



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ST BERNARD'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Bernard's Preparatory School

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| Full Name of School | St Bernard's Preparatory School |
| DfE Number | 871/6000 |
| EYFS Number | EY305560 |
| Registered Charity Number | 241743 |
| Address | St Bernard's Preparatory School Hawtreys Close Slough Berkshire SL1 1TB |
| Telephone Number | 01753 521821 |
| Fax Number | 01753 552364 |
| Email Address | info@stbernardsprep.org |
| Headmaster | Mr Nathan Cheesman |
| Chair of Governors | Mr Stephen Patterson |
| Age Range | 2 to 11 |
| Total Number of Pupils | 242 |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (144 boys; 98 girls) |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): 5 5-11: 192 3-5 (EYFS): 45 |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: 242 |
| Head of EYFS Setting | Ms Amy Underwood |
| EYFS Gender | Mixed |
| Inspection Dates | 13 May 2014 to 16 May 2014 |

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in June 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior leaders, other members of staff and with the chair of governors and one of the trustees. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Graham Sims

Ms Susan Dilley

Mr Adrian Taylor

Mrs Eithne Webster

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Bernard's Preparatory School is a Catholic co-educational day school for pupils aged from 2 to 11 years. The school occupies a compact site with its own playing fields in the town of Slough, Berkshire. It was established in 1945 by the Bernardine Cistercians Order, whose Sisters own the school and remain as trustees and proprietor. A governing body oversees the management of the school on their behalf. Since the previous inspection, the school has had a new headteacher, in September 2013.
- 1.2 The school's prime purpose, in partnership with the home and parish, is to help all members of the school community to live the Gospel values of reconciliation and forgiveness and to respond in a Christian way to the challenges of life. The school aims to develop the potential of all pupils and provide them with the means to take an active part in the field of their choice. It seeks to develop the pupils' intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual qualities and to foster an appreciation of those things which add quality to life. It sets out to be a place of Christian service where all are sensitive to the needs of others.
- 1.3 The school's early years setting admits children from the age of two and a half and follows the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Pupils from the age of 5 to 11 are taught in adjoining buildings.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, there were 242 pupils on roll, of whom 50 were in the EYFS. From Reception to Year 6, there are two classes for each year group. Around three-fifths of pupils are boys, and pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Fifteen pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and receive additional English support.
- 1.5 The ability range of the pupils is broad, but is above average overall. The school has 48 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Of these, 21 pupils receive significant additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

| School | NC name |
|---------------|-----------|
| Pre-school | Nursery |
| Early Years 1 | Nursery |
| Early Years 2 | Reception |

Preparatory Department

| School | NC name |
|------------------|---------|
| Prep | Year 1 |
| Upper Prep | Year 2 |
| Lower Transition | Year 3 |
| Transition | Year 4 |
| Upper Transition | Year 5 |
| Remove | Year 6 |

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 St Bernard's Preparatory School is extremely successful in meeting its aims of developing the potential of all pupils and of helping pupils to respond in a Christian way to the challenges of life and to be sensitive to the needs of others. The pupils' achievement throughout the school is excellent. The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding build continually in every year group so that, by the time they leave Year 6, standards in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar are well above those expected for that age. The pupils' achievement in mathematics is exceptional. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND and those who receive additional support for EAL, make excellent progress, in response to an excellent curriculum and a good programme of activities. Pupils benefit from excellent teaching which engages, interests, challenges and inspires the pupils to work hard and do their best. Occasionally, the work pupils are asked to complete in some subjects is not as consistent in challenge as it is in others, but the variety and volume of work across all subjects, some of which are taught by specialists, is excellent. Pupils develop into motivated, highly articulate, independent learners who are extremely well prepared for their move to secondary school.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils are extremely well behaved. They are polite, courteous, considerate and helpful. Relationships between pupils and staff and among the pupils themselves are excellent. Pupils from many different cultural backgrounds and faiths mix extremely well together and show genuine love and concern for each other. Pupils are very happy at school and appreciate the high standard of care shown by the staff which helps them to feel safe and secure. Excellent attention is given to the pupils' welfare, health and safety throughout the school.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are excellent. Governors and trustees have a very good understanding of the school. They ensure that the school fully complies with all legal requirements and that pupils are effectively safeguarded. They hold the school's leaders to account but also provide excellent support for them and are fully involved in ensuring the school continues to develop. Investments made since the previous inspection have resulted in many improvements, both to the school's facilities and to the quality of education provided. Issues identified in the previous inspection have been resolved effectively. Senior leaders have been highly successful in creating a united team of staff who are committed to providing the best possible education for the pupils. Leaders are perceptive in identifying areas for development and highly effective in implementing plans which improve the quality of education, such as those to improve the quality of the pupils' writing. Parents are very pleased with the school and what it offers their children and have no major concerns. They are particularly pleased that their children are happy and feel safe at school, that they are well looked after and that the school achieves high standards of behaviour.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Extend the level of challenge in tasks set for pupils in the humanities and other subjects to match that provided in English and mathematics.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is very successful in meeting its aim to develop the potential of all pupils and their intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual qualities. Pupils develop increasingly good communication skills as they move through the school so that, by the time they leave, they are excellent listeners and highly articulate. They demonstrate a great enthusiasm for learning, and enjoy questioning and exploring new ideas and different ways of solving problems. Many pupils leave the school with a facility with number and an ability to apply their mathematical skills in different situations which are far beyond those expected of pupils of their age. Pupils also achieve extremely well in science; they particularly enjoy investigations which form the backbone of much of their work in class. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- 3.3 Pupils are highly successful in creative, sporting and other areas. Many achieve success in tennis, ballet, dance, football, rugby, cricket, swimming and gymnastics. Two-fifths of the pupils learn to play a musical instrument and some win silver and gold medals in local arts festivals. For the last three years, there has been a 100 per cent pass rate for those entered for instrumental examinations. Pupils have received awards in the Primary and UK Mathematics Challenges and have been successful in local and national competitions and events in debating, handwriting and story writing.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 to 2012. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at ages 7 and 11 have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools. The results have improved each year for the last few years and, in 2013, were higher again than those in 2012. A large majority of pupils exceed the expected standards for their age in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar. The pupils' achievement in mathematics at age 11 is exceptional: many pupils work at levels expected of very much older pupils. The great majority of pupils gain places at secondary schools of their choice, with the majority transferring to local selective maintained schools.
- 3.5 These levels of attainment indicate that pupils make excellent progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability, as shown by standardised measures of progress. The most able pupils relish the challenges they are given and make rapid progress as a result. Pupils with SEND and those who receive additional support for EAL also make excellent progress because of the well-planned and timely support they receive.
- 3.6 Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Their learning in lessons is of a consistently high standard and the volume of written work shows continual building on prior knowledge and understanding. Younger pupils quickly develop outstanding learning habits. By the time they are in Years 3 and 4, they show excellent powers of concentration, working in total silence on their own when appropriate or engaged in enthusiastic discussion with their peers when asked to work in groups. Their inquisitiveness, their eagerness to learn new things and their willingness to apply their knowledge and understanding help them to develop into pupils who, by the end of Year 6, are extremely well prepared for their move to secondary school.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum fully supports the school's aims. The curriculum is very well planned and is suitable for the age groups, ability range and learning needs of the pupils. It provides a high level of challenge for the most able and excellent additional support for any who need it. Pupils express high levels of satisfaction with the curriculum, which is broad and well balanced.
- 3.9 The high standards achieved in English and mathematics are a reflection of the importance given to these subjects which, along with science and religious education, make up the core curriculum. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in science, design and technology, physical education (PE), music and French. There is valuable use of ICT as a tool to support all aspects of the curriculum and it is also taught as a discrete subject. Some work in the humanities offers excellent challenge, but this is not provided as consistently as in the core subjects, particularly when there is an over-reliance on the use of worksheets.
- 3.10 The curriculum enables pupils to use their initiative to work independently and collaboratively, and to engage in self-directed research. The pupils' aesthetic development is enriched by provision for music, art and drama. Pupils have the chance to flourish in school productions, such as *What a Night* for older pupils, and *The Selfish Giant* for the younger ones. They enjoy and benefit from opportunities to play a variety of instruments for their peers, staff and parents.
- 3.11 Systems to identify and support pupils with specific learning needs work well. Timely, effective support is provided for a small number of pupils with EAL. Provision for pupils with SEND is excellent. Individual education plans are drawn up when assessment shows these to be beneficial. Specialist staff liaise closely with class teachers, and the progress of these pupils is monitored extremely thoroughly.
- 3.12 The provision of extra-curricular activities for all pupils at lunchtime and after school is good. Pupils express great enthusiasm for the activities provided, which are well attended. Ballet and street dance for the younger pupils sit alongside golf, judo, chess club, computer club and a range of sports activities. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to represent the school in a variety of team games and have met with a considerable degree of success.
- 3.13 The curriculum is enriched throughout the school by a wide range of day and residential trips that support the topics being studied. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the trips in which they are involved. Younger pupils wrote with great empathy for children evacuated to the country during the Second World War, following a visit to Dorset. Other year groups visit stately homes and art galleries and have been to the theatre to see *War Horse*. Pupils in Year 6 look forward to their residential visit to France in the summer term.
- 3.14 The school has excellent links with the parish community and hosts a range of sporting activities for schools in the local vicinity.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.16 Teaching is extremely effective in promoting the pupils' progress and fosters a real interest in learning, strongly supporting the school's aims. Staff prepare interesting activities using excellent resources to motivate and stimulate pupils, informed by a clear understanding of the pupils' individual needs. This helps them to be highly effective learners. Staff are knowledgeable and, through their enthusiasm, they ensure that pupils are eager to learn.
- 3.17 Lessons are conducted at an excellent pace and teaching uses a range of styles that appropriately challenge and extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Thorough and detailed planning ensures consistency between classes in the same year group. Teachers know their pupils extremely well, and pupils feel confident to seek help should they require it. Teaching fulfils the requirements of individual education plans to ensure appropriate challenge and extremely good provision for pupils with SEND. Individual pupils who need additional help in lessons are well supported. Well-trained assistants provide focused support for individuals or small groups of pupils. Pupils with EAL are monitored carefully and given additional help if needed.
- 3.18 The teaching helps pupils to develop the confidence to contribute to their lessons with great enthusiasm and perseverance, and to work independently and challenge themselves, leading to excellent achievement in almost all cases. Pupils feel they make good progress with their work through the support of their teachers. They are helped to develop study skills and strategies to prepare them for their future education and for examinations. The breadth of the pupils' learning is enhanced by the appropriate use of cross-curricular links between subjects. The focus on writing development has produced some outstanding work. Much teaching exploits the use of ICT effectively.
- 3.19 Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Assessment and marking of the pupils' work is regular and consistent; it enables pupils to understand what they need to do to improve, through effective evaluation and reflection. Excellent internal assessments and the use of standardised data to monitor the progress of individual pupils ensure that appropriate targets are set for the pupils' future progress.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' personal development reflects the school's aim to respect the uniqueness of each individual. Everyone is welcomed and valued. Pupils show great maturity and are highly confident. They are personable, articulate, and keen to share their experiences with others. They support each other through mutual co-operation which helps all to thrive in the school community. Older pupils carry out their role as guides around the school for prospective parents and visitors with great assurance, courtesy and consideration. The pupils' views, as expressed through the responses to the pupils' questionnaire, show a high degree of satisfaction with almost every aspect of the school.
- 4.3 The quality of the pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The strong Catholic ethos that underpins the life of the school fosters the pupils' spiritual awareness, including through times in the school day for them to be quiet, still and reflective. Pupils come from many different cultural backgrounds. They study a different world religion each year, visit local places of worship, and talk openly about their faith in form time and in assemblies. In this way, they develop an excellent understanding and great respect for a range of world religions. Pupils benefit from a chaplaincy which makes a valuable contribution to school life and supports families of all faiths in times of difficulty.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong, demonstrate exemplary behaviour and are encouraged to think about their relationships with others. They demonstrate high levels of self-discipline, showing respect and consideration towards others. They listen to each other's opinions through the many opportunities presented for debating. Pupils take on responsibility readily; they help in the classroom and around the school, act as members of the school council and as house and sports captains. Pupils appreciate rewards for selfless acts. They support various charities, showing an awareness and empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. Recent charitable causes include the local food bank, guide dogs for the blind, and Catholic international charities, specifically in Goma and Kenya.
- 4.5 The pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils are naturally polite, confident, helpful and welcoming. They readily show initiative and are mature beyond their years. Through the paired buddy system, pupils demonstrate an excellent social awareness and a mature approach to their relationships with others who are both older and younger than them. They co-operate readily in group activities in lessons and listen attentively to the ideas of others. Pupils put forward good ideas through their school council representatives. In assemblies, they celebrate each other's successes whether academic, sporting or artistic. They show love and compassion towards others.
- 4.6 The quality of the pupils' cultural awareness is excellent. They have a high level of understanding of different cultures. They demonstrate a welcoming and inclusive approach to all those of different backgrounds. Pupils enthused about a visit to the Gurdwara, while pupils in Year 6 looked forward to the annual retreat after examinations at the Bernardine community in Stroud. Their broader cultural

awareness is developed very well through the wide-ranging curriculum and opportunities for them to be involved in artistic and musical activities.

- 4.7 By the time the pupils leave the school, they demonstrate a great level of maturity and self-confidence which equips them extremely well for their transition into senior school.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The school amply fulfils its aim to provide a caring, nurturing Christian community. The care and support provided for pupils in this happy, caring environment is excellent. The staff act as excellent role models.
- 4.10 Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding and are based on high levels of mutual respect. The pastoral system, which is based on the role of the form teacher, is well defined and the systems for rewards and sanctions are fair. Support is always available from senior managers, if and when required, and there is excellent support for those with SEND or EAL.
- 4.11 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through being made aware of healthy eating choices in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and science and by posters displayed in the dining area. Dining arrangements are well organised. The school is seeking to develop the facility to prepare meals on site and channel guidance for pupils to eat healthily in this way. Pupils learn why they should care for their teeth, and the need for exercise. They are actively encouraged to participate in the good range of sporting opportunities available.
- 4.12 The school is highly effective in promoting excellent standards of behaviour. Behaviour is monitored closely by key staff, and pupils are supported appropriately. The school's anti-bullying policy is effective. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and that bullying is very rare but, if it occurred, they are confident that it would be dealt with effectively and quickly. Pupils appreciate and benefit from a new lunchtime club, which offers support to those who have experienced bereavement or are facing family issues. Pupils have many opportunities for quiet, reflective time and say that they value this greatly.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND and strives to realise the potential of all pupils according to their abilities and talents.
- 4.14 All pupils consider their needs are understood; they feel extremely well supported by their teachers. They use the school council to put forward their ideas and believe that attention is paid to their ideas and opinions.

4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.16 The school takes its duty to safeguard pupils and to ensure their health and safety very seriously. Arrangements are fully in line with requirements and official guidance. Staff undertake safeguarding training every year and all new staff are made well aware of the school's procedures. The checking of suitability of teaching and non-teaching staff, and others who may come into contact with pupils, are thorough and are overseen carefully.
- 4.17 The school takes all necessary measures to prevent risks from fire and other hazards. Fire drills are carried out each term and pupils and staff are told how to improve the procedures to evacuate buildings as quickly as possible. Risk assessments are thorough and are reviewed regularly.
- 4.18 Pupils are in safe hands if there are any accidents or illness. All staff receive training in first aid. The school's medical room is fit for purpose. There is always someone available to deal with any medical problems, which are always recorded carefully.
- 4.19 Arrangements for ensuring the safety of buildings and equipment are meticulous. All necessary checks are carried out with great regularity, and specialists are brought in to test equipment as required. A planned programme of refurbishment of all areas of the school has resulted in much improved classrooms in most parts of the school and access from outside is carefully controlled.
- 4.20 Registration of the pupils is undertaken efficiently, and registers are properly maintained. The school keeps an appropriate admission register electronically. This is backed up and stored in accordance with requirements.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governors and trustees have a very good understanding of how effective the school is and of its unique ethos. They provide strong support to ensure the school continues to fulfil its aim to help all members of the school community to respond in a Christian way to the challenges of life. Through regular reports from the school's leaders, the governing body's committees maintain effective oversight of teaching, curriculum and staffing, as well as safeguarding, health and safety. There are appropriate procedures to manage the performance of the headmaster. The governing body's full support, its involvement in making astute appointments of staff, and its eagerness to continue to develop the school have been highly effective in helping the school to improve since its previous inspection.
- 5.3 Trustees and the governing body have responded well to the recommendation from the previous inspection to define the role of trustees more clearly. Trustees take their legal responsibilities very seriously. They have thorough procedures for ensuring the school has checked the suitability of staff and others who have contact with the pupils, and they review safeguarding procedures annually as a body. They are quick to follow up any issues, and contact with the school is frequent. There are excellent lines of communication between the governing body and trustees, who are always represented at meetings of the governing body.
- 5.4 Careful financial management has enabled the school to develop specialist teaching in a number of subjects, improve resources, particularly in ICT, and refurbish most areas of the school so that pupils in most years are taught in bright, attractive classrooms. Governors are intent on supporting senior leaders with further developments to improve the curriculum, while maintaining the excellent ethos of the school.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, is excellent.
- 5.6 Excellent leadership and management ensure the most successful realisation of the school's aims, seen most clearly in the pupils' excellent personal development and the extremely friendly and harmonious relationships among pupils and staff in this culturally and ethnically diverse school. Leaders have been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and ensuring very high levels of achievement by the time pupils leave the school, particularly in mathematics.
- 5.7 Since the previous inspection, leaders have instigated many improvements. The pupils' achievements in national tests have gone from strength to strength. The relocation of the sports field so that pupils can access it directly from the changing rooms, and the increase in sporting activities have had a marked impact on the pupils' achievement in physical education and games. Communications with parents have improved, especially through the use of email and text messages to provide instant communication whenever required. Pastoral support for pupils has become even more responsive to their needs. The refurbishment of the computer

suite and acquisition of small tablet computers have opened up a new range of opportunities which teaching is beginning to exploit.

- 5.8 Senior leaders know the school extremely well. They are well aware of its strengths and are determined to maintain the excellent atmosphere and distinctive Catholic ethos which embraces pupils of different religions and backgrounds. They are also honest and far-sighted in identifying areas for further development, including further improvement to areas which are already excellent. Subject leaders are instrumental in supporting other staff and leading changes within their areas of responsibility. For example, initiatives to improve the pupils' writing have been welcomed by staff, enjoyed by pupils and resulted in higher standards. Teachers feel they are very well supported by regular, targeted in-service training and an annual appraisal carried out by a member of the senior leadership team. Subject leaders are effective in monitoring teaching and learning in their subjects and all staff are involved in the moderation of pupils' work. A review of the curriculum is underway to identify a more creative approach which fully utilises opportunities to link the teaching of humanities and other subjects with the teaching of core subjects, including consistent levels of challenge.
- 5.9 The school appoints staff of high quality who quickly adopt and support the school's ethos. Staff are highly committed to the school and give far beyond the call of duty to ensure that they provide the best possible teaching opportunities and level of care for their pupils. There is an atmosphere of mutual support, which raises the quality of teaching even further. All staff receive a thorough induction into the school, which emphasises the importance of safeguarding and the welfare, health and safety of the pupils; such training is consistently updated.
- 5.10 Teachers receive excellent support from other staff. Administrative staff ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Other financial, catering staff, and those who care for the premises, are all essential members of the school team. They contribute significantly to the friendly nature of the school and play their part in ensuring pupils are not only extremely well equipped for the future, but develop into mature young people who make the atmosphere of the school so special.
- 5.11 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. Parents expressed themselves in response to questionnaires, as highly satisfied with the education and support provided for their children and with the quality of communication with the school. Inspectors agree. The school has an appropriate, detailed complaints policy which is made available to parents and the school follows its published procedures. Although a small number of parents expressed concern at the way their complaints were handled, inspectors found the school's open-door policy provides an appropriate route for issues to be resolved through face-to-face discussions.
- 5.12 Responses to the questionnaire show that parents are unanimous in thinking that their children are happy and safe, that they are well looked after and that the school has high standards of behaviour.
- 5.13 The very positive daily relationships with parents which are established in the EYFS continue to develop as pupils progress through the school. Parents agree that there are a broad range of academic, artistic, sporting and extra-curricular opportunities and experiences available to all pupils. Homework club is also available; this extension of the times of the school day benefits working parents.
- 5.14 Communication with parents is very strong. There are many ways for the school to keep parents informed and for parents to contact the school: parent mail, the weekly

newsletter, the school website, text messages, the homework diary and the reading log. Parent mail and the text messaging service are highly valued. Parents are welcomed to a number of school events including liturgies, concerts and sports matches.

- 5.15 Parents have many opportunities to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children. The very active parent association, FOPS (Friends of Prep School), supports the school and organises a variety of events such as pupil discos, film nights, the Christmas and Summer fetes and Valentine's disco. Parents help to look after the conservation area, give career talks to older pupils, give faith talks in assemblies, actively participate in school chaplaincy through 'Parent Prayer' and support the War Veterans event.'
- 5.16 The school's website, which is undergoing further development, provides parents and prospective parents with detailed information about forthcoming events and school news and includes the required policies and procedures for parents to download.
- 5.17 Parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress through written reports in December and July for pupils in Years 1 to 6. There are parent consultation meetings in every term for all age groups. Informal discussions take place whenever appropriate or as requested to discuss a child's progress.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 6.1 The early years provision is outstanding in meeting the needs of all the children who attend, including the most able, those with SEND and those with EAL. Profile results and other assessment data show that nearly all children reach the expected levels of development, and a considerable number exceed them, by the end of Reception. Children, from the youngest to the oldest, make excellent progress in their learning and development, and acquire the skills to learn effectively. They are extremely well prepared for the next stages in their learning. Internal assessment is used highly effectively to maintain achievement and secure intervention so that all children make excellent progress.
- 6.2 Teachers and teaching assistants work extremely effectively as a team. They provide a stimulating learning environment that is secure and supportive and demonstrates high expectations. The children use both the indoor classrooms and the outdoor areas for imaginative learning experiences, such as 'painting' the fence or gardening in the compost tray. They speak confidently to each other and to adults. They use stories as a basis for imaginative and exciting activities, such as building houses suitable for the Three Pigs or extending language through the use of prepositions to discover hiding places for gingerbread men.
- 6.3 The older children become eager and exuberant learners who take pride in and gain confidence through their achievements. This is evident as adults listen carefully even to the most hesitant child. This supportive response encourages the children to participate and develops their thinking and their language. Children were encouraged to develop their own versions of the *Gingerbread Man*, such as the 'Gingerbread Alien' or the tricky Gingerbread Man, who encouraged his pursuers on to a bridge which then collapsed under their weight. These versions provided a stimulus for high-quality drawing and writing.
- 6.4 The youngest children settle quickly into the setting, helped by close liaison with parents, who are encouraged to participate in their children's learning by a range of highly successful strategies including the use of handbooks, letters and reading diaries. Parents are well informed about their children's progress, by conversations at pick-up and drop-off times, more formal meetings, reports and consultation evenings. The very youngest children have daily diaries that describe their day and what they have done, enjoyed or found challenging. These provide a useful means to inform parents and a way of helping children at home. All these methods contribute to excellent co-operation between home and school. This in turn enables the children to feel secure, knowing that all the most important adults in their lives know them, care for them and want them to succeed.

6.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 6.5 The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being is outstanding.
- 6.6 The youngest children settle very quickly and make excellent progress in their personal development. Children aged three to five are happy and secure. They enter school confidently. All practitioners are highly skilled and sensitive in helping children to form warm bonds with the adults. These secure emotional attachments provide the children with the stability needed to help them develop independence.
- 6.7 Children's behaviour is outstanding. The environment is highly stimulating, and children are able to access independently resources that inspire and challenge them. Children co-operate well in their play and are spontaneous and unaffected in the way that they help each other to put on overalls or find their belongings. They are developing independence and learning to make choices, through such means as signing the board if they want to cook gingerbread men.
- 6.8 Staff help the children to make good choices, an example being the selection of fruit available for a snack. The teachers help the children to develop awareness of the importance of exercise and their own body's reactions by asking them to feel their heartbeats after exerting themselves in PE. The recommendation of the previous inspection to develop the lunchtime dining experience and ensure that adults and children engage and interact in smaller groups to enhance the children's social skills has been met. Younger children now eat on their own at small tables laid with cloths and each with a member of staff. The cloths have the beneficial effect of muffling the sound of cutlery and crockery so the children can talk and listen to each other.
- 6.9 Adults provide excellent support for the children as they learn to manage their own personal and hygiene needs.
- 6.10 The children's emotional resilience is promoted very effectively by the staff. The close proximity of the EYFS classrooms, the shared outdoor areas and attendance at assembly and liturgy mean that the children are familiar with other pupils and adults in the school. They are extremely well prepared for the transition to the next stage of their learning.

6.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 6.11 The leadership and management of the early years provision is outstanding. Senior managers are developing strong links with the governors, who, through a nominated governor, play an increasing role in the setting. Effective involvement of the governors has resulted in the recent refurbishment of the EYFS areas. This provides the children with a well-resourced, welcoming and stimulating environment.
- 6.12 Inspiring leadership is extremely effective in ensuring thorough coverage of EYFS programmes and consistent implementation of all safeguarding and welfare requirements.
- 6.13 At all levels, staff are enthusiastic, even passionate about their roles. Regular EYFS meetings review and evaluate all aspects of the provision, aided by the use of external benchmarks which support a well-documented drive to improve attainment. The leadership sets challenging targets for improvement such as raising the standard of language development or enhancing the children's understanding of disability.

- 6.14 Staff have regular performance management and supervision meetings and welcome opportunities to improve the impact of their practice and knowledge on the children's learning. A cluster group for other schools has been established to share and disseminate good practice in order to strive for even higher standards.
- 6.15 There is a close, highly effective working relationship with local agencies. This enables the school to help children or parents who require any additional support such as speech therapy or parenting classes to access provision directly and thus improve outcomes for the children.

6.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 6.16 Children are active learners, engaged and focused in both teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Because of excellent teaching using a range of methods, high standards are seen in all areas of learning, particularly in literacy and mathematics. Skilful adult intervention using excellent resources and effective support from teaching assistants, together with a range of strategies and different tasks to suit individual children's needs, enable all children, including those with SEND and EAL, to make excellent progress. For example, careful questioning and active participation enabled children to explore challenging concepts such as, 'Are bigger things always heavier?'
- 6.17 Many of the youngest children can count beyond 20 and the older ones use mathematical symbols correctly and add and subtract. Children have made a good start at learning to read using a fast-paced multi-sensory phonics system, and even the very youngest can recognise some high frequency words. Very effective use is made of specialist teaching and resources in areas such as PE and the children respond with enthusiasm. Children's independence is developed effectively by the opportunities for them to choose freely from activities both inside and in the outdoor learning areas.
- 6.18 Parents' responses to the questionnaire and those spoken to were unanimously supportive. They appreciate the personal and social development of their children who themselves feel secure and happy and speak with affection of the adults in school as well as their friends. They know that the teachers care for them and will protect and look after them. Their educational progress is outstanding, and the skills and attitudes they are developing are an excellent foundation for the years ahead.
- 6.19 The school fully meets the requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare. All who work in the EYFS continually reinforce safe practices and are fully aware of any issues which might affect the children's safety. The school's leaders' rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision for children in the EYFS have resulted in improvements since the previous inspection.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 6.20 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.