



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
ST DOMINIC'S PRIORY SCHOOL**

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## St Dominic's Priory School

Full Name of School	<b>St Dominic's Priory School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>860/6011</b>		
EYFS Number	<b>EY433130</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>1141147</b>		
Address	<b>St Dominic's Priory School 21 Station Road Stone Staffordshire ST15 8EN</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01785 814181</b>		
Email Address	<b>info@stdominicspriory.co.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs Rebecca Harrison</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Michael Hughes</b>		
Age Range	<b>0 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>189</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed</b>		
Numbers by Age	<b>0-2 (EYFS):65</b>	<b>5-11:60</b>	
	<b>3-5 (EYFS):10</b>	<b>11-18:54</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>185</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>4</b>	
	Full:	<b>3</b>	Weekly: <b>1</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Karen Davies</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection Dates	<b>20 Jan 2015 to 23 Jan 2015</b>		

## 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 October/November 2010.

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 2014. These Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://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.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare.

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 members of staff and with the deputy chair of governors and a parent governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Beryl Fawcett

Mrs Lesley Parlane

Sister Paula Thomas

Mrs Jenny Clayphan

Mrs Jean Gray

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Dominic's Priory School is an independent day school and nursery educating girls from 3 months to 18 years of age and boys to 11 years old. Founded in 1934 by the English Dominican Sisters, the school continues to share the original site, in the market town of Stone in Staffordshire, with the convent. Over time, additional buildings have supported educational developments and requirements. In May 2011, ownership of the school transferred from the English Dominican Congregation to a new independent charitable trust with a governing body that includes two members of the congregation.
- 1.2 The school aims to nurture and educate the whole child and promote a sense of personal responsibility based on the Christian values of truth, justice, compassion, partnership and community; to know, respect and care for each pupil; to promote a family atmosphere and spirit of collaboration throughout the school; to combine high academic achievement with a wide variety of interests and challenges outside the classroom; and to help all pupils to develop into confident, self-assured individuals who show respect for others and earn respect for themselves.
- 1.3 A total of 189 pupils attend the school. In the EYFS, 65 children are under the age of 3 (29 boys, 36 girls) and 10 are aged 3-5 (7 boys and 3 girls). Of the 60 pupils in Years 1 to 6 in the junior school, 17 are boys and 46 are girls. There are 54 girls in the senior school, from Years 7-13.
- 1.4 The school accepts pupils with a range of abilities from well above to below average. The ability profile of the junior school is above the national average. Owing to the small sizes of many cohorts, the average and statistical spread of abilities may vary notably between cohorts. The ability profile of the senior school is above the national average, with most pupils having at least above average ability.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection, changes in the leadership team have included the appointments of a new deputy head, a senior teacher in the junior school and a new head teacher who took up her post at the beginning of the spring term 2015. In 2011, the school registered to provide care for children of eighteen months, and in September 2013, provision was extended to include babies from three months of age. Development of facilities has included new junior science and biology laboratories; a new eco garden and climbing wall; some renovated classrooms and a nursery block. In 2013, the school acquired a building five minutes' walk from the school, that has been completely refurbished to provide a boarding house for 17 girls.
- 1.6 Throughout the school, 35 pupils are recognised as having special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who are gifted and talented. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Thirteen pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom four receive learning support. Pupils come from families from various occupational and ethnic backgrounds who live within a 30 mile radius of the school and transportation is offered from a number of locations within the same radius.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The school meets its aim to educate the whole child and to combine high academic achievement with a wide variety of interests and challenges outside the classroom. Pupils achieve extremely well for their ages and abilities and are supported in this by the use of a variety of highly effective teaching and learning styles. Their performance is enhanced through the use of detailed tracking. Across the school, pupils display high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills within the curriculum and extra-curricular areas. They display strong communication skills and speak articulately. Written work is strongly developed from the prep school onwards, and skills of numeracy are well developed across the school and confidently applied. The quality of the curriculum is good and supports pupils' achievements well, although under new regulations it has yet to fully promote all of the fundamental British values. The provision for information and communications technology (ICT) across the school is inconsistent, with greater in-class provision of technology within the prep department. Its use within the curriculum is developing and was evident within some subjects across the age ranges.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent and is a real strength of the school. The Catholic ethos is instrumental in promoting the growth of pupils as individuals and it is successful in achieving its aim to educate the whole child. Pupils are self-confident, self-aware and respect themselves and others. The pupils' excellent moral development is constantly strengthened, from their concern for support and kindness in everyday matters, to their concern for world poverty and for the planet. Socially, pupils develop extremely well and their cultural development is demonstrated clearly in opportunities both within and outside the classroom where pupils see and experience new ideas and cultural differences. The quality of pastoral care is excellent and the small school community ensures that each pupil is known and receives outstanding care. Welfare, health and safety are thorough and ensure that pupils are safe, although pupils in the senior school are not provided with a medical room should they be ill or injured.
- 2.3 Leadership and management are effective at all levels, in line with the school's aims, and responsibilities are correctly discharged, particularly the implementation of policies and safeguarding, the high quality of the education provided and the excellent quality of pupils' personal development. The governing body is very supportive and has ensured that the school has continued evenly during the interim of a term before the arrival of the school's new head teacher. The educational direction of the school is clear and its aims are successfully promoted. Management of the curriculum has been maintained and performance data is well reviewed to enable thorough and consistent tracking of pupil attainment and progress. Lines of responsibility have been redrawn in the junior school and now support curriculum coordination, but in this the senior school is less well advanced.

### **2.(b) Action points**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and therefore it is required to:



- provide accommodation in the senior school for the medical examination and treatment of pupils [Part 5 paragraph 24(1) (a) & (b), under Premises and accommodation]

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.7 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. In the senior school, establish clear management responsibilities to support co-ordination and coherence of practice across the range of subjects, and develop closer links with coordinators in the prep department.
2. Extend the range of teaching styles available to the staff by incorporating interactive technology within the senior classrooms.
3. Ensure that the proposed training on special needs enables the appointment of a special educational needs coordinator for the school.
4. Actively promote the teaching of British values.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The high quality noted during the previous inspection has been maintained. The school meets its aim to educate the whole child and to combine high academic achievement with a wide variety of interests and challenges outside the classroom. Overall, pupils achieve extremely well for their ages and abilities and are supported in this by the use of a variety of effective teaching and learning styles. Their performance is enhanced through the use of detailed tracking.
- 3.3 Across the school, pupils display high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills within the curriculum and extra-curricular areas. They are mature for their age and confident in approaching different subjects. They display strong communication skills, speaking articulately and enthusiastically. Written work is strongly developed from the prep school onwards, becoming fluent and showing particularly imagination and creativity in English. Numeracy skills are well developed across the school and pupils confidently apply them in a variety of subjects such as science and geography.
- 3.4 Open-ended tasks and sophisticated questioning facilitate pupils' independent thinking, and they are able to make connections with other subject areas. Pupils' reasoning skills are well developed, especially when they are challenged to think critically. Creativity is strongly developed in dance and drama and particularly in art, where the excellent art exhibition demonstrates pupils' acquisition of an exceptionally wide range of techniques, styles and materials.
- 3.5 Pupils' use of ICT is well developed in discrete ICT lessons and, in the junior school, its use by teachers promotes effective learning. Nevertheless, in the senior school, lack of good quality interactive provision limits the range of what can be achieved by teachers and pupils. Senior pupils identified the library as an under-used resource to support learning.
- 3.6 Pupils display strong physical skills across a range of sports, including netball, and are successful in the range of extra-curricular activities that include representation in local and regional teams. The older senior pupils achieve well through the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
- 3.7 Throughout the school, pupils with SEND and EAL achieve strongly as a result of excellent in-class and dedicated support. The considerable progress these pupils make socially and academically is particularly noteworthy. More able pupils respond successfully to the challenging content of the curriculum and extension activities, both within and outside the curriculum, which develop their talents further.
- 3.8 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Results in standardised tests in the junior school indicate that pupils' performance in English and mathematics is higher than national norms. GCSE results have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and have shown improvement from 2011-13, with 2013 results being similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Although IGCSE results in combined science have been lower than the worldwide average, those in coordinated sciences have been

higher than the worldwide average. A-level results in 2011-12 were above the national average for girls in maintained schools, and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Results in 2012 were lower than in 2011, being similar to the national average for girls in maintained schools.

- 3.9 As seen in the schools performance data, the standard of pupils' work, observation of lessons and discussions with pupils, prep school pupils make good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. In the senior school, the level of attainment at GCSE, and available standardised measures of progress, indicate that pupils make good progress that is appropriate in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Pupils make good progress in the sixth form, enabling Year 13 students to consistently achieve places at the university of their choice.
- 3.10 Pupils' attitudes are wholly excellent throughout the school. They are willing workers who settle readily to the tasks set. They are industrious and work effectively both independently and with others. Pupils have a positive approach to learning and are fully involved. They enjoy their work and are keen to widen their knowledge and skills.

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

- 3.11 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.12 The curriculum supports the aims of the school. With one clear exception, the curriculum effectively covers the required areas of learning. It is broad for a school of this size with many excellent features. Although mutual respect and tolerance are actively encouraged, under new regulations the school has yet to fully promote all of the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law and individual liberty.
- 3.13 Schemes of work are in place for all subjects with regular reviews. The provision for ICT across the school is inconsistent, with greater in-class provision of technology within the prep department. The use of ICT within the curriculum is developing and was evident within some subjects across the age ranges. French is taught successfully through the school from Reception, and the change from Italian to Spanish as the second language in the senior school has been a success. Links between the junior and senior school are developing and are already effective in some subjects such as science.
- 3.14 It caters for a wide range of ability and offers different approaches to support those who experience difficulty of any kind, and to extend those identified as gifted and talented. English as an additional language is provided for where necessary. The school's small class sizes, allow each pupil's needs and strengths to be addressed. This, and the family environment, is closely linked to the outstanding academic results. The creativity in the curriculum, whilst present in the senior school is most evident in the junior school. A termly theme, which flows throughout the curriculum, is a feature in the junior school, while in the senior school a week is put aside each academic year with a theme, such as the most recent one on creative arts.
- 3.15 Gifted and talented pupils are challenged effectively through activities such as public speaking competitions, UKMT maths challenge at junior, intermediate and senior level, and science lectures for the seniors. Links with a local university related to medical and other courses have proved valuable. The school works hard to accommodate each individual pupil's choices in GCSE and A-level options within the wider teaching timetables. Changes to funding of external agencies have affected provision for careers advice; however, the school is working toward internal projects

to support the girls, senior school staff are available for advice and girls feel that they are well guided.

- 3.16 The range of extra-curricular activities is good, especially considering the size of the school. After-school and lunchtime clubs are popular and offer a wide variety of options. Partnerships with other senior schools in the locality provide debating opportunities. Throughout the school, curriculum-related trips are regularly taken and residential trips are included at senior level, some of which are abroad. Whole-school trips are arranged at least annually.
- 3.17 Pupils are keen to involve themselves in fundraising activities such as class charity markets, to raise money for a chosen charity or a project to be undertaken to benefit the school community. They have sung at a local nursing home and participated in local charity events, such as *Stone Civic Sunday*. The Nursery and prep school designed floats and took part in a local carnival in 2013 and 2014. In the senior school there are opportunities to develop pupils' organisational and leadership skills appropriate to their age.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.18 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.19 The school is successful in achieving its academic aims. The excellent subject knowledge of teachers is evident and the enthusiasm, apparent in much of the teaching, proves infectious. It sparks endeavour and interest in the pupils and enables them to develop a secure understanding of the subjects being studied and make significant progress overall.
- 3.20 The most effective teaching makes a valuable contribution to pupils' achievements and makes learning exciting, as pupils are allowed to discover for themselves and recognise achievement as their own. Such teaching has pace, sets appropriate challenges and utilises the pupils' noted strengths in discussion and reasoning. The excellent rapport between teachers and pupils contributes significantly to progress in lessons at all levels and for all groups, including those with SEND. The teachers know their pupils' aptitudes well and adapt their teaching to their different needs. Due to small class sizes, many lessons are like tutorials which are tailored to ensure that every pupil can avail themselves of one-to-one guidance and support. This enables staff to provide more challenging work for more able pupils while at the same time giving the necessary support to pupils with SEND and EAL.
- 3.21 Assessment and marking of pupils work is generally helpful, thorough and productive; constructive comments are made for improvement and a helpful dialogue between pupils and teachers promotes pupil achievement. Since the previous inspection, the recommendation, to ensure that spelling, punctuation and grammar in senior pupils' work is corrected, has been addressed.
- 3.22 Pupils use ICT competently and, since the previous inspection there has been an increase in the use of ICT as a teaching resource. Interactive whiteboards have been installed in the prep school and are used constructively and to good effect as teaching aids. In the senior school, teachers work innovatively with the resources that are available to them, but both teaching and learning is somewhat limited by the inconsistent quality of the available ICT facilities.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 This is a real strength of the school. The Catholic ethos is instrumental in promoting the growth of pupils as individuals and it is successful in achieving its aim to educate the whole child, giving equal recognition to excellence in the teaching of the spiritual, academic and social aspects of each individual's development.
- 4.3 Spiritual development is excellent. Pupils are self-confident, self-aware and respect themselves and others. They are confident and self-aware. They are highly appreciative of the non-material aspects of life and are emotionally mature for their age. They develop a set of values, principles and beliefs which inform their perspective on life and their patterns of behaviour. They have a good understanding of their own and others' beliefs which are clearly illustrated in pupil-led assemblies.
- 4.4 The pupils' excellent moral development is constantly strengthened, from the concern for support and kindness in everyday matters, to their concern for world poverty and for the planet. 'Class Markets' are popular, where each class sets up a stall, the proceeds of which are used to support local charities, and some charitable events are organised to raise funds for overseas charities. The prep school pupils are very proud of their eco garden. They clearly distinguish right from wrong, based on knowledge of the moral codes of their own faith and culture, and have confidence to act consistently in accordance with their own principles. They show a willingness to express their views on ethical issues and personal values and, through subjects such as history, learn to make responsible and reasoned judgements on moral dilemmas.
- 4.5 Socially the pupils develop very well indeed. They show excellent social confidence and personal skills that will equip them well for the future. They accept responsibility for behaviour, show initiative, and contribute positively to the wider community. In lessons and activities they work successfully, as a member of a group or team. Throughout the school, pupils value the range of opportunities they have to exercise responsibility for others in such roles as prefect, form leaders and deputy form leaders. Older pupils care well for those younger than themselves. The school council has representatives from every form and pupils are involved in discussions which enable them to share views and opinions of others in seeking improvements to the school facilities. The pupils are proud and delighted with their climbing wall which came as a result of this. Pupils understand well the values of democracy, mutual respect and tolerance, but they know less of the rule of law or knowledge and respect for public institutions.
- 4.6 The cultural development of the pupils is excellent. There are opportunities both within and outside the classroom through which pupils see and experience new ideas and cultural differences. Through subjects such as religious education, English and art, they develop an ability to use language and understand images which have significance and meaning in their own and other cultures. Pupils appreciate the achievements of the Western and other cultural traditions.
- 4.7 In the daily life of the school, there is tolerance for those of other beliefs and different cultures and languages are celebrated and enjoyed, as, for example, when in one

assembly girls from different nationalities took it in turn to say parts of the Lord's Prayer in their own language.

- 4.8 By the time they leave the school, pupils have an excellent standard of personal development.

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

- 4.9 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 This excellent standard has been maintained since the previous inspection, and the school meets its aims of affording all pupils the opportunity to be part of a community where individual worth is recognized and a strong family atmosphere and spirit of collaboration are promoted.
- 4.11 The staff are proud that, because of the small class size, they know the pupils extremely well. They are caring and compassionate in providing appropriate guidance and support aimed specifically at each pupil's needs. Relationships amongst staff and pupils and pupils themselves are excellent. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and in the school in general is of a very high standard, showing consideration for other members of the community. Pupils suggested that bullying rarely occurred and that if it did it would be dealt with speedily. School records show that any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with constructively.
- 4.12 The kitchen staff work hard to provide nutritious and tasty food which encourages healthy eating habits amongst the pupils. There is a wide choice of hot meals and lighter fare, which also caters for pupils with specific dietary needs. As well as regular exercise being part of the curriculum, pupils are encouraged to take extra-curricular activities, such as being coached for tennis.
- 4.13 In a pupil questionnaire, a small percentage of pupils did not think that the school listened to their opinions, but inspectors found that the school council is a democratic mouthpiece for pupils, and is successful in voicing pupils' ideas and initiatives. A worry box, which has just been introduced, is proving popular as a less formal way of gathering pupils' opinions.
- 4.14 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.15 In the pre-inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents said that their children are well looked after in school.

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

- 4.16 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.17 Throughout the school, highly effective procedures for promoting the welfare of the pupils, including child protection, contribute to the pupils' personal development and the fulfilment of the school's aims. All staff receive regular training in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, and the designated safeguarding lead is additionally trained in inter-agency working. Safeguarding is on the agenda of all meetings of staff and governors and so all are aware of emerging issues or new regulations. New staff have a good induction into relevant procedures, and all staff have a secure

understanding of the safeguarding policy, which is thoroughly prepared and regularly reviewed.

- 4.18 Health and safety procedures are adhered to rigorously and are in evidence in day-to-day practice and thorough well maintained records of practice. Effective measures are in place to reduce the risk from fire, and fire evacuation drills take place regularly. As appropriate, risk assessments are prepared for facilities, trips and activities and good site management maintains a thorough over-view of the site.
- 4.19 Unwell or injured pupils are well cared for in a suitable room in the prep school, but there is no similar provision for senior school pupils. Sufficient staff are well trained in first aid, some to a high level including paediatric care. Staff are well informed about individual pupils' needs and conditions, including any relating to SEND, and pupils are looked after with great care.
- 4.20 The admission and attendance registers are maintained correctly and are stored, as required, for three years.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding education**

- 4.21 The quality of boarding education is excellent.
- 4.22 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. The boarding house has been open for five terms and in that short time the boarding staff have worked very hard and successfully to create a home from home, thus meeting their aims, and also creating for the boarders a sense of family which is greatly valued. The girls are happy, confident and friendly, willing and able to enjoy discussions. They have excellent constructive relationships with each other and with the boarding staff. Within the house and the school, the boarders' individuality is respected and different cultures and traditions are enjoyed, as, for example, when a group of day girls were invited into the boarding house to celebrate Chinese New Year. There are several formal opportunities for girls to voice their ideas, as for example the house meetings and school council. However, in a small community, girls are confident to ask questions and give their opinions.
- 4.23 A comprehensive guide for new boarders is available on the website, and when they arrive at the school the helpful induction programme is delivered by the boarding staff and senior pupils, with a substantial input from the EAL department. Excellent language and learning support are in place to give extra help to girls in the house and during the school day. Girls are aware of outside agencies and the Independent Listener to whom they can turn for support and advice, but cannot imagine they would ever need to do so with all their friends and such caring staff available in the house.
- 4.24 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. The boarding house is a detached building five-minutes-walk away from the main campus. It has been imaginatively transformed from its original purpose to provide superb accommodation with all modern conveniences while still retaining the elegance and charm of the original building. An effective wireless network is available in the house which is sensibly restricted, but through which girls are able to contact family and friends and gain information from the outside world. At the time of the inspection, each girl had her own room which gave ample opportunity to personalise, some doing so with great creativity. The very well equipped kitchen and brightly furnished, comfortable common room are assets which are greatly appreciated. The house is warm and well lit, with a high quality of bathroom and shower fittings affording

suitable privacy. In questionnaires, all the girls said they feel safe in their boarding house. Within the house an en-suite medical room is used for any girl who is unwell. Boarders' medical needs are cared for by the house staff who are trained first aiders. Staff make appointments with a local doctor and dentist if necessary. Homely medicines are stored in a locked cupboard and proper procedures are in place and observed for dispensing these to girls when needed. Girls may self-medicate and their confidentiality is respected.

- 4.25 Risk assessments are in place and their conclusions are acted upon. Girls' safety is a priority and they are accompanied on their walk to the main school for breakfast, and also on their return after supper. They do not return to the house during the day. Safety checks on the premises and fire precautions are regular and effective, and fire drills are carried out regularly in boarding hours.
- 4.26 During the week, girls eat three meals a day in the school dining room and enjoy the varied, tasty and nutritious food, with special diets and allergies being catered for. At the weekend, boarders are taken out to restaurants for their main meal each day, with their house staff helping them to cater for themselves in the house for breakfast and supper. Drinking water is labelled and available at all times, and girls all have access to a very generous provision of snacks during the evening and at weekends. Laundry is mainly done by staff in the house, although girls can use the washing machine if they wish. Boarders find it easy to buy daily necessities in the local shops, but if necessary, emergency supplies are available from the house staff. Lockable cupboards are available in the rooms.
- 4.27 An extensive and interesting programme of weekend activities is much enjoyed by the boarders, and there are plenty of opportunities for them to become involved in weekly activities in the main school, or crafts and hobbies in the house.
- 4.28 Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent. National Minimum Standards for Boarding schools, including for safeguarding are fully met, implemented and managed effectively at every level. Up-to-date training ensures that staff know the procedures to follow in the event of a girl needing support. Security measures in this off-campus house have been well provided for, and access to the house by visitors is carefully controlled and monitored. Signing in and out rules are followed carefully, and staff know the procedure to follow should a girl go missing. Staffing in the house is generously resourced to ensure constant and effective care of boarders. There are always two members of staff sleeping in the house at night, and girls know who is on duty and how they may contact staff for help at night. Staff accommodation is appropriately separate. Structures that are known and understood by staff and pupils are in place to implement the anti-bullying policy, but with high standards of behaviour and relationships, this has never been necessary.
- 4.29 The effectiveness of leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. A clear statement of boarding principles is evident in the leadership and management of the house, which is committed to self-evaluation and improvement. The housemistress is also head of boarding and attends the meetings of senior leadership when there is a boarding issue. Governors are aware of their boarding responsibilities and visit the house. The housemistress holds regular meetings with the other boarding staff, who feel well supported and informed. There are also formal and informal links with the pastoral and academic sections of the school so that each pupil's progress may be monitored by those who have responsibilities for her. New boarding staff undergo a robust induction, and an effective system of



professional development for boarding staff is in place, with training needs identified as a result. Staff have gained specific skills such as first aid and food handling to ensure high standards in boarding care and practice.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 With enthusiasm and dedicated attention to the school, the governors provide highly effective oversight in line with its aims. The governors are well-qualified in a range of complementary financial and business skills which are used to the advantage of the school and are currently bringing in an educational professional to strengthen that aspect of its work. They understand their role well and have actively sustained the progress and development of the school during testing circumstances associated with organisational restructuring, staff illness and a change of headship. They are now committed to oversight of the school's further development. They discharge their responsibilities for education, finance, accommodation, staffing and resources with noticeable thoroughness, giving careful consideration to the implications of proposed developments, and are ready to grasp hard or necessary decisions, or to initiate necessary changes.
- 5.3 The governing body shows considerable willingness to be interested in the school and derive good insight into the working of the school through planned and occasional visits. Most support pupil performances and similar activities, but they also visit the school, to see it in action during a normal working day. A few get into the school on a regular basis and are able to provide support, for example in accompanying a pupil group on a visit, or discussing and reviewing curriculum with members of staff. Staff know the governors well and welcome their contribution. Such insight provides governors with the opportunity and ability to provide regular support and challenge to the leadership and management and makes a helpful contribution to the new head in taking up her role in the school.
- 5.4 The governing body is well advised on its regulatory responsibilities and effective in discharging those for child protection, welfare, and health and safety throughout the school, including the annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school, which is undertaken by the governing body as a whole.

### **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, carers and guardians is good.
- 5.6 Leadership and management are effective at all levels, in line with the school's aims, and responsibilities for the implementation of policies and safeguarding are correctly discharged. The leadership of the school has changed this term with the appointment of a new head who has started to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the school but, judiciously, has set about understanding the school before any main moves to alter or improve. Despite an interim of a term, when the previous head retired, she inherits a school in which the educational direction of the school is clear and its aims are successfully promoted. Management of curriculum has been maintained and performance data is well reviewed to enable thorough and consistent tracking of pupil attainment and progress. Nevertheless, management roles and responsibilities are not always clearly defined. In the prep school, recent

reorganisation has been thoughtfully restructured to create clear lines of responsibility that are making for improved communication and effective coordination and oversight. In the senior school, these lines are not well defined and most staff operate within their subject area, often without reference to any other colleagues and do not work within clearly defined lines of responsibility for coordination and exchange across the curriculum. Throughout the school, and at all levels, the teaching staff is characterised by a close knowledge of the pupils and a shared belief in the essential ethos of the school to inspire pupils' personal ambition and success.

- 5.7 The school improvement plan, due for review, identifies key and appropriate issues for development ranging from raising of achievement to improving community engagement. Much has been achieved and the school's leadership has already made a good start to the review, in consultation with staff and governors. Prudent financial management, in line with the development plan, has allowed for the development and improvement of facilities to enhance educational provision.
- 5.8 Established procedures have secured high quality, appropriately qualified staff. A good range of professional development has been undertaken by staff. Safeguarding is a priority of leadership and management and has been included both in whole staff training, in the induction of new staff and as a regular agenda item for meetings of staff and governors. Maintenance of the single central register of appointments is up to date and accurate.
- 5.9 The school maintains excellent links with parents who are highly appreciative of all features of the school, but above all for the warm, family atmosphere and the high levels of individual support which their children receive.
- 5.10 Parents value the ease of communications between them and the school. The school produces a termly newsletter and in addition regularly keeps parents informed electronically. Emergency information is posted on the school's website and the school phone. Parents of younger children have daily contact with school through the communication diaries and also have daily opportunities to meet with teachers. Those with older children are welcomed into school to discuss any problems as soon they arise. The school also uses social media platforms. There are a series of parents' evenings throughout the year which parents find valuable, in addition to the regular full and intermediate reports which are extremely informative about their children's work and progress. The school provides detailed information to parents and prospective parents about its policies and procedures.
- 5.11 Parents new to the school receive a warm welcome and all parents are encouraged to participate in school life. The Parents' Association is very active and organises numerous events, such as discos, fairs, and ladies evenings, to raise funds for the school. Among other projects, these have been used to refurbish the senior library, improve the nursery play area, build the eco garden and the climbing wall. Parents are encouraged to volunteer to help in school with events such as careers advice, trips and sporting events, and they give loyal support in many ways. The pre-inspection parents' questionnaire revealed high levels of satisfaction with the way the school fulfils all its aims. Parents are welcomed into school if they have a concern and the school has thorough and speedy procedures to deal with any incident. These procedures are readily available to parents should the need arise. The complaints procedure is clearly promulgated but has not been invoked for many years.

**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 provision is outstanding in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend throughout the setting. Rich opportunities are provided for children of all ages to investigate and learn at individual levels. Younger children and babies listen attentively and start to develop concentration, early speech and their physical skills. Older children increasingly use their imaginations, speak fluently and start to express their ideas clearly. Older children are also encouraged to use phonics when practising early reading and writing skills so that by the end of Reception they write simple words and sentences correctly and read confidently. Resources are good and are used imaginatively, for example in Reception when children discussed and experimented how to make a shelter for a large soft toy from the varied range of games and resources stored outside.
- 6.2 There is a careful mix of activities led by adults and those developed by children. Staff are skilled and use stimulating information and questions which capture children's interest so they make rapid progress in their understanding. Staff often use children's interests as a starting point such as a large wheeled toy up on a ramp for children to investigate and which led to valuable imaginative play about motoring problems for both boys and girls.
- 6.3 The quality of provision for children of all abilities is outstanding. The most able children are challenged appropriately while simpler tasks and more adult support are provided for children with SEND and EAL. For example, an activity in Reception which required the most able children to identify independently the number of sounds in short words such as "shirt", was adapted for the rest of the group to do the same but beginning with words composed of single sounds and with adult support.
- 6.4 Adults have thorough knowledge of the EYFS curriculum and they work as close knit, effective teams in each part of the setting. Thorough assessment is used to plan appropriate activities and children's learning journeys make valuable records of their progress and are shared with parents who also make contributions. Strategies such as searching questions and detailed information, challenge and delight children so that they think carefully and learn rapidly both with adult support when very young and increasingly independently as they grow older. For example, a delightful session where babies were encouraged to look at their reflections led to deep concentration then crows of laughter and a wish to look again and again.
- 6.5 Staff work closely with parents who appreciate the loving family atmosphere and the way staff treat each child as a valued individual, promoting both the pastoral and the academic development of each child in their care. They feel well informed about what their children do at school.

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

- 6.6 The contribution of provision to the children's well-being is excellent. Each child has a key worker and children respond positively to them, displaying mature relationships and exemplary behaviour both in their work and at play. The

atmosphere in the rooms for younger children is serene and loving while, where there are older children, it is often buzzing, purposeful and fun. Everywhere children feel happy and are confident to try new activities and to work increasingly independently.

- 6.7 Staff understand the importance of keeping children safe and secure. Children know that exercise makes them hot and that fruit and vegetables are good for them, and they enjoy the healthy snacks and lunches provided for them. They understand that washing hands is important and they become increasingly able to manage their own hygiene. The requirement of the previous Ofsted inspection, that the younger children's hands should be routinely cleansed after nappy changing, has been implemented.
- 6.8 The setting pays great attention to ensuring that children have a smooth and happy experience when arriving at school and that transition from one room to another is accomplished painlessly.

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

- 6.9 Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors take a knowledgeable and active role in supporting and promoting the success of the EYFS. Safeguarding and the welfare of children are paramount for all staff and the requirements are all met. Policies are up to date and are well implemented. Staff receive regular training in child protection matters and procedures are well understood. Systems have been put in place to monitor the educational programmes, clarify priorities and ensure that improvements are implemented. Staff discuss their professional development regularly and have opportunities to attend relevant courses. Expertise is shared and valued at regular staff meetings which strengthen the sense of being part of a team. The development plan is detailed and appropriate with clear and relevant aims.
- 6.10 Much has been achieved since the previous inspection, such as the development of nursery facilities for very young children and improvements to outside provision, and the leadership team is keen to continue to move the setting forward. A regulatory requirement still to be implemented fully is the provision of a trained SENCO which the senior management team has started to put in place. The setting has close relationships with parents, and values the advice given by external agencies when needed.

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

- 6.11 The quality and standards in the EYFS are excellent. All children make rapid progress in relation to their abilities. In the two rooms for babies, children quickly learn to trust and love their key worker and then the rest of the team. Their physical skills, understanding and early speech develop well and they play happily beside other children. By the end of Reception most children have achieved the early learning goals in all areas of learning and some exceed them. They confidently use phonics to read and write simple sentences. Their speech is fluent and well developed. They count accurately and understand that, for example, five pennies are the same as a five pence piece. They understand the need for common starting points when investigating, for example that to compare lengths the items must be placed on a level base. All children including those with SEND, EAL and the most able are given tasks that challenge them appropriately.

- 6.12 All children are happy, extremely confident and eager to learn. Children's behaviour is exemplary throughout the setting and kindness to others is a strong feature of the mature relationships that develop between the children and towards the adults who care for them. From a young age children show increasing willingness to work independently or to co-operate sensibly together.
- 6.13 Safeguarding requirements are met fully and leadership and management are highly effective in analysing practice and in ensuring further improvement where needed.

### **Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

- 6.14 In order to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006, those responsible for the registered provision must:
- identify a member of staff as SENCO.

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