



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ST MARY'S SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Mary's School

Full Name of School	St Mary's School
DfE Number	881/6008
Registered Charity Number	309266
Address	St Mary's School Lexden Road Colchester Essex CO3 3RB
Telephone Number	01206 572544
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Email Address	info@stmaryscolchester.org.uk
Principal	Mrs Hilary Vipond
Chairman of Governors	Mr John Pendle
Age Range	3 to 16
Total Number of Pupils	381
Gender of Pupils	Girls 3 to 16; Boys 3 to 4
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 28 5-11: 108 11-16: 245
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Emma Stanhope
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	30 Sep 2014 to 03 Oct 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 January 2011.

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 members of staff and with the deputy chair of governors and one other governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sheila Hayward	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Penny Austin	Team Inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Mrs Pamela Evans	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, GSA school)
Mrs Pamela Hutley	Team Inspector (Headmistress, ISA school)
Mr Adrian Meadows	Team Inspector (Headmaster, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Vivien Sergeant	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Rosamund Walwyn	Co-ordinating Inspector for EYFS

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Mary's School is a day school for girls from the ages of three to sixteen and for boys from three to four. It aims to offer a focused academic education and to support all pupils with a wealth of opportunities to stretch them intellectually, creatively and physically, and as they develop into young adulthood. It seeks for girls to become balanced and civilised young women who can be themselves, thrive and achieve, are articulate, enjoy acquiring knowledge and skills, are interested in other cultures, and are prepared to invest thought, time and energy for the benefit of others.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1908, and moved to its present site in Colchester in 1923. In 1983 the Lower School, for pupils up to the age of eleven, was moved to a new site three miles further out of Colchester. The school was initially privately owned but became a registered charity with a board of governors in the mid-1920s. The current principal was appointed in September 2006, along with a number of other senior staff. Initially, the Kindergarten was managed by an outside agency on St. Mary's behalf and in September 2013 St Mary's took the management in house.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 381 pupils. The Lower School comprised 136 pupils, of whom 28 children aged 4 to 5 were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). In the Senior School there were 245 pupils from the ages of 11 to 16. A number of pupils leave at the age of 11 to move to maintained selective schools in the area; the remainder leave at the age of 16, with the great majority moving to maintained schools or sixth-form colleges.
- 1.4 In the Lower School the ability profile is above the national average, with most pupils having ability that is at least above average. The ability profile of the Senior School is above the national average overall, with some pupils in each cohort having ability that is well above average.
- 1.5 Pupils are drawn from a broad range of backgrounds, including many from professional and business families. The majority are of white British origin, with a mix of other ethnic backgrounds represented. Pupils are admitted to the Lower School following informal assessment and into the Senior School following written tests in English, mathematics and reasoning. The school identifies 27 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 43 receive specialist support for their learning. Three pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) but do not require special support for their learning.
- 1.6 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 quality of the pupils' academic achievements and learning is good. The outcomes for children in the EYFS are excellent. By the end of their time in the EYFS most children are performing at expected levels and a significant number are exceeding national expectations. Pupils are well educated, and the school is successful in meeting its aims for them to become balanced and civilised and to enjoy acquiring knowledge and skills. Throughout the school pupils are enthusiastic learners. In Years 1 to 6, pupils build on the secure foundations established in the EYFS and develop solid literacy and numeracy skills. Older pupils demonstrate good levels of information and communication technology (ICT) skills in a variety of subject areas. Pupils' progress, including those with SEND and the more able, is good in relation to national age-related expectations. Their achievement is supported by a suitably broad curriculum that includes a sustained programme of modern foreign languages and maintains an emphasis on creative aspects. The programme of extra-curricular activities offers an outstanding range of opportunities both in and outside school that add considerably to pupils' learning. Much of the teaching is excellent and engages and motivates pupils, who thrive on opportunities to develop their own learning. It usually recognises pupils' differing abilities, although sometimes lacks variety in the level of tasks that are set, particularly for the more able.
- 2.2 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent, as is the quality of pastoral care. In the EYFS the children play very well together and they have an excellent understanding of each other's needs. The school's aims permeate its daily life and contribute greatly to the educational experience enjoyed by all pupils. The pupils feel valued. They are confident in themselves and self-aware, and care greatly about non-material aspects of life and the needs of others less fortunate than themselves. The school councils enable pupils to have their say and initiate improvements. Pupils' successes and achievements are celebrated. Pupils' moral development is excellent and they demonstrate a strong sense of right and wrong. Responsibility is cheerfully accepted. By the time they leave, pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils develop an excellent understanding and awareness of other cultures. They confirm that staff are fair in their use of rewards and sanctions and are confident that any bullying would be dealt with swiftly and fairly. The system of pastoral care is well defined and appropriately focused on pupils' needs and development.
- 2.3 The governing body provides effective oversight of all sections of the school, including the EYFS, and fulfils its responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. It has good insight into the working of the school, and offers support and stimulus for growth and improvement. Governors are effective in discharging their responsibilities for statutory requirements, including the annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school. Although academic management roles and responsibilities are not clearly understood by all members of staff, at all levels of responsibility the leadership and management of the school are effective, in accordance with the school's aims. Clear educational direction is reflected in the quality of the pupils' education and the high standard of their personal development, and in safeguarding. Leadership and management are effective in self-evaluation, setting priorities and ensuring that they are achieved.

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) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Further clarify and communicate academic management roles and responsibilities to all members of staff.
2. Share the considerable excellent teaching expertise to extend the most effective practice throughout the school.
3. Within lessons further develop the extension, stimulation and challenge of the more able pupils through well-planned and appropriate activity that recognises their potential.

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 good.
- 3.2 The outcomes for children in the EYFS are excellent. The children enjoy exploring and investigating, and are able to be creative and to think critically. Children in the Nursery learn to recognise letters and numerals, create a timeline to plan and predict the day's activities, and record the day's date and weather. In Reception, children can count accurately to 20 and beyond, and many can write simple sentences, with some accurate punctuation. By the end of their time in the EYFS, most children are performing at a level in line with expectations and a significant number are performing at higher levels than those expected nationally. All children, including those with SEND or EAL, make excellent progress relative to their starting points, with many exceeding expectations.
- 3.3 In Year 1 to 11, pupils are well educated. The school is successful in meeting its aims to develop pupils who are self-confident, articulate, balanced and civilised, and who enjoy acquiring knowledge and skills. Throughout the school pupils are enthusiastic learners, able to reason and apply their understanding to a range of situations. They enjoy using their skills in investigations and problem solving when the opportunity is given. Older pupils demonstrate good levels of ICT skills in a variety of subject areas, using technology with confidence and creativity. Pupils show secure literacy and numeracy skills, achieving highly in lessons and external mathematical challenges. They show a flair for literacy and demonstrate a mature and empathetic command of language. Senior pupils demonstrate high levels of creative expression through drama. Outside the classroom they achieve well in music examinations and a variety of subject-related areas. They show a high standard of artistic ability, which they have used to great effect in their wearable art fashion show and other local exhibitions. The pupils' physical ability is well developed through an effective and wide-ranging programme of curricular and extra-curricular provision. They enjoy sport, in which they experience success, for example in reaching the county finals in cross-country running. In the last academic year, 20 per cent of Year 6 pupils gained places at local selective grammar schools and a significant proportion achieved places at selective sixth-form institutions.
- 3.4 Pupils with SEND or EAL are well supported and achieve in line with their peers. Within a programme of support for those identified as particularly able, and/or talented, which includes an extensive range of quality enrichment activities, pupils achieve well. Younger pupils are members of the Children's University, in which a number achieved top awards within the region for their participation and commitment in activities inside and outside school.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at the age of seven were above the national average for maintained primary schools, and in 2012 to 2013 were well above the national average for maintained primary schools. Results in national tests at the age of eleven were well above the national average for maintained primary schools, and in 2013 results in reading were exceptional. Results at GCSE level have been good in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools.

- 3.6 These levels of pupils' attainment, as shown by inspection evidence and standardised measures of progress, indicate that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability.
- 3.7 The pupils demonstrate an enjoyment of their learning and are invariably enthusiastic and well behaved. They work well during lessons and are very supportive of each other, celebrating each other's achievement in class. The presentation of work is generally excellent.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.9 In the EYFS classes the broad and balanced curriculum is carefully planned to make excellent provision for the seven areas of learning and include opportunities for the children to express themselves, develop their interests and skills, and meet all their different needs. A recommendation from the previous inspection to further develop the outside area and fully realise its potential for learning has been met.
- 3.10 Throughout the rest of the school, the curriculum provides pupils with a range of experiences across the required areas of learning and is well matched to pupils' varying abilities. The curriculum takes account of a variety of links across subjects, with opportunities in the creative curriculum being particularly broad and effective. As a result, the pupils develop effective knowledge, skills and understanding in accordance with the aims of the school.
- 3.11 A particular focus is placed on languages. The innovative curriculum allows pupils to study a breadth of languages, starting with French in Year 1. From Year 6, pupils have increasing experience of Spanish, Italian and German, as well as French, which lays good foundations for their choice of examination subjects in Years 10 and 11.
- 3.12 Outdoor exploration in a woodland environment provides curriculum opportunities for physical activity, with pastoral discovery for pupils from Years 1 to 6, but the outcomes of these activities are not sufficiently evaluated to ensure that planning builds on previous learning and promotes the progress that the pupils make. A broad range of subjects can be studied at GCSE level, with options built around pupils' preferences, and online learning extends their choices.
- 3.13 In Years 1 to 6, the development of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme in conjunction with philosophy is largely in its infancy but in Year 6 pupils benefit from a course in which they are taught about safety topics, including e-safety, traffic and rail aspects, drugs and alcohol. In the Senior School, the provision for PSHE is extremely well organised around specialist teaching and includes a range of appropriate topics. All pupils in Year 10 complete an online accredited Health and Safety in the Workplace course.
- 3.14 Pupils benefit from a detailed careers programme throughout the Senior School which covers post-16 choices, as well as future careers. Former pupils regularly return to talk about their career plans. Pupils are involved in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network events and Women in Construction events in the region.
- 3.15 Curriculum planning is generally of good quality, although in the Lower School some curriculum units in subjects lack detail. The school development plan is a key tool in

curriculum development and targets a range of appropriate and achievable aspects of curricular provision.

- 3.16 The school makes excellent provision for pupils with SEND. Class and subject teachers are supported by a range of strategies, including personal learning programmes, which are regularly reviewed, updated and assessed. Pupils are prepared well for moving to Year 1 and transfer at Year 6.
- 3.17 Extra-curricular provision is of a high standard. Throughout the school, a very wide range of activities covers all aspects of learning, especially in creative, dramatic and musical pursuits. Participation levels are exceptionally high. Many girls from the Lower School 'graduated' from a university scheme that credits the hours pupils spend participating in extra-curricular activities. A good number of pupils throughout the school take part in sports fixtures, especially cross-country running in the Lower School and netball in the Senior School, as well as participating in frequent music, drama and fashion shows. Older senior pupils participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme at bronze level and can follow a sports leadership course.
- 3.18 The Lower School visit to the Houses of Parliament, to demonstrate British democracy at work, is one of an extensive number of visits that widen pupils' educational experience throughout both sections of the school and enhance the curriculum.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.19 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.20 In the EYFS, teacher-led activities successfully promote children's learning in all seven areas. Enthusiastic and dedicated staff provide a wealth of activities that stimulate the children's curiosity and instil a love of learning. Extremely thorough systems are in place for observation and assessment. The environment, both indoors and outside, is extremely well organised and resourced to facilitate many opportunities for independent learning and investigation.
- 3.21 In the rest of the school, a significant amount of the teaching is excellent. It reflects the school's aim to enable each pupil to enjoy the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Since the previous inspection the school has introduced various new strategies aimed at meeting the needs of pupils of all abilities: more challenge is now being given to the more able in many lessons, but this is not yet universal. In some instances work to extend their learning is limited in its scope.
- 3.22 Teachers have secure and extensive subject knowledge. In the best lessons they have high expectations of the pupils, which make a good contribution to their progress. Highly effective use of targeted and open-ended questions is a positive feature of many lessons, and encourages the pupils to think independently and to apply their knowledge. In some subjects and year groups, particularly in the Senior School, ICT is widely and very profitably used to enhance the teaching and to benefit the pupils' learning. For example, pupils were observed recording photographic evidence on a handheld device to identify changes within an experiment.
- 3.23 Teaching is based on teachers' excellent knowledge of their pupils. Several instances of excellent planning were observed, with a range of tasks being set to accommodate the differing abilities of the pupils, though in a few lessons there was a lack of variety in the level of these tasks, particularly for the more able. Teachers

are very conscious of provision for pupils with SEND; they take great care to meet their needs and to support these pupils in their lessons. Teachers provide pupils with clear learning objectives, and useful plenary sessions are a feature at the end of lessons. In a very few lessons observed the pace was too slow, but for the most part it was brisk and time was well used, so the pupils' interest and concentration were maintained throughout. In the best lessons observed, there were both variety in the tasks set and much pupil involvement, thereby giving the pupils many opportunities to participate actively.

- 3.24 The libraries are attractive, welcoming and well-stocked resources. Senior pupils are actively encouraged to expand their reading levels and material through the school's very good 'Passport to Reading' scheme. Pupils enjoy using the internet to find out information in support of their learning.
- 3.25 Teaching invariably fosters pupils' interest, and lessons are lively and stimulating. Pupils are regularly encouraged to contribute their thoughts and ideas to lessons and many opportunities are given for pair and small group work. Pupils use these opportunities very positively and with enjoyment. Relationships between teachers and pupils are relaxed but respectful and they make a significant contribution to the good levels of achievement in lessons. Attractive and well-presented displays, often of pupils' work, are a prominent feature of the school.
- 3.26 Assessment procedures help to identify individual pupils' needs and this information is well used by the teachers in their lesson planning. Formal ongoing use of target setting is not widespread, other than in reports, but some teachers in the Lower School successfully use this either within their comments in marking or by asking pupils to generate their own ideas. The school has recently reviewed its assessment scheme for senior pupils, and has introduced an effective in-house 'steps to success' progress measure, which is still to be fully embedded and used consistently. In the best examples seen, lesson outcomes were incorporated into the new scheme and pupils used the charts to track their own progress. Across the school, lower attaining pupils are well supported in lessons by their teacher or classroom assistants as appropriate. Available national baseline data is not always used to communicate academic targets to the more able pupils. Marking is usually thorough and in line with the school's policy. Pupils understand the codes used and much appreciate the detailed comments that often accompany a piece of marked work.

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 In the EYFS, the children play very well together and they have an excellent understanding of each other's needs. They learn to use good manners, share, take turns and use basic courtesies such as 'please' and 'thank you'. Reception children visit a local church for special occasions such as Harvest Festival and Christmas carol services, and participate in assemblies where they become familiar with many hymns and learn to sing The Lord's Prayer. All EYFS children learn to respect each other's differences.
- 4.3 In Year 1 to 11, the pupils' strong spiritual development is fostered and encouraged by the ethos of the school, in fulfilment of its aims for girls to be themselves, thrive and achieve. Pupils develop as confident, talented and educated young women who are ready to make a difference in the world around them. The school engenders pupils' appreciation of Christian values whilst welcoming and respecting members of other faiths and those of no faith. Pupils take an active role in the planning and provision of regular assemblies. Assemblies offer excellent opportunities for the celebration of holidays such as Harvest Festival, and of pupils' successes and achievements. In the Lower School, pupils demonstrate a sense of awe and wonder in creation as they play in their scenic woodland surroundings, often finding time for stillness and reflection.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral development is excellent. A clear ethos of mutual respect and trust exists throughout the school, which contributes significantly to the strong sense of community. Pupils are extremely polite, courteous and well mannered, and they are sensitive to each other's needs. Pupils are aware of the needs for laws within society and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. From PSHE, religious education and history lessons, pupils derive insight and have opportunities to discuss issues such as racial prejudice and discrimination. In geography and textiles lessons, they gain an understanding of sustainability and fair trade.
- 4.5 Pupils' social development is particularly marked by the warmth of relationships, which they value, treating each other and all staff with mutual respect. Pupils demonstrate impeccable behaviour towards visitors and are extremely welcoming. At all levels throughout the school, they accept responsibilities readily and develop strong leadership skills. Pupils have a wide range of responsibilities, including as playground assistants for younger children, as part of the 'Eco' team, as charity representatives or as head girls. Older pupils are exceptional role models for younger pupils; they act as 'listeners' and they are exemplary ambassadors for the school. Pupils of all ages work together very effectively in creative activities and team sports. Pupils demonstrate genuine concern for those less fortunate than themselves through a strong commitment to the school's programme of charitable efforts, raising funds for local good causes such as a harvest collection for the homeless. For many roles, pupils are democratically elected and pupils are aware of British institutions and their associated values.
- 4.6 Pupils' excellent cultural development is marked by their very good appreciation of and respect for Western traditions and other cultures, learning about world faiths and celebrating festivals such as Chinese New Year. All pupils benefit from widespread musical experiences, many participating in the school choirs and orchestra, and

having opportunities to perform at festival concerts. Within their art lessons pupils display imagination, creativity and high standards of skill. Pupils respond eagerly to the opportunities provided by the many school visits and by foreign travel and exchange trips, from all of which they derive a rich diversity of cultural experience.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of the arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 In the EYFS, key people develop very strong links with children's home environments, and help to ensure that the transitions to and from Nursery and Reception classes are smooth, secure and very well supported. Excellent communication between home and school is nurtured through the use of home-school notebooks and frequent parental visits to the classrooms. Children learn to behave appropriately towards each other, and develop secure attachments and positive relationships with the adults who care for them. They learn to keep themselves and others safe. From the youngest age, Nursery children know to wash their hands before eating to prevent germs spreading. The setting promotes healthy living by encouraging participation in numerous outdoor activities and providing nutritious food.
- 4.9 Strong, effective pastoral systems in both the Lower and the Senior School ensure that high quality support and guidance are provided to all pupils. In their responses to the questionnaires and in discussions with inspectors, girls said that they feel safe and have a member of staff to whom they can turn if they have a concern. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong; pupils appreciate teachers' warmth and approachability. Relationships amongst the pupils themselves are also excellent. The pastoral care routes from form or class teachers to the directors of the Lower or Senior School are clear. Opportunities to discuss any concerns about pupils are frequent in staff meetings, and written records are part of the effective monitoring of the pupils' welfare. Parents are informed about pastoral care at parents' evenings.
- 4.10 Pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles is promoted and all pupils are engaged in regular physical exercise. Younger pupils have many opportunities to play outside and a range of sports clubs is on offer through the extra-curricular programme. Healthy food is promoted in balanced lunch menus, although some Lower School pupils say that portions are small and food is often cold. The variety and choice of food available feature regularly at the senior school council meetings and plans are in place for the caterers to join the next meeting.
- 4.11 Good behaviour is successfully promoted and pupils respect the school rules. Sanctions are set out and used should any instances of misbehaviour occur. The school's policy to guard against bullying works well. Inspectors found that instances of bullying are rare and that the procedures to deal with these are thorough and effective. Initiatives such as the 'buddy' system, which begins at the point of transition into the Senior School, enhance the family atmosphere of the school. The Senior School PSHE department and the appointed Year 11 pupil 'listeners' provide a sensitive, welcome source of support for any pupil.
- 4.12 The school councils are frequently used well as forums for pupils to air their views. Action has been taken on a number of suggestions, including play equipment and fund raising for a new 'friendship bench' in the Lower School. In the Senior School, a change of school uniform was requested and implemented.

4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with SEND.

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

4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.

4.15 In the EYFS, children's welfare is promoted effectively. Throughout the school, the safeguarding of children is carefully promoted in a welcoming and stimulating environment. Some minor adjustments to the safeguarding policy were made during the course of the inspection, to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place and that the policy meets all legal requirements.

4.16 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. The record of requisite procedures and maintenance is thorough. It demonstrates clear understanding of the school's responsibilities in these matters and the use of external advisers where this is considered appropriate.

4.17 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective. They include provision for pupils who are ill, injured or have SEND, and necessary risk assessments. All medicines and first aid are administered appropriately and parents are kept fully informed. Staff are regularly trained and updated, and good links are established with local agencies.

4.18 Attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored. With adjustment during the course of the inspection, the admission register is now compliant with regulations and suitably stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governors provide effective oversight of the school, in line with its aims. They are committed to the progress and realisation of the school's development, and discharge their responsibilities for standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and learning resources effectively. In all of this, they understand their role well and, where necessary, are ready to tackle difficult or key decisions, or to initiate necessary changes. This insight provides them with the opportunity and ability to provide regular support and challenge to the leadership and management. The recent extension of EYFS provision within the school has provided an excellent starting point for the pupils' education and the governors' involvement is effective.
- 5.3 A feature of the governing body is governors' active interest in the school and many of its activities, which gives them a good insight into its operation, and enables them to provide support and stimulus for improvement. The governors are well qualified in a range of complementary educational and business skills that can be used to the advantage of the school. Under a new chairman, they have plans to review their operation and relevant training for all governors is currently planned.
- 5.4 The governing body is effective in discharging its responsibilities for child protection, welfare, and health and safety throughout the school. This includes the annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements, 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 Throughout the school, including the EYFS, the safeguarding of children is carefully promoted in a welcoming and stimulating environment. Staff meet regularly to plan activities, discuss individual pupils' needs and evaluate provision. Appropriate intervention programmes are put in place to support those with SEND or EAL and good links are maintained with the local authority and a variety of support agencies. Appropriate training and professional development are provided for all members of staff.
- 5.7 At all levels of responsibility, leadership and management are effective in achievement of the aims of the school and have effectively responded to recommendations of the previous inspection. Through a consistent approach which is expected of all staff, pupils develop into self-confident, articulate, balanced and civilised young women, who enjoy acquiring knowledge and skills, and are interested in other cultures, and prepared to invest thought, time and energy for the benefit of others. This ensures that pupils feel secure, recognised and valued. Attention to their pastoral needs is exemplary. Over the past two years there has been a reorganisation of middle management roles, and although individuals discharge their delegated responsibilities for implementation of policies and the safeguarding of

pupils, an understanding of their academic leadership role is not yet fully communicated or sufficiently well understood throughout the school.

- 5.8 The senior leadership team provides successful leadership and management, and promotes effective educational direction, as reflected in the pupils' significant achievement at the end of Year 6 and examination performance in Year 11, the outstanding care of pupils and the fulfilment of the school's aims and ethos. The school is led with clear vision and sense of purpose. A wide variety of academic opportunities is planned, and the extensive range of curricular and extra-curricular activities makes for a rich educational experience and a very happy working environment.
- 5.9 Leadership and management throughout the school are effective in self-evaluation, setting priorities and ensuring that they are achieved. Although new management arrangements for the EYFS classes are yet to be fully implemented, there is a shared vision for the future and good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The recent reassignment of management roles in the rest of the school reflects a clear openness to change and continues to be developed. The current development plan is firmly based on identified priorities and carried through into planning, for example by heads of department in the Senior School. This is evident in the current review and development of the assessment scheme, which have involved all members of staff. Appropriate staff training is planned to target significant elements of the development plan, such as the strengthening of ICT, aspects of creative provision and dyslexia awareness.
- 5.10 Management at all levels successfully secures, supports, develops and motivates sufficient high quality staff and ensures their suitability to work with children. It implements effectively the appointment and necessary checks and support of appropriate teachers at every level. All staff, both teaching and non-teaching, provide excellent support in the pastoral care of the pupils. The administration of the school is efficient. Financial resources are well managed to secure appropriate accommodation and resources, in support of the school's educational aims, and to meet the needs of its pupils. A significant contribution to the effective running of the school is made by the non-teaching staff.
- 5.11 Throughout the school, links with parents are excellent and strong partnerships are in evidence. Parents are provided with a wide range of information about the school through the prospectus, handbooks, open days, induction events and coffee mornings. A good range of useful material, including regulatory requirements and information about the life and work of the school, is available to the parents of prospective and current pupils through the school's website. Newsletters and end-of-year magazines include detailed reports of school events and activities, celebrate a wide range of achievements and signal future events.
- 5.12 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children. The school promotes an open and accessible environment where parents are welcomed. They are provided with much information about the curriculum at the start of each year, and are given opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children through activities such as the home learning links for pupils in Years 1 to 6, and invitations to plays, concerts, exhibitions, sporting events and annual prize-giving celebrations. An active Parent Teacher Association organises many social and fund-raising events throughout the year, including an Autumn ball, a quiz evening, golf days and the school fete.

5.13 Reports about pupils' progress are sent home twice a year, and parents are given two opportunities every year to consult with teachers and discuss their children's progress. The school's complaints policy is clear and detailed, and is available for parents on the school's website. No formal complaints have been received within the last three years.

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