



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

FELSTED PREPARATORY SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Felsted Preparatory School

Full Name of School	Felsted Preparatory School		
DfE Number	881/6009		
Registered Charity Number	310870		
Address	Felsted Preparatory School Felsted Dunmow Essex CM6 3JL		
Telephone Number	01371 822610		
Fax Number	01371 822617		
Email Address	prepoffice@felstedprep.org		
Headmistress	Mrs Jenny Burrett		
Chair of Governors	Mr John Davies		
Age Range	4 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	472		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (268 boys; 204 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 277
	3-5 (EYFS):	41	11-18: 154
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	456	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 35
Number of Boarders	Total:	16	
	Full:	0	Weekly: 16
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	01 Feb 2011 to 02 Feb 2011		
	02 Mar 2011 to 04 Mar 2011		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in January to February 2005.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government 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*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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 31st 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 Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain 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 and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in December 2009 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will 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.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendation(s) for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	7
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	7
(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	8
(c) The quality of boarding education	9
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	10
(a) The quality of governance	10
(b) The quality of leadership and management	10
(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians	11
6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	13
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	13
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	13
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	13
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	14
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	15

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Felsted Preparatory School is a day and boarding school for 472 boys and girls aged 4 to 13. In total, 41 children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and 16 of the older pupils are weekly boarders; other pupils may board for shorter periods. The preparatory school is a partner to Felsted School; together they have a tradition of nearly 500 years. The schools are a charitable trust led by a governing body; a number of governors take a particular interest in the preparatory school. About 35 years ago, the schools became co-educational.
- 1.2 The school takes its pupils from the surrounding area on the Essex-Hertfordshire border and further afield. The school population is mostly of white British heritage, but the cultural diversity of the area is also represented. Most pupils come from professional and business families. Standardised test results and pupils' work indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the national average. At present, two pupils are receiving help with English as an additional language (EAL). Ninety-three pupils are receiving support for mostly mild learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and none has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.3 Felsted Preparatory School aims to educate pupils in a warm and caring environment, where the highest possible standards are set. The school strives to encourage boys and girls to achieve their individual best by gaining appropriate skills and awareness in preparation for the next stage of their education. It sets out to help pupils understand and enjoy the academic and intellectual challenges that they face as well as the social, spiritual, physical, creative, moral, emotional and cultural dimensions of life at school and beyond. The school seeks to encourage and nurture the development of personal faith, consideration, tolerance and respect for the strengths and weaknesses of others, which is consistent with its Christian ethos and foundation.
- 1.4 At the time of the previous inspection in January 2005, the headmistress was newly appointed. Since then, the school has worked to improve the quality of its provision, in particular the professional skills of staff. Accommodation has improved with the addition of a new sports hall, and a new building for the pre-prep is presently under construction.
- 1.5 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 pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills is excellent. Literacy and numeracy skills are very high and from an early age the pupils are articulate and numerate. They use their skills well across the curriculum. Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils come to lessons with an eagerness to learn. The school provides an excellent curriculum that is broad and balanced, and carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils. It is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The quality of teaching is excellent. It is always meticulously planned to meet the differing needs of pupils, although there is some inconsistency of practice in lessons. Comprehensive and thorough assessments are used well to plan each lesson. The needs of pupils with LDD or with EAL are very well provided for and they make excellent progress. At present, however, target setting for pupils is not sufficiently clear and information not fully disseminated.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent and they show well-developed confidence and self-awareness. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Older pupils become mature and sensitive young people. Awareness of 'green' issues is strong. The school has excellent arrangements to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety within a very happy, caring and inclusive environment. The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. Relationships at all levels are extremely positive, mutually respectful and most supportive. Comprehensive policies ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent. Governors are very well informed about and involved with the school. Leadership and management are excellent and managers at all levels have a clear vision of the direction and ethos of the school. Improvement has been marked in recent years. The highly committed staff have improved the quality of provision so that teaching is now excellent. Rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation by both teachers and pupils have led to pupils' excellent achievement. The facilities and accommodation have improved through major building programmes. All of the recommendations of the previous report have been implemented and all regulatory requirements are met. The school has excellent links with parents and involves them extensively in its life. Parents particularly appreciate the wealth of opportunities in extra-curricular activities, the governance and management of the school, the ease of communication with staff, the range of subjects taught and the quality of pastoral care.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met 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. Share existing excellent practice to more consistently provide excellent teaching.
2. Refine further the arrangements for target setting so that the tutorial targets for each pupil are disseminated to subject teachers to refer to in their marking.
3. Use the outside environment of the EYFS to provide more opportunities for child-initiated learning when the new accommodation is completed.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' overall achievements is excellent and fully meets the school's aims for pupils to achieve the highest individual standards possible. Literacy skills are very high and from an early age the pupils write fluently and imaginatively. Speaking and listening skills are also high and pupils display a wide vocabulary for their age. As they move through the school, pupils learn the techniques of writing for a variety of purposes. In an excellent English lesson for pupils in Year 7, much discussion and co-operative learning took place as pupils explored, in groups and pairs, the persuasive writing of Hardy and Blake.
- 3.2 Number skills are very good and pupils use mental arithmetic well across the curriculum. Older pupils work confidently solving complex mathematical problems with good knowledge and understanding of algebra and geometry. Similarly, pupils enjoy working in science and develop good investigative skills and ability to analyse results. Skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are high and are used productively in other subjects.
- 3.3 In many lessons, pupils have opportunity to extend their learning by using their imagination and initiative, which supports the excellent progress often to be seen. In English, in art displays and in music lessons, examples of pupils' creativity are numerous and of a high standard. Pupils write poetry and stories in a wide variety of styles.
- 3.4 Attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be far above national age related expectations. Standards are considerably higher than those reported at the previous inspection. The pupils make good and often excellent progress in lessons across all subjects. Pupils with LDD are carefully nurtured in their lessons and make excellent progress. Similarly, the most able, and gifted and talented pupils are well provided for and make excellent progress, as do those pupils with EAL. On leaving school, most proceed to the partner senior school.
- 3.5 The development of physical skills is strong and pupils make good use of the many opportunities offered. Individuals and teams representing the school at sports and games achieve high standards at local and regional levels. A very high level of technical ability in sport is seen throughout the range of teams and a number of former pupils have moved on to represent their country internationally. Pupils regularly achieve success in musical instrument grade examinations. Musical opportunities are numerous and include the chapel choir, which is one of several occasions when pupils join with those from the senior school to make music at a high level. Pupils have a good record of playing in national schools orchestras.
- 3.6 Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. Relationships with teachers are supportive and encourage good progress. Behaviour is of a very high standard and pupils come to lessons with an eagerness to learn. They work well individually, in small groups and as a whole class, and welcome frequent opportunities to take initiative. Homework is invariably completed diligently. Pupils are keen to join in the evaluation of their work and achievements.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.7 The school provides an excellent curriculum that is suitably broad and covers effectively all required areas of learning. The curriculum fully supports the aims of the school to challenge pupils across the range of academic and intellectual learning experiences. Since the previous inspection, the school has worked successfully to improve the curriculum, striving to make it more innovative and imaginative in content. The school has focused on developing pupils' critical thinking skills. An effective pupils' leadership programme which encourages all to give their best has also been introduced. The curriculum is carefully planned and monitored to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils of all ages, abilities and needs, including those with LDD or with EAL, and enables them to become fully rounded individuals.
- 3.8 Pupils receive a thorough grounding in English and mathematics, and develop the skills needed to underpin their work in other subjects. Reading is clearly valued and good opportunities are created to channel pupils' enthusiasm for reading, for example in the excellent library Accelerated Reader scheme. ICT is employed to support work across the curriculum and pupils enthusiastically use the internet to research information for work in many subjects. The recommendations in the previous inspection report for both the library and ICT have been fully met and both are now strong elements of the school.
- 3.9 Cross-curricular learning opportunities have been considered when planning schemes of work. Themed days and weeks add to the unique experience given to pupils, and these occasions allow them to try new experiences and broaden their knowledge and understanding of the world. During Book Day, pupils and staff dressed as characters from Greek mythology and sampled Greek food, and lessons covered topics such as Pythagoras.
- 3.10 Pupils are involved in reviewing the curriculum; they are enthusiastic about their learning and eager to discuss what they have learnt and where they will go next. They are encouraged to engage fully in their learning and in Year 6 they take part in the Passport programme that encourages breadth and depth of study. The extra-curricular provision is wide ranging and intensive, and a senior teacher has been appointed to oversee the programme. Opportunities offered to pupils include languages, the arts, chess, cooking and numerous sporting activities. The school and the pupils are proud of their sporting traditions. Pupils initially are expected to try a wide range of activities before choosing to make a commitment to develop their skills further.
- 3.11 The curriculum is effectively supported by numerous links to the community, including the village carnival in which the whole school is involved, and links are made within religious studies and art. The science department has developed a nature trail. Visitors come to support the curriculum; examples include visits from people who provide services, a well-known author speaking to pupils on Book Day and grandparents discussing aspects of the Blitz. Visits are also used to support the curriculum. In history, Year 2 pupils visit the Victorian schoolroom in a local museum, and gifted and talented pupils visited a chemical engineering exhibition as part of their extended science programme.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.12 The quality of teaching is excellent; it is very successful in promoting the pupils' progress and supporting the aims of the school. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and the recommendations from that inspection have been followed up successfully. Assessment information is now used consistently in planning future lessons, and the needs of the more able pupils are always planned for and usually met.
- 3.13 The planning of lessons is a considerable strength of the teaching. Every lesson is planned with awareness of the different abilities of pupils in the class and their needs provided for. The planning of the content, the timing and the methods to be used is consistently detailed and comprehensive.
- 3.14 Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and teach with authority. They ask appropriate questions that prompt pupils to think and respond to challenge, so that they feel successful and rewarded in their learning. Questioning is often rapid and demanding of pupils, who respond with enthusiasm and confidence.
- 3.15 The methods which teachers use engage the pupils' interest and time is managed effectively. The pace of lessons is usually judged well, so that pupils concentrate very well on their work and often remain focused throughout. Pupils have many good opportunities to work independently and to use their initiative. This is particularly evident when they are engaged in evaluating their own work.
- 3.16 Extension work for the most able is planned for most lessons, but at times not put into practice. Pupils with LDD, however, are supported effectively in lessons and in withdrawal sessions, where they work to their individual education plans and make good progress.
- 3.17 The management of behaviour is excellent. It is positive, supportive and encouraging. Teachers help pupils to work together, so that they develop good co-operative and personal skills.
- 3.18 The school is very well equipped with learning resources; they are well organised and of good quality, quantity and range. Teachers make good use of these; this is particularly evident in ICT.
- 3.19 Assessment is regular and thorough; it identifies strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' progress and highlights areas needing development. Marking is of very high quality; it is positive, encouraging, accurate and up-to-date. It provides the pupils and their parents with areas for improvement.
- 3.20 Teachers set targets for their pupils and verbally maintain focus on these. Main targets are noted in the pupils' planners and targets set by subject teachers are written in exercise books. Consequently, some pupils have a large number of targets relating to different areas, which can lead to confusion. At present, most subject teachers do not see the tutorial targets and focus on subject marking.
- 3.21 Nationally standardised tests and progress data are used to evaluate the overall performance of the pupils and to help management to be aware of strengths and shortcomings in the school's provision. The large amount of assessment data gives the school detailed and wide ranging information about all pupils, which is used to track their progress and ensure that they are making consistent improvement. Overall, assessment has improved markedly since the previous inspection.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' personal development is excellent, so that they develop confidence and self-awareness. Older pupils are mature and sensitive young people, happy to take responsibility for themselves and for younger peers. Pupils show a well-developed spiritual awareness. The school has a Christian foundation and pupils frequently contemplate spiritual matters in the chapel and in lessons. They embark on a Lent challenge and think about what this means, and they regard music within the chapel service as an opportunity for quiet reflection. In prayer in the chapel, pupils think about the world beyond the tangible. Older pupils are taught how to plan and lead chapel services. In assemblies, pupils explore spiritual and moral issues, and the need to care for each other.
- 4.2 The pupils display very strong moral attitudes and show exemplary behaviour at all times. They have a keen sense of fairness and of right and wrong. In conversation, younger pupils show an awareness of the consequence of unkind behaviour or of bullying. Mnemonics remind pupils of the school's moral codes and very effectively underpin the school's aims in this respect. Older pupils recognise the need to be responsible for their own behaviour before working with younger pupils. The Leagues (school houses) encourage pupils to work with others from different years and in boarding, younger pupils are mentored by more experienced, older pupils.
- 4.3 Pupils are courteous and mature, and show strong social skills. They are confident with adults and with each other, and work collaboratively very successfully. The leadership programme reinforces pupils' social responsibility to care for others within their community, one of whom commented on how the older pupils always knew them and helped them. Pupils are heavily involved in charitable work, both through the Leagues and their own initiatives. The Green Flag award recognises and involves all pupils in matters of recycling and the reduction of energy consumption. The sustainability projects provide valuable insights into how food is produced.
- 4.4 Cultural awareness is strong in pupils. They are enthusiastic about the range of experiences provided in culturally themed days and weeks, such as the Japanese Day and Africa Week. The depth of study of other cultures in the school has been recognised through a British Council International School Award. Teachers draw upon the experiences of pupils, and a child expressed how his confidence was boosted after preparing and delivering a presentation on his faith to his class; his peers expressed what a valuable opportunity it had been for them. Awareness of western cultures is extended in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. Opportunities to take part in musical activities and productions are numerous and involve large numbers of pupils. Drama and art are strong and thriving in the school and many pupils enjoy those activities, both during and after the school day.
- 4.5 The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) curriculum reinforces the pupils' personal development with a well-structured programme. Pupils appreciate the discussions that they have in PSHCE and feel that the lessons on smoking, drugs and alcohol were particularly informative. Pupils from Year 7, for example, discussed the valuable insight into life presented by a rehabilitated drug addict who visited the school to talk to the children.

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

- 4.6 The school has excellent arrangements to promote the pupils' welfare, health and safety within a very happy, caring and inclusive environment. The staff provide most effective support and guidance for the pupils, in accordance with the school's aims. The standard of provision has improved since the previous inspection.
- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. Close supervision across a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities in an extended day and week ensures that each pupil is known extremely well and valued by all staff. Form teachers oversee academic and personal progress, supported by heads of house who are responsible for sections of the school by age. Any concerns are shared centrally so that necessary support can be put in place quickly.
- 4.8 Procedures for promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying are excellent. Pupils are confident that bullying is of little or no concern to them and know that any bullying or unkindness is dealt with effectively. They say that they can always turn to a range of adults for help if required. There is a strong sense of community throughout the school. Relationships at all levels are extremely positive, mutually respectful and most supportive. Pupils move confidently and happily between lessons and activities.
- 4.9 A wide range of opportunities is used to reward pupils for good work and behaviour; these are wholly understood by staff and pupils, and they effectively promote the pupils' self-esteem. A graduated system of sanctions exists, involving parents and the leadership as required. These are positive in approach but are rarely used.
- 4.10 Comprehensive policies ensure that pupils are effectively safeguarded, and staff, including new and temporary appointments, are appropriately trained in this area. Arrangements to secure staff suitable to work with children are very good, and all staff have been appropriately checked.
- 4.11 All pupils have school lunch and are encouraged to eat healthily. A matron and other staff oversee the meal, ensuring that all pupils eat a full lunch. Lunchtimes are sociable occasions where adults and pupils enjoy eating and talking together. The conduct and table manners displayed by the pupils in the dining hall are exemplary. In the autumn and summer terms, pupils complete a healthy week log, including detail on diet and exercise. This is used to inform and improve pupils' knowledge and actions towards a healthier future lifestyle.
- 4.12 Within the school day and across the full week, pupils enjoy extensive, timetabled opportunity for physical exercise. The facilities and staffing available are plentiful, enabling pupils to experience a range of activities.
- 4.13 Policies and procedures for securing welfare, health and safety are implemented consistently. The admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained and correctly stored, and suitable measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire. An effective plan is in place to improve educational access for any pupils with statements of special educational needs or with other disabilities.
- 4.14 The school has excellent procedures and facilities for first aid and for dealing with pupils who are unwell. All staff are trained in first aid every three years. When necessary, matrons are supported by qualified nurses from the senior school.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.15 The arrangements for boarding are excellent and are improved since the previous inspection. The school provides an excellent experience for both weekly and flexi-boarders, which contributes much to those pupils' education and personal development. The provision fully meets the school's aims.
- 4.16 The extended day for all pupils runs seamlessly into the early evening, making the transition to boarding easier for new boarders. Boarding is not compulsory, but most pupils try flexi-boarding at some point during their time at the school, and this is an excellent preparation for the senior school.
- 4.17 Relationships between staff and boarders, and amongst boarders themselves, are excellent. Older pupils take pride in assisting younger and new boarders, and in helping them to become part of the family unit. Guidelines and rules are drawn up by the boarders as to how the house can run well for all. These are supported by the staff, and engender a sense of responsibility and commitment amongst the pupils.
- 4.18 The accommodation is of high quality; it includes well-equipped social areas and distinct dormitory areas for both boys and girls. The boarding housemaster, deputy housemaster and duty matron reside within the boarding house and can be called upon at night by pupils if required.
- 4.19 Recreational facilities are excellent, and pupils use the safe and well-maintained school site to enjoy a wide range of supervised evening opportunities including sport, art and drama. Good arrangements exist for them to complete their prep.
- 4.20 Staff are well trained and committed. The housemaster is supported by a team of his deputy, matrons, Gap Year students and a rotation of other school staff. The team works very hard to ensure that a family atmosphere pervades and this is greatly valued by the pupils. The boarding houses are well organised and arrangements for flexi-boarding run smoothly.
- 4.21 An Ofsted inspection of boarding in December 2009 graded the overall quality of boarding as outstanding and no recommendations were set.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is excellent. The governors provide excellent oversight of the school in line with its aims and discharge their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, and investment in staff, accommodation and resources.
- 5.2 Governors are very well informed about and involved with the school; some, with an educational background, come on occasions to work with staff and pupils. The structure of committees is well thought through, with regular meetings of sub-committees and the main governing body.
- 5.3 Members of the governing body have had training in safeguarding and safer recruitment. The policy to safeguard children is thorough and well implemented, and staff are appropriately trained. The required central register of staff appointments contains all the necessary information and all staff in the school have been suitably checked. Governors monitor the central register of appointments carefully.
- 5.4 Governance is highly effective in the success of the school, the effective management structures, the quantity and quality of resources, and the excellence of the buildings and setting of the school. Development planning is excellent. It is very detailed and thorough, and sets out a clear strategy for taking the school forward in both the long and short term.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.5 Leadership and management are excellent and have improved since the previous inspection. All of the recommendations of the previous report have been implemented. Pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching have improved and are now excellent. Managers at all levels have a clear vision of the direction and ethos of the school. They ensure that policies are fully implemented and are particularly conscientious about matters of safeguarding and child protection.
- 5.6 The senior team consists of the headmistress, deputy head and senior staff to cover the academic and pastoral provision at each stage of the school. In the last few years, a number of significant developments have been introduced or are in the process of change.
- 5.7 The management and teachers have together developed comprehensive and thorough modes of lesson planning that are used consistently by all teachers. Teaching and the curriculum have been taken forward through rigorous but sensitive monitoring and evaluation, including self-evaluation, of classroom practice. Pupils also have been encouraged to share in the responsibility for their learning through target setting and self-evaluation. All staff show a strong commitment to, and understanding of, learning priorities, and staff development has successfully modified and improved the quality of teaching. Facilities and site development have improved, with a new sports hall, a new pre-prep under construction, and considerable enhancement of ICT facilities and the library. Pupils' books are scrutinised regularly by heads of subject and by the director of learning.
- 5.8 The appraisal of all staff is well established and is used very effectively to raise the quality of the school's provision. Information from appraisal, from lesson monitoring,

from assessments and from scrutiny of work is fed into the school improvement plan and into plans for continuing professional development. The development plan is a strong tool for taking the school forward; it is comprehensive and thorough.

- 5.9 Staff are highly committed to the school and its pupils, and are effective in supporting the caring ethos of the school. All staff are suitably trained for their roles in safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety. Suitable arrangements exist for checking the suitability of staff on appointment. In-service training for all staff is a regular feature and the school is generous in its support for teachers to take part in in-service courses. Support for newly qualified teachers is good and is linked with other independent schools in the area.
- 5.10 The school has very good, well-organised resources. The decoration and maintenance of the attractive buildings and grounds are good and pupils enjoy the learning environment. The administrative, maintenance and domestic staff make a valuable contribution to the life of the school and to the pupils' welfare.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.11 The school has excellent links with parents, carers and guardians, and invites them to become involved extensively and increasingly in its life. Volunteer helpers are welcomed on many occasions and on trips; in the infant library, a parent regularly helps support the sessions when pupils visit to enjoy and borrow books.
- 5.12 A wide range of information is regularly provided through the colourful and very detailed weekly newsletters, the school diary and regularly scheduled information evenings. These keep parents well informed on changes and developments their children will experience as they move through the school. Since the previous inspection, the appointment of a trained admissions registrar has greatly improved the entry procedures to the school. Regular parental surveys and evenings keep parents well updated about their children's progress as well as giving opportunities to share their view about the school. The delightful annual grandparents' days and regular parent classroom visits illustrate how the school welcomes families to join and celebrate the pupils' achievements. A cycle of special information evenings on particular areas, such as safe use of the internet, is also offered.
- 5.13 Through the informative website, parents can access their children's reports, grades and other key information. Written reports of good quality are sent out each term, with progress targets and comments from the class teacher and the headmistress. They are informative and positive, and give good guidance for improvement. Parents are warmly welcomed at many sporting and cultural events, as well as special occasions, and the school is continually exploring ways in which it can further extend and strengthen this relationship. For example, opportunities are provided for parents to come into the school to extend their own experience and learning in classes, workshops and talks on selected topics.
- 5.14 A well-established and very active parents' association contributes to the school in a rich and diverse way. Events such as the Christmas Fair are very well attended and enjoyed by all. They raise considerable sums of money towards resources for the school. Parents also serve on the class parent network, which has been highly supportive and influential in integrating all families into social occasions and bringing new parents into the school family.
- 5.15 Analysis of parents' responses to questions in the pre-inspection questionnaire shows a very high level of satisfaction with the school. Parents particularly

appreciate the wealth of extra-curricular opportunity, the governance and management of the school, the ease of communication with staff, the range of subjects taught and the quality of pastoral care. No significant concerns were raised.

5.16 The school has an appropriate complaints policy. It implements its policies, and handles the concerns of parents promptly and with care.

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) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.1 Overall effectiveness is outstanding. The setting is very effective in meeting the needs of all the children, and provides excellent and appropriate support. Excellent teaching in a nurturing and stimulating environment ensures that all children achieve very good standards in their learning and development. Children's welfare is effectively promoted and thorough safeguarding procedures are in place. Recent self-evaluation reveals a clear vision for future developments and the capacity for sustained improvement.

6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.2 Leadership and management are excellent. Teachers consistently implement policies that promote equality and eliminate discrimination. Children's well-being and safeguarding are of paramount importance to the school and thorough risk assessments are in place. The children's progress is carefully monitored through close communication amongst staff, ensuring that teachers identify clear priorities for improvement, founded in effective self-evaluation. An excellent relationship exists with parents; in the pre-inspection questionnaire, they indicated that they value and strongly support the work of the school. No significant concerns were expressed. Resources are very good and are accessible to the children.

6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. The children respond positively to the warm and welcoming environment and benefit from the excellent facilities. Relationships between children and adults are excellent. Good opportunities are provided for children to engage in their own play activities, although they do not fully take initiatives in their learning. The timetable provides excellent balance and coverage of the Early Learning Goals. The children's welfare is promoted very well indeed. The setting successfully provides a safe environment. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that children are very well cared for. Teachers manage behaviour sensitively, rewarding good work and behaviour. Planning is meticulous and takes account of the needs of the individual child whilst providing challenge for the most able. At present, the scope of outdoor activities is limited; a new building is intended to improve facilities in this area.

6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 6.4 The outcomes for the children are outstanding. Achievement and progress are outstanding. Children are articulate, and participate enthusiastically in speaking and listening activities. They identify letter blends and read words, and most can write their name independently. Many are beginning to develop independent writing skills, for example when describing their nature walk. Children have a good understanding of number and can count confidently to 100. Most are beginning to understand the concept of ordinal numbers and could identify the fifth rabbit in a row. Children's skills and attitudes are excellent. They take responsibility for putting equipment away. They eat their lunches independently and wash their hands regularly throughout the day. Children are aware of the need to make healthy choices about food and they understand the importance of taking regular exercise.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

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 governors, 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

Mr John Ayerst	Reporting Inspector
Mr David Aylward	Headteacher, IAPS school
Mrs Philpa Yugin-Power	Deputy Headteacher, IAPS school
Mr Andy Rowley	Deputy Headteacher, IAPS school
Miss Mary Regan	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector