



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

STROUD SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Stroud School

Full Name of School	Stroud School		
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Headmaster	Mr Alastair Dodds		
Chair of Governors	Mr Geoff Gibbs		
Age Range	3 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	310		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (181 boys; 129 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	66	5-11: 224
	11-13:	20	
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Sue West		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	08 Feb 2011 to 09 Feb 2011		
	09 Mar 2011 to 11 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 May 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 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Stroud School provides education for boys and girls aged from three to thirteen years. It is situated in spacious grounds in the countryside near the market town of Romsey. Founded in 1926, it moved to its present position in 1953. The school became a limited company in 1958. It is privately owned, though administered by a board of governors. The main building, Highwood House, dates from 1850 and over time, further classrooms, specialist rooms and a sports hall have been added. Since the last inspection, a new early years building has opened, as well as an additional classroom for Year 3. Information and communication technology (ICT) facilities have been upgraded to include a new ICT room for the Pre-prep, changing rooms have been refurbished and an initiative to promote learning through outdoor experience in a woodland environment has been adopted in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection visit, the school had 310 pupils on roll, of whom 66 were in the EYFS. The school is non-selective and has a wide cross-section of academic ability, though the overall ability is above the national average. Nursery and Reception children are accepted in order of application. Beyond this age, pupils are informally assessed to ensure that they will benefit from the school's provision. Sixty-five pupils have been assessed as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and of these, thirty-seven receive additional help. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Three pupils receive assistance in learning English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.3 Most pupils come from the surrounding area, within a radius of fifteen miles. Pupils come from mainly professional backgrounds and a range of different nursery schools and playgroups. The majority of pupils who leave at eleven or thirteen years of age move to independent day schools.
- 1.4 The school aims to create a safe environment in which children feel confident, cared for and have the freedom to enjoy their learning in an atmosphere where all members of the community feel valued and respected. It seeks to provide an education of the highest quality, in which children are challenged and encouraged to achieve their potential in all areas - academic, social and moral. The school believes that all children should experience a breadth of opportunities and be encouraged to make the most of their talents and abilities.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence is shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Bees	Reception
Dragonflies	Reception

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 From the EYFS onwards, pupils of all abilities are successful in their learning and personal development. The school fulfils its aim to provide an education of the highest quality in which children are challenged and encouraged to achieve their potential in all areas. Pupils' excellent achievement overall is supported by teaching of high quality within a broad curriculum which includes an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Throughout the school pupils develop strong literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and they are extremely well prepared for their future schools. Pupils' excellent attitudes towards their work are a strong contributor to their success, together with their exemplary behaviour and positive relationships with their teachers.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent and they are confident, articulate and proud of their achievements. Their spiritual awareness is very well developed. Pupils respect each other's views and have a strong moral code and mature sense of social responsibility. Their sense of well-being is supported by the school's committed pastoral care embedded in a family atmosphere, together with careful attention to their welfare, safeguarding, health and safety. Pupils are happy in school and appreciate that it fulfils its aim to accord them a safe environment in which they are confident and feel valued and respected.
- 2.3 Arrangements for governance soundly promote the school's aims. Governors provide informed and committed support to the proprietor but in the past there has been insufficient training to ensure that they are fully aware of all their regulatory responsibilities. Shortcomings in recruitment checks in the past have now been rectified where possible, and appointment procedures for the last eighteen months have been secure. Strong and cohesive leadership and management, which involve all members of staff in setting the school's priorities for development, make a significant contribution to the school's success. The leadership has successfully implemented recommendations from the last inspection in the areas of assessment, monitoring and staff appraisal. Links with parents are excellent and parents express very strong support for most aspects of school life, in particular the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, progress made by their children, pastoral care and the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and good behaviour. A small minority are concerned about provision for children with additional learning needs and would like more information about their children's progress and greater opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school, but inspection findings did not support these views. The school has met all the recommendations from the previous inspection successfully.

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 did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it was required to:
- ensure that all recruitment checks on staff are completed before, or in the case of Criminal Records Bureau checks, as soon as is practicable after, their appointment and entered correctly in the single central register of appointments [Part 4, paragraphs 19(2)(a) and (c) and 22(3)(b) and (4) under Suitability of staff and proprietors, and, for the same reason, under Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b) under Welfare, health and safety].
- 2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all of the above shortcomings, as far as it was possible to do so, as noted in the text of the report.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Develop further the use of assessment information, to ensure that teaching consistently includes tasks matched to pupils' different abilities.
 2. Implement training for governors to support them in their responsibilities.
 3. In the EYFS, implement the planned development of the outdoor area to further enhance outside learning.

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 standard of pupils' achievements and the quality of their learning, attitudes and skills have continued to improve and are now excellent. This fulfils the school's aim to challenge pupils and encourage them to achieve their potential in all areas - academic, social and moral. Throughout the school pupils demonstrate excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum. Pupils with LDD or EAL make good progress according to their abilities through effective identification and additional support.
- 3.2 Priority given to English and mathematics results in high standards in these subjects at all ages. Pupils demonstrate particularly good listening skills and articulate their ideas with confidence and persuasion. High levels of reading fluency and comprehension are evident from an early age. Pupils demonstrate considerable ability in writing for a range of purposes, such as poetry, stories, diaries and factual accounts. They achieve well in numeracy, developing the facility and confidence with calculations to enable them to investigate numbers and solve problems effectively. Competent ICT skills are applied to good effect in many subjects such as English and history. Pupils' imagination and creative abilities are seen in their varied and capable art work, design and technology (DT) projects, music, dance and drama. In many subjects, and encouraged from an early age, pupils are given frequent opportunities to demonstrate exceptional critical thinking and reasoning skills. Most pupils achieve well in challenging tasks in physical education (PE), games and music. Pupils, as they grow older, are especially mature in their ability to evaluate their work perceptively.
- 3.3 The school strongly emphasises achievement of any kind and many instances of success are celebrated in special weekly assemblies. Sports teams have a good record of success against local schools and everyone is given the chance to participate. Individual pupils achieve highly in music, sport and drama, for example in the national under-16 hockey team, the Royal Ballet and in regional theatre. Pupils gain a good number of awards at the primary and junior mathematics challenges. Many pupils receive individual music tuition and their results in instrumental and singing examinations, together with results in speech and drama, are consistently good.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Pupils make rapid progress in the EYFS, so that by the end of Reception they achieve above national expectations for this age. They continue to make good progress so that, by the age of eleven, attainment in national and standardised tests is excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. Scrutiny of work shows that whilst pupils start from a wide range of ability, the consistently good progress of pupils with LDD enables them to significantly raise their attainment by Year 7. The high standards reached by senior pupils following a wide curriculum, allow large numbers to gain entry to selective independent schools at ages eleven and thirteen, with some winning awards each year.
- 3.5 Pupils' achievements are very well supported by their excellent attitudes towards their learning. They organise and present their work well, and work equally well independently or with each other. They are highly motivated and have extremely

positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards learning, demonstrating exceptionally respectful attitudes towards each other and to their teachers.

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

- 3.6 The school's curricular provision has continued to develop since the last inspection and is now excellent. It is broad, well balanced and well suited to the pupils' ages and abilities, achieving the school's aim to enable pupils to enjoy their learning. Since the last inspection, a new ICT suite for Years 1 and 2, and an upgrade of ICT resources in general, has enabled excellent application of the subject across many curriculum areas. The curriculum is well planned throughout the school and each subject is carefully structured to build upon previous learning. The opportunities it provides accord well with the school's aim to offer each child the breadth of opportunity to make the most of their abilities and talents. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects, DT, French and Spanish are included. Pupils of all ages benefit from specialist teaching which, for the younger ones, includes French, PE and music. Provision for art, drama, music and DT fosters pupils' creative development most effectively. The comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is arranged to allow progression of understanding throughout the school. It includes sex and relationships, drugs awareness, healthy living and citizenship, reflecting the school's ethos and contributing strongly to the pupils' personal development. The library is spacious, well stocked and in frequent use by the pupils.
- 3.7 Time allocation of subjects is very well balanced and, although priority is given to acquiring literacy and numeracy skills, other subjects receive good coverage. Effective communication between teachers ensures pupils' moves between year groups are smooth. As children enter Year 3 they are divided into ability sets for English and mathematics, to allow for an appropriate pace of learning. Strong use is made of cross-curricular activities such as the joint history and French residential visit to Normandy. Provision for pupils with LDD is very effective and excellent support is available within or outside the classroom, as is deemed to be appropriate. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides detailed guidance to enable staff to plan appropriate learning activities for pupils with specific difficulties. Good provision for more able pupils means that they are identified, frequently given extension work in lessons and offered extra activities such as 'The Newspaper Club' to provide a suitable level of challenge.
- 3.8 At lunchtime and after school, an excellent range of extra-curricular activities such as sports clubs, riding, art, debating, choirs, orchestra and a wind band is much enjoyed and well supported by the pupils. Work in class is complemented by a wide range of visits and visitors, where a strong practical focus helps to bring learning to life. During the inspection week, the English curriculum was much enriched by a Shakespeare morning for older pupils and a Tudor instrument workshop for Year 4, which afforded useful cross-curricular links between history and music. Residential trips offered from Year 4 upwards, both abroad, such as those to Barcelona and Normandy, and in this country to Ironbridge and Avon Tyrell, provide excellent opportunities for self-evaluation, self-reliance, responsibility and the development of relationships. Sports fixtures provide regular contact with other schools, both maintained and independent. The pupils' educational experience is further enriched through valuable links with the local community, such as when pupils planted snowdrops to enhance Romsey Park and when the wind band visit local primary schools.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.9 Pupils' achievements are supported most effectively by teaching which is of a predominantly good quality, with a high number of excellent lessons seen across the school. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has continued to strengthen and is now a major contributor in helping the school fulfil its aim of providing an education of the highest quality. Teaching allows most pupils, including those with LDD and the gifted and talented, to learn effectively and progress well.
- 3.10 Teachers bring good subject knowledge as well as enthusiasm to their subjects. Consequently lessons are stimulating and engage pupils' interest. Most lessons are characterised by brisk pace and include varied activities with well-judged use of resources. Pupils are trained to make the best use of co-operative learning, particularly in paired work, where they remain focused on the task in hand. Teachers give clear guidance to enable pupils to work independently, and many instances were seen of pupils successfully researching information, taking notes and presenting their findings confidently. Skills in ICT are developed progressively and used frequently for research or to present information in many subjects, especially as older pupils develop sufficient competence to work independently. Teachers make effective use of praise which motivates pupils to further effort. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive and pupils are confident that they make good progress due to the help and advice they receive from them. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to give additional support to groups of pupils and to individuals.
- 3.11 The SENCO gives teachers comprehensive information about individual learning strengths and weaknesses, to help them adapt work for pupils with LDD. Teaching is most successful when planning draws on this advice, as well as using assessment information for all pupils in the class, so that lessons offer different levels of challenge. Occasionally teachers do not fully use information from assessment to provide adapted tasks to match the differing aptitudes within their class. Lessons then lose pace, as some pupils require considerable support to achieve, whilst the more able make less rapid progress due to lack of challenge. In the best lessons teachers ensure that pupils understand the learning objectives and success criteria. A variety of teaching methods cater for differing learning styles, such as a map skills lesson in geography in which pupils applied their knowledge through orienteering. Questioning is carefully targeted to individual abilities and encourages pupils to think at a deeper level. Careful time management allows for a plenary session to draw learning together and affords pupils time to evaluate their learning.
- 3.12 Assessment procedures for all subjects are very thorough, an improvement since the last inspection. For the core subjects the school records and analyses information gained from standardised and national tests and other assessments. Other subjects are assessed according to success criteria for the topic. Results are stored electronically so that all staff can track the progress of individuals and cohorts of pupils. Teachers are encouraged to challenge anomalies in pupils' performance and to plan lessons accordingly. Effective use is made of self-assessment and peer review in subjects such as English, history and art. Results are recorded in individual profiles and targets are set and reviewed each term so that pupils have a clear idea of how they are progressing. Scrutiny of work across the school shows that the marking policy is followed consistently.

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 the pupils' personal development is excellent. The school is very successful in its aim to create a safe environment in which children feel confident, cared for, and have the freedom to enjoy their learning in an atmosphere where all members of the community feel valued and respected.
- 4.2 Pupils develop an excellent spiritual awareness, for this is embedded in the ethos and daily life of the school. They are caring towards each other, take pride in their own and others' achievements and support each other with sensitive enthusiasm. This was exemplified when a pupil displayed pride and quiet confidence as he spoke of his faith with clear understanding to a younger class. Pupils have a strong sense of self-esteem as a result of the recognition they receive for success in activities both in and out of school. They are reflective and demonstrate a clear awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. The PSHCE programme and themed assemblies contribute to pupils' strong ethical awareness, confidence and self-worth. In an assembly taken by a local member of the clergy the spiritual dimension was outstanding, producing a tangible atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and support.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is exceptional. They are self-assured and articulate. Pupils of all ages have a strong sense of right and wrong and, as they grow older, display mature understanding that moral issues can be approached from different viewpoints. They respect and adhere to the classroom rules, and feel well supported by staff in discipline issues. They are extremely proud of their school and are excellent ambassadors. In lessons and interviews they listen carefully to different thoughts and ideas and value the opinion of their peers. Whilst they may hold strong views, they try to be fair. In a history lesson pupils discussed events leading to the murder of Thomas Becket and realised that words spoken in anger may invoke serious consequences.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate an outstanding social awareness. Younger pupils are given responsibilities at an appropriate level. All senior pupils are given excellent opportunities to develop their leadership skills through roles such as head boy and girl, prefects, heads of sections and membership of the eco-committee. The committed work of this committee has gained the school the highest award, 'Green Flag' status, and environmental issues have a high profile in school, as seen in the many displays to inform pupils of natural disasters and current affairs. Pupils display knowledge of public services and government suitable to their age. They are actively and regularly engaged in charitable work. Each section supports a charity of choice and pupils also raise money for many worthwhile causes on their own initiative.
- 4.5 Pupils have a well-developed cultural awareness. They understand their own and other cultures through a wide range of musical, dramatic and artistic experiences, enhanced by curricular visits such as to Romsey Abbey and Stratford. Pupils have many opportunities to appreciate cultural diversity. In religious education they gain a good understanding of the major world faiths and visit a Hindu temple, a synagogue and a mosque. They develop an appreciation of other cultures in their French and Spanish lessons as well as visits abroad to Barcelona and Normandy. Pupils study world music and gain an understanding of past civilisations through topics such as that on the Aztecs and Mexico.

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

- 4.6 The quality of the provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils overall is good and makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal development. The pastoral care shown to pupils is excellent and staff care for pupils' well-being most effectively, in accordance with the school's aim of creating a safe environment where all pupils feel valued and accepted. Throughout the school relationships between staff and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, are outstanding, and a warm and friendly atmosphere pervades. Pupils speak highly of their staff and are confident that they can approach them with a problem. Self-esteem is raised as pupils readily congratulate and encourage each other over achievements around the school, such as providing reassurance as they admire the art work of their peers.
- 4.7 The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is excellent. The children are friendly, courteous and present themselves well. Most pupils say that school rules make sense and that they are reasonable, straightforward and fair. They support the school's sanctions procedures, feeling that the blue concern slips enable them to receive advice and support from staff, and also saying that they understand that receiving a yellow slip means they have overstepped the mark and should receive a sanction. Unacceptable behaviour of any kind is dealt with swiftly. Pupils believe that bullying and harassment issues are very rare and most agree that staff deal with any such issues quickly and constructively.
- 4.8 The safeguarding policy is effective and now implemented conscientiously, although prior to September 2009 recruitment checks on staff were not always sufficiently thorough. All staff receive safeguarding training at the appropriate level for their responsibilities. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards, and regular fire drills take place. Health and safety procedures are good and appropriate risk assessments cover all areas of school life, both on and off site. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with disabilities, and welfare arrangements, including provision for pupils who are ill, are effective. The medical staff form an integral part of the pastoral team and pupils know that they can turn to them when they need to. When considering who to go to with a problem one said, 'You can always go to matron if you are sad'.
- 4.9 Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits and take regular exercise. This is supported in science and PSHCE lessons, such as where Year 3 pupils investigated the effect various substances have on tooth enamel. Pupils enjoy the high-quality food provided by the chef, who works closely with the school to provide excellent and nutritious midday meals. The well-maintained grounds and playing fields encourage pupils to enjoy healthy activity. From Year 3 upwards pupils follow a health-related fitness programme in PE and all ages participate with great enthusiasm during games sessions. The school's admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The arrangements for governance of the school soundly promote its aims and development. The proprietor, who served as headteacher of the school for many years, is advised by a board of governors whose broad range of experience and skills provides informed and committed additional support. Governors maintain good oversight of educational standards and initiatives through the headmaster's reports for their termly meetings. In addition the headmaster holds monthly meetings with the chairman of governors and has frequent informal contact with the proprietor, who is a regular visitor to the school. Careful financial management has enabled the continued updating of buildings, the provision of new facilities, such as those for the EYFS, and investment in staff and resources.
- 5.2 Governors gain a general insight into teaching and learning in the school through information from the headmaster. They visit the school for formal events such as concerts and productions, as well as to informally meet staff, and one governor assists with matches. Governors are aware that they have not yet made suitable arrangements for the appraisal of the headmaster. The governing body maintains a general overview of the school's legal responsibilities and has appointed one of its number with particular responsibility for safeguarding and another for the EYFS. However, governors have not undergone training to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge to support the school in all the regulatory requirements. This has resulted in some shortcomings in recruitment checks and their recording in the past. Governors have now appointed one of their number to monitor their legal responsibilities.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 Leadership and management of the school are of high quality and play a significant part in the continued improvement in all areas of school life. Leaders are exceptionally effective role models in securing the school's aim to create a safe environment where all members of the community feel valued and respected. The strength of leadership contributes significantly to the pupils' success, particularly with entry into selective schools, as well as their excellent personal development. The senior management team works as a motivated and cohesive group, who all lead by example. They have established highly efficient systems to monitor educational provision as well as pastoral matters throughout the school.
- 5.4 Senior leaders have a clear sense of direction and purpose and involve all staff in identifying priorities for the school development plan. This links to action plans held for every department in the school. All plans include clear time scales and success criteria; they are revisited regularly so that progress can be evaluated and amendments made if need be. The school has been very successful in carrying out its action plan relating to monitoring the curriculum, which resulted from the previous inspection's recommendations. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Responsibility for subjects rests with curriculum teams comprised of teachers from across the school. These teams exercise collegial responsibility for their subjects and their work is monitored, in turn, by senior leaders. Their success is exemplified by the consistency inspectors found in the quality of teaching and learning across

the curriculum. The leadership is supported by favourable numbers of well-qualified staff. Appropriate arrangements for the induction of new staff enable them to familiarise themselves with school routines and with matters of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. A comprehensive handbook provides staff with all the information they need about school policies and procedures, and senior leaders ensure that these are well implemented and regularly reviewed. All appointment checks are now carried out and recorded rigorously, and a robust safe recruitment procedure has been in operation for the last eighteen months.

- 5.5 The school development plan, as well as a well-established appraisal system, developed since the last inspection, highlights priorities for staff training such as extending training for an initiative to promote learning through outdoor experience in a woodland environment to Years 1 and 2, and it is now well established in the EYFS. Individual members of staff are encouraged and supported in their personal professional development, including support for those who wish to enhance their qualifications, for example by pursuing a further degree. Whole-school in-service training, such as in safeguarding, first aid and fire management, covers welfare, health and safeguarding issues suitably.

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

- 5.6 Links with parents have continued to develop since the last inspection and are now excellent. Most parents are overwhelmingly positive and supportive and extremely happy with the education their children receive. They commented favourably on the high standards expected of the pupils, the quality of the curriculum and activities available and the excellent pastoral support. Parents also appreciate the school's promotion of good behaviour and worthwhile attitudes. A small minority indicated some dissatisfaction with opportunities to be involved with the life and work of the school, information on their children's progress and help given to pupils with additional needs. Inspection evidence did not support these views.
- 5.7 The school has developed excellent means of communication with parents. The website provides insight into the school and the school magazine is a highly visual celebration of all aspects of school life. Parents receive a weekly newsletter, which, along with all letters to parents, is available on the parents' section of the website. Ease of communication is facilitated by parents' email and a text service for messages. The school handles parental concerns with care and in the rare case of a complaint, follows its procedures correctly. The headmaster is available at the beginning and end of each day so that parents can approach him to discuss any issues informally. Parents are well informed about their children's progress through a September curriculum evening and two parents' evenings a year. Parents receive two written reports, a full report including progress and targets in the summer, and a shorter one following a parent consultation, at Christmas. Parents whose children receive additional support have the opportunity to discuss their children's progress and targets with the SENCO each term and all parents are welcome to contact teachers at any time.
- 5.8 Parents are welcome in the school and have regular opportunities to be involved in its life and work. The recently introduced breakfast café enables parents to socialize over morning coffee and is much appreciated. Parents are invited to sporting, musical and dramatic events and a popular grandparents' day. Some assist with activities such as art, sewing, cookery and DT. Others talk to pupils about their cultures and traditions. An active parents' association organises social events for adults and children, such as treasure hunts, fun days, coffee mornings for new

parents and a summer ball, with funds raised divided between the school's charities and items to enhance the pupils' experience, such as the assault course.

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 are Foundation Stage

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS provision is outstanding. All children's needs are met exceedingly well so that they make excellent progress in their learning and development, through a wide range of imaginative activities. Staff create a welcoming environment where each child is valued highly and they constantly seek ways to improve the already high quality of provision. Since the last inspection, construction of new, purpose-built indoor and outdoor classrooms, together with weekly woodland sessions, has had a most positive effect on learning.

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

6.2 Leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. Highly effective policies to safeguard children and eliminate discrimination are implemented successfully. Exceptionally strong links with parents, local authorities and other settings, contribute significantly to the children's welfare and development. The head of early years communicates a clear vision of the way forward and regular meetings enable the caring and committed team to thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of their current practice and to plan further improvements. Meticulous observations, together with detailed recording and tracking of each individual, enable each child to have an equal opportunity to succeed.

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

6.3 Provision is outstanding. The carefully planned curriculum, supported by a wide range of interesting resources and purpose-built facilities, provides many opportunities for children to increase their problem-solving skills and develop their imagination through role play. Whilst the outside area is spacious and well resourced, the school has identified this as an area for further improvement. The woodland environment provides many exciting opportunities for creative and physical development. There is an excellent balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. A detailed profile informs staff and parents about each child's progress and the next steps in their learning. Children are taught about keeping safe in many contexts and are cared for extremely well. Rigorous risk assessments and regular safety checks ensure their safety.

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

6.4 Outcomes for the children are outstanding. They make substantial progress from their different starting points, so that by the end of Reception most achieve very high standards in all six areas of learning. Children are very enthusiastic learners and clearly enjoy taking part in all activities. Most Nursery children are able to solve simple problems on computers, recognize two-dimensional shapes and count reliably to ten. They are beginning to write recognizable numbers and letters. By the end of Reception, most children can use numbers up to one hundred and read and write at a level that well exceeds national expectations for literacy. Children develop extremely good manual skills, such as handling simple tools effectively

during their woodland sessions, and are able to realize the meanings of terms such as 'larger' and 'heavier' through their practical experiences. They use ICT to paint pictures and can record sounds effectively. Children develop a strong sense of personal safety and talk freely to adults within the setting. They understand that personal hygiene, exercise and sensible eating are all required to keep them healthy. These articulate, industrious and inquisitive children exhibit exemplary behaviour. They take turns, are willing to share and relate extremely well to each other and to adults.

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 the chair of governors and the proprietor, 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 Jan Preece

Mr Alan Laurent

Mrs Elaine Rushforth

Mr Richard Balding

Reporting Inspector

Headmaster, IAPS School

Head of Pre-Prep, GSA School

Early Years Coordinating Inspector