



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BOLTON SCHOOL GIRLS' DIVISION**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Bolton School Girls' Division

Full Name of School	<b>Bolton School Girls' Division</b>		
DCSF Number	<b>350/6015</b>		
EYFS Number	<b>EY315995</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>526618</b>		
Address	<b>Bolton School Girls' Division Chorley New Road Bolton Lancashire BL1 4PB</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01204 840201</b>		
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Email Address	<b>grichards@girls.bolton.sch.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs G Richards</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Michael Griffiths. Vice Chair with responsibility for the Girls' Division, Mrs Margaret Kenyon</b>		
Age Range	<b>0 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>1308</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed to Year 2; Girls Years 3 to 13</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>57</b>	5-11: <b>332</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>121</b>	11-18: <b>798</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>1308</b>		
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Hilary Crawforth</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection date/EYFS	<b>01 Feb 2010 to 02 Feb 2010</b>		
Final (team) visit	<b>01 Mar 2010 to 03 Mar 2010</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. It 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 February 2004.

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 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 In 1913 Sir William Lever Hesketh, the first Viscount Leverhulme, endowed two existing schools to form the Bolton School Foundation with Boys' and Girls' Divisions accommodated as equal partners sharing a single site on the outskirts of Bolton. A single governing body oversees both Divisions, but each of the two Vice Chairs takes special responsibility for one of the Divisions. The Girls' Division offers day education to girls from birth to the age of eighteen and boys from birth to seven. In total, 1308 pupils attend the school. There are 178 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The youngest of these children are accommodated in the Nursery while the 69 Reception pupils share the infants school (Beech House) with the 144 pupils in Years 1 and 2. Beech House and the Nursery are situated next door to each other, close to the main school, and have appropriate play space for the ages of the children. One hundred and eighty-eight pupils in Years 3 to 6 are in the junior school and 798 girls in the senior school of whom 216 study in the sixth form. The school seeks to realise the potential of each pupil and aims to ensure that pupils leave the school as self-confident young people equipped with the knowledge, skills and attributes that will allow them to lead a happy and fulfilled life and to make a difference for the good.
- 1.2 Since the last inspection in 2004 a new head has been appointed on the retirement of her predecessor. A new head has just been appointed to the junior school after a period of acting headship. The school is in the midst of a building programme that has provided a purpose built infants department, and will complete a new junior department by September 2010. The two Divisions work more closely together than they did at the time of the last inspection.
- 1.3 The ability profile of pupils at all stages is above the national average. Pupils come from diverse backgrounds, but mostly business and professional. Approximately one-fifth are from ethnic minorities. Although many pupils speak other languages at home, almost all are fluent English speakers and only three require support for their English. The school has identified 62 pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). No pupil has a statement of special educational need.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS**

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

- 2.1 The excellent quality of the governance, leadership and management of Bolton School Girls' Division ensures that the school fulfils its aims and maintains its distinctive and inclusive ethos in which every member of the community is valued. As a result of good teaching and their own serious approach to their studies, at all educational stages pupils achieve highly and make good progress in relation to their abilities. The outstanding range of interesting and stimulating extra-curricular activities provides excellent opportunities for pupils to take initiative and extend their capabilities. Throughout the school the personal development of pupils is exceptional. Excellent administrative and pastoral arrangements ensure that all regulatory requirements are met. However, in the junior and senior schools the standard of marking is inconsistent, and not all lessons offer opportunities for stretching pupils academically.
- 2.2 Only a small proportion of parents responded to the questionnaires issued ahead of the inspection, but those who did expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the provision of the school in all areas. Parents were particularly enthusiastic about the teaching, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, standards of behaviour and the promotion of worthwhile attitudes. They were relatively less happy with the opportunities to be involved in the work of the school and the way their concerns are dealt with. Few pupils returned the questionnaire. Those who did, thoroughly enjoy their experiences at the school and were particularly positive about the help given them by teachers, their progress and the roles of responsibility open to them. They were least positive about the way teachers monitored their work load, the way rewards and penalties were distributed and the effectiveness of home work.
- 2.3 The school has responded strongly to the three recommendations made in the last report. The role of heads of department in the senior school has been clarified and now stresses the importance of monitoring the quality of teaching. An excellent policy is now in place giving guidance to staff in providing for the needs of pupils at each end of the ability range, and the completion of Beech House for the infant department and the near completion of a new purpose-built junior school have ensured that more spacious accommodation is available for pupils at all educational stages.

### **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 2003, as subsequently amended.
- 2.5 The school's registered provision for childcare met the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Act 2006 and no action was required.

**(ii) Recommended action**

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Raise the standard of marking in the senior and junior school so that consistently helpful advice on how to improve is offered to pupils.
2. Improve strategies for stretching all pupils, but particularly the able and talented, in mainstream lessons in the junior and senior schools.
3. Persist in the implementation of current procedures to prevent pupils being 'afraid to fail' and to provide greater scope for pupils in the junior and senior school to take intellectual risks in lessons.
4. In the EYFS, further develop the outside classroom to include learning opportunities across the whole curriculum.
5. In the EYFS, further improve liaison between Reception and the Nursery to promote a more cohesive provision.
6. In the EYFS, ensure that there is a balance between child-led and adult-led activities in Nursery to enhance teaching opportunities.

### **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' achievements, in Beech House, and in the junior and senior schools, is high and largely fulfils the school's aim to enable pupils of all abilities to reach their potential. Pupils of all ages approach their work seriously but with clear enjoyment.
- 3.2 In Beech House and the junior school pupils of all abilities, including those with LDD and English as an additional language (EAL), develop their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. From an early age they reason cogently and when given the opportunity they can think for themselves and ask demanding questions. For their ages they use a wide vocabulary and understand appropriate specialist terms. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other and express themselves clearly both orally and in written work. They read with fluency and understanding. They are able to apply their linguistic, mathematical and scientific skills with confidence to both familiar and less familiar situations. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well developed in ICT lessons, but fewer opportunities are given in other subjects. In the junior school a lack of challenge in many lessons constrains the achievement of the most able pupils.
- 3.3 Senior school girls of all levels of ability, including those with LDD and EAL, have high expectations of themselves and respond eagerly to their studies. They have a thorough understanding of the subject matter and deftly apply previous knowledge, mathematical and scientific skills to the analysis of new material. They are highly articulate, using technical language with ease, and listen attentively in lessons. Reading and writing skills in all subjects, including foreign languages, are well developed. Girls have acquired competent ICT skills, which they use adeptly for research and word processing. The many and varied displays around the school are a colourful testament to pupils' creative achievements. Girls reach extremely high standards in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, for example in national music and speech and drama examinations, in mathematical, scientific and business competitions, in sport, and debating.
- 3.4 Pupils in Beech House and the junior school are not entered for national tests, but their progress in relation to their abilities is good. Results in GCSE examinations over the last three years for which nationally comparative data is available have been excellent in comparison with the national average for girls in all maintained schools and high when compared with the average for girls in maintained selective schools. More than three-quarters of grades were at A\* or A. Results at A level over the last three years for which nationally comparative data is available have been high when compared with the national average for girls in all maintained and selective sixth forms. Four-fifths of these results were at grades A or B.
- 3.5 The whole school is permeated by a desire to learn and make progress. Pupils of all ages are keen to be involved and to learn co-operatively with their teachers and with each other. They settle quickly in lessons and concentrate sharply on the topic. They are eager to answer and, when given the opportunity, to ask probing questions.

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

- 3.6 The quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities provided throughout the whole school is excellent and fully supports the aims of the school. It provides pupils of all ages, abilities and needs with extensive opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and talents. Strong support for pupils throughout the school with LDD and EAL ensures that they are able to benefit fully from the curriculum. All year groups benefit from a well-planned and appropriate programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils develop an understanding of the public services and institutions of England.
- 3.7 The well thought out curriculum in Beech House and the junior school goes beyond the subjects of the National Curriculum, and includes modern foreign languages and Latin. The allocation of time to each subject is skilfully balanced between core and other subjects while carefully constructed plans maintain continuity and progress across the years. The creative curriculum, which consists of cross-curricular themes designed to stimulate interest and involvement, is well-established in Beech House. In the junior school, short term plans do not clearly identify links between subjects, thereby reducing the opportunities for meeting the needs of the more able. Staff liaise effectively across transitional stages and the children are thoughtfully prepared for the next part of their education, including induction visits for Beech House pupils to the junior school, and junior pupils to the senior school.
- 3.8 In the senior school, girls have opportunities to study an exciting array of subjects in addition to those included in the National Curriculum. All subjects receive an ample allocation of time in the recent and successfully introduced ten day time table. Separate sciences are taught from Year 9 while three modern foreign languages, Latin and classical Greek and four distinct branches of technology are offered. Year 9 pupils are extended by an annual three day practical project which challenges them to combine skills acquired in three branches of learning – for example by making a working model of a trebuchet. By Year 12 the curriculum is extended to include theatre studies, business studies, economics, government and politics, classical civilization and psychology. The sixth-form curriculum enrichment programme includes such diverse courses as Chinese and criminology. Extended project qualifications are also available. Careers education begins in Year 7 and provides excellent support for making choices of subjects and higher education courses. A comprehensive teaching and learning policy includes helpful guidance for staff, and the school is continuously engaged in curriculum review.
- 3.9 Throughout the whole school, a range of imaginative extra-curricular activities effectively supports the main curriculum, providing intellectual challenge for the more able and stimulating all pupils to extend their interests and capabilities. Emphasis is placed on participation and commitment as well as achievement. Sixth formers take a leading role in running clubs for younger girls. The Girls' and Boys' Divisions collaborate successfully in ambitious musical and dramatic performances. In addition to the expected music, drama and sporting activities, an extensive range of clubs provides for diverse interests. The outdoor activity centre in the Lake District and the sailing ketch 'The Tenacity of Bolton' are well used.
- 3.10 Pupils of all ages are enthusiastically involved in many worthwhile community links, reflecting the line in the school prayer that 'much is expected from those to whom much is given'. All pupils work hard and sincerely for charity, raising funds, contributing harvest gifts and working in charity shops and hospices. Older girls

walk guide dogs, and help with reading and mathematics at a local school. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is popular and provides personal challenge and opportunities for community service. Electronic links have been set up with schools in Chile, India and Tanzania.

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

- 3.11 Teaching is good throughout the whole school and in the senior school it is occasionally excellent, thus largely fulfilling the school's aims. At all educational stages the teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge, thorough planning and a sound understanding of and dedication to the needs of the pupils. Teaching throughout the school is well resourced and almost all classrooms are light, airy and attractive.
- 3.12 The supportive teaching in Beech House and the junior school enables pupils, including those with LDD and EAL, to make good progress and apply themselves diligently. The best lessons feature lively, enthusiastic and varied techniques, include apposite cross-curricular links and make use of effective questioning. In less successful lessons in the junior school, expectations of the more able are not high enough and pupils are rarely asked to think for themselves because activities are tightly controlled by teachers. Over-reliance on textbooks and printed sheets sometimes inhibits independence of thought and creativity.
- 3.13 Marking in Beech House and the junior school is diligent, and the most helpful contains both encouragement and practical suggestions for improvement. In the junior school the results of assessment are not always used constructively to influence planning. In Beech House a 'traffic light' system used by the children to indicate the level of their understanding is most effective in helping teachers tailor their lessons to meet the needs of the children.
- 3.14 In the senior school almost all teaching is secure, thorough and directed at ensuring the success of girls in external examinations. However, the school is anxious to overcome a 'fear of failing' exhibited by some pupils and is keen to encourage them to dare to take some intellectual risks. The best teaching is enthusiastic, uses technical language and encourages pupils to think independently, to develop logical and sustained arguments and to analyse issues in depth. Less effective teaching lacks pace and limits opportunities for extension and challenge. Teaching takes good account of the requirements of pupils with LDD and EAL. Teachers know their pupils well and in most lessons, through skilful questioning or by using graded tasks, cater for individual learning needs. Girls speak warmly of the willingness of staff to give them extra help and of the subject 'clinics' available to them. Learning resources can be made available to pupils via a virtual learning environment (VLE), but while the use of this as a tool for teaching and learning is gathering pace, the process is slow and the VLE is not yet widely used.
- 3.15 The standard of marking in the senior school is inconsistent. The frequent, detailed and constructive marking by some departments is appreciated by the girls but is not universal. Assessment is regular, and frequent checks within lessons ensure that teaching is adapted to the progress of the pupils. A sophisticated system of target setting, based on estimates of each girl's potential, and of monitoring and tracking, is being developed and is beginning to provide quick and efficient ways of identifying under-achievement and triggering appropriate support.

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

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

- 4.1 At all educational stages, pupils demonstrate excellent personal qualities, and in doing so, fulfil the school's aim to equip each young person with the knowledge, skills and attributes to live a happy and rewarding life and make a difference for the good.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages show a high degree of spiritual awareness. They gain from the time for reflection offered at morning assemblies and show concern for others in their daily life, going about their business with courtesy and consideration. They are developing a strong sensitivity to and understanding of the points of view and beliefs of others, so that pupils of different cultural and faith backgrounds grow and learn together in harmony. Muslim pupils appreciate the arrangements the school puts in place for them to practise their religion, and when space is released after the completion of the new junior school building, a room for contemplation will be set aside for all. The new infants' school, Beech House, has been blessed by leaders from several different religions and this has enhanced the children's awareness of faiths other than their own. Pupils of all ages are proud of their school, its history and its values.
- 4.3 Pupils throughout the school have a strong moral awareness, and a highly developed sense of right and wrong. Rules in Beech House and the junior school are well understood and pupils enjoy being able to discuss them. The code of conduct in the senior school is well respected and pupils show a mature acceptance of personal responsibility. Older girls appreciate opportunities to debate ethical issues and have the confidence to make their own moral decisions. Pupils at all stages show altruism in their eagerness to work for charity and participate in community service.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is excellent. They are eager to take up the many positions of responsibility that exist for all age groups. Pupils in the junior school enjoy supporting their house and acting as prefects. Beech House children happily contribute as music or register monitors. Prefects in the senior school take their duties very seriously and are distinguished by the wearing of formal maroon gowns. Pupils work with commitment and enjoy experiencing democracy in practice on the school councils. The junior school council recently organised a charity breakfast club, and a playground clock was the result of the work of the Beech House council. The senior school council is highly regarded and is consulted on some matters of school policy, for example the review of the behaviour policy.
- 4.5 Pupils are developing a strong appreciation of their own culture and that of others. Beech House and junior school pupils learn about the people and cultures of the world in many curriculum subjects, and through visitors to the school and external trips. Children who are bi-lingual are encouraged to share their own language to enhance topics. In the senior school cultural and aesthetic appreciation is strongly supported by the quality of the displays in classrooms and corridors. The popular religious studies craft club provides beautiful artefacts for all to enjoy. Flowering plants on window sills, grown and tended by the members of a school club, raise the spirits of all. Many visits to theatres, concerts, museums and galleries enhance the girls' cultural development. Trips abroad, for example to India where the girls visited a street kids project and to Morocco where pupils helped paint a remote village school, further raise the girls' awareness of conditions in the world.

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

- 4.6 The quality of pastoral care, welfare, health and safety throughout the whole school is excellent and fully supports the school's aims. Well-designed pastoral structures are tailored to the needs of pupils of different ages and provide valuable guidance that enables pupils to become confident and increasingly self-reliant.
- 4.7 Pastoral staff throughout the school liaise closely and effectively to monitor the academic progress and personal development of individual pupils. Pupils are confident to speak to staff if they have problems and know to whom they can turn if they are in difficulty. In the senior school older girls have been trained to act as peer mentors and offer a well-organised service that is much appreciated by younger girls.
- 4.8 Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are extremely strong. Pupils commented warmly on the friendly atmosphere in the school. Pupils in Beech House and the junior school play together happily and move sensibly and purposefully around their schools repaying the trust placed in them by staff. In the senior school high expectations of good behaviour successfully encourage mutual respect and a mature attitude to relationships. The codes of conduct, or, in Beech House the 'golden rules', are well understood by pupils. A system of merits throughout the school, and in the junior school an entry in the excellence or 'Button' book, reinforce good behaviour. Misbehaviour in Beech House and the junior school is dealt with in consultation with parents. A series of order marks in the senior school may lead to a detention, and serious issues are resolved in partnership with parents.
- 4.9 The school has developed a thoughtful and detailed anti-bullying policy. All pupils know what to do if they or a friend is unhappy, but pupils reported that bullying was almost non-existent.
- 4.10 The school has developed a detailed and thorough safeguarding policy that is well known to staff who are trained regularly in these procedures. Policies and procedures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards, and to ensure health and safety are comprehensive and robust. Detailed risk assessments are in place both for potential hazards in school and on external visits and trips. A suitable plan has been drawn up to improve educational access for pupils with disabilities. Provision for pupils who are ill is good. Pupils can visit the school counsellor and the school nurse confidentially if they need to. The first aid policy is effective and the school has sufficient staff trained in first aid.
- 4.11 The PSHE programme, work in other lessons, and the nature of food provided in the dining rooms highlight for pupils the need to eat healthily. All pupils are given generous opportunities to take exercise and understand its value. Admission and attendance registers are maintained correctly and kept for three years.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The governing body has oversight of both the Boys' and Girls' Divisions of Bolton School and has developed very effective structures for carrying out its duties, for ensuring that the inclusive ethos of the school is maintained and that well integrated planning of all aspects of the school's provision leads to the fulfilment of its aims. The governing body works closely and harmoniously with senior staff. The small executive committee, which consists of a governor, the heads of the two school Divisions and the clerk and treasurer meets monthly to discuss issues concerning the Foundation as a whole, and is a powerful link between the governing body and the management of each Division. The governors, many of whom are past pupils of Bolton School, are passionate about the school's distinctive character and are fully involved in long-term planning. However, they trust the staff and understand that their role is governance and that they are not executives.
- 5.2 The governing body has developed a deep insight into the working of the school. One of its two full meetings each term is devoted to presentations by staff on educational issues. Parent governors are present at parents' consultations evenings. Staff welcome the presence of governors at school events and open days and appreciate their support. Records of meetings reveal penetrating questioning and a highly analytical approach to issues and ideas for development.
- 5.3 The governing body is highly effective in discharging its responsibilities for child protection and for the welfare, health and safety throughout the school. It has set up a central services department which provides, for both Divisions, excellent professional support that ensures compliance in all health and safety and safeguarding matters.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent, successfully enabling the school to fulfil its aims. The senior leadership team, which includes leaders from every section of the school, gives clear educational direction, supports the school's ethos and establishes high expectations for both attainment and personal development. The management of academic and other departments throughout the school is characterised by an energetic desire to build on existing good practice and improve the provision for the pupils.
- 5.5 Planning at all levels is extremely thorough and derives from thoughtful analysis of previous performance. Management structures are complex but suited to the needs of a large school which is part of an even larger educational foundation. Development planning is proactive and coherent, and the views and ideas of staff are sought and valued. The school development plan is constructed in relation to the strategic plan for the Foundation, and departmental development plans are derived from it. Evaluation of the success of all these plans is rigorous and constructive. Following a period of slower development owing to the ill health of key personnel, a recent change in leadership in the junior school, has led to a vigorous re-assessment of priorities and procedures and this is revitalising the department. The previous report recommended that the roles of head of department in the senior school should put more emphasis on the monitoring of teaching. Many effective

procedures have since been put in place to promote good practice, for example the sharing of resources, in-service training days when staff demonstrate teaching techniques, and the sampling of pupils' work.

- 5.6 Staff throughout the school are well qualified, enthusiastic, and determined to promote the individual welfare and progress of their pupils. Relationships between staff are relaxed and co-operative. Thorough induction procedures ensure that they quickly understand the ethos of the school as well as practical arrangements. A well thought out and constructive system of professional review is appreciated by staff who value the developmental targets set and the generous opportunities for continuing professional development that result. All staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and welfare, health and safety.
- 5.7 The school has established excellent arrangements for checking the suitability of staff to work with children. Every interview panel includes someone trained according to the requirements for safer recruitment. All staff have undergone Criminal Records Bureau checks and the centralised register of appointments is correctly maintained.

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

- 5.8 Throughout the school the quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. The school maintains many open and varied channels of communication and actively encourages parents to be involved in their children's education and in the life of the school.
- 5.9 Only a minority of parents replied to the questionnaire issued ahead of the inspection, and of these the vast majority were highly satisfied with the education and support offered by the school. Parents expressed strong endorsement for the quality of the teaching, the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, standards of behaviour and the promotion of worthwhile attitudes. The inspection investigated some disquiet, expressed about the provision of information on progress and the way in which complaints are dealt with, but found this to be unsubstantiated.
- 5.10 Parents and prospective parents are supplied with all the requisite information about the school. Communication with current parents about their children's progress is frequent and detailed. On a day-to-day basis this is done through the reading records in Beech House, the homework diaries in the junior school and the student planners in the senior school. Reports are clear and informative and include opportunities for parents to respond. Parents' consultation meetings and information evenings for each year group are held regularly. Parents are kept up-to-date with school news and events through newsletters, and increasingly through the parents' portal on the school website where parents can also check their child's attendance, look at reports, and access school policies and procedures.
- 5.11 Parents are invited to participate in the life of the school in many ways. The active parents' association includes all parents. Parents have their own choir, they help sixth formers with interview practice and contribute specialist information at careers events. A series of workshops led by parents in Beech House inspired the children to invent playground games in which they tried to decide whether to become pilots, surgeons or hotel managers.

- 5.12 Should parents wish to raise any complaints or concerns, procedures are clear. The well designed complaints policy is readily available. Day-to-day issues are dealt with by the heads of school who consider liaison with parents and care of pupils as their chief concern.

**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 This is an outstanding setting that achieves its aims. Highly effective teaching nurtures lively independent minds, personal confidence and respect for others. The staff promote an environment where both academic progress and pastoral care are well balanced and the welfare of the children is of extreme importance. Children make excellent progress and show high levels of independence in their learning. They enjoy their time at school and participate enthusiastically in all activities. Excellent relationships exist with parents who in the parent's questionnaire showed their satisfaction and appreciation of the setting. Since the last inspection, Nursery staff have improved their registration procedures, and facilities for the Reception children have greatly improved. All children now benefit from the excellent progress made to improve provision for outdoor learning. Comprehensive arrangements are in place for safeguarding children and all staff are suitably trained.

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

6.2 Leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. Adults have extensive knowledge and skills in promoting children's welfare and supporting their learning, development and well-being. The leaders of the Early Years have a clear vision for the setting and are ably supported by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable team. Understanding of the provision's strengths and weaknesses is excellent and practice is constantly refined and evaluated. All records, policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting and safety of the children are in place and implemented well. Risk assessments are robust. Staff are suitably qualified and well deployed. Links with parents are strong and they are very supportive of the school. The school has links with the local authority and external agencies.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. Children learn and develop exceptionally well through stimulating play and valuable first-hand experiences. Activities are planned based on the interests of the children and the areas of continuous provision are enhanced according to these interests. There is an excellent balance between adult-led and child-led activities in the Reception classes, but for the older children in the Nursery opportunities for adult-led activities are not always made. Thorough initial and ongoing assessment identifies what children can do, and the next steps they need to take to progress. Observations record progress and allow staff to challenge each child to move on at the appropriate time. Children have easy access to a wide range of excellent resources which they use enthusiastically. Staff recognise the need to develop further the provision for the outside classroom in order that all children are encouraged to use it regularly as part of their learning. The role of the key workers is clearly identified and they guide and support children carefully, providing safe and clear routines for them. Children enjoy the healthy snacks provided for them and the sociable nature of snack time and lunchtime.

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

- 6.4 Children make outstanding progress in their learning in relation to their starting point and capabilities. They are on course to meet or exceed the Early Learning Goals in all six areas of learning. Literacy and numeracy are strongly promoted and most children make particularly rapid progress in these areas. Knowledge and understanding of the world is developed through first hand experiences and they can talk about their learning activities with growing confidence and clarity of expression. They are very active learners and enjoy energetic play. Their excellent personal, social and emotional development is clearly apparent. Behaviour is exemplary and is effectively managed through gentle reminders. Children develop a good awareness of personal safety and they comply with the simple rules that relate to this.

**Complaints since the last inspection**

- 6.5 Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

**What the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## 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 and Vice Chair of governors, 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 Ann Mayou	Reporting inspector
Mrs Janet Cooper	Junior Team Inspector (Head of School (Prep), ISA)
Mr Guy Willatt	Junior Team Inspector (Director of Studies, GSA)
Mr David Edwards	Junior Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS)
Mrs Hilary French	Senior Team Inspector (Head, GSA)
Mr Martin Lawrence	Senior Team Inspector (Head of Dept, HMC)
Mrs Cathy Williamson	Senior Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA)
Ms Barbara Pankhurst	Senior Team Inspector (Director of Teaching and Learning, GSA)
Mr John Coleman	Senior Team Inspector (Head of Dept, HMC)
Mrs Linda Donowho	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Joan Fearn	Early Years Team Inspector (Head of School (Pre-prep), IAPS)