



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

TAUNTON PREPARATORY SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Taunton Preparatory School

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| Full Name of School | Taunton Preparatory School | | |
| DfE Number | 933/6214 | | |
| EYFS Number | EY 310094 | | |
| Registered Charity Number | 1081420 | | |
| Address | Taunton Preparatory School Staplegrove Road Taunton Somerset TA2 6AE | | |
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| Email Address | tps enquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk | | |
| Head | Mr Jimmy Beale | | |
| Chair of Governors | Mrs Jane Barrie | | |
| Age Range | 2 to 13 | | |
| Total Number of Pupils | 434 | | |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (234 boys; 200 girls) | | |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): | 30 | 5-11: 210 |
| | 3-5 (EYFS): | 60 | 11-13: 134 |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: | 399 | Capacity for flexi-boarding: 23 |
| Number of Boarders | Total: | 35 | |
| | Full: | 35 | Weekly: 0 |
| Head of EYFS Setting | Mrs Kathy McLauchlan | | |
| 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 January 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.

Under the Care Standards Act 2000, an inspection of boarding was carried out during the week prior to the initial ISI inspection visit by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The report of this inspection is available separately 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Taunton Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding preparatory school for pupils aged from two to thirteen years. It is an integral part of Taunton School and was founded in 1994 following the merger of the former boys' and girls' junior schools. The whole school is an educational trust run by a governing body as a Christian non-conformist foundation of Free Church origins. The head has been in position since 2010.
- 1.2 The whole school is located on a large campus within spacious grounds on the outskirts of Taunton. The preparatory school has its own specialist teaching rooms, boarding house and playing areas and uses some of the main school facilities, including dining halls, the Chapel and specialist sports facilities. The preparatory school swimming pool is shared with the main school. The pre-preparatory (pre-prep) and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are an integral part of Taunton Preparatory School, and occupy recently built extensive buildings with their own large playing area and access to woods.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the number of pupils on the roll was 434, including 90 in the EYFS of whom 30 are under three years of age. Two hundred and ten pupils are aged from five to eleven and 134 from eleven to thirteen. Of these, 35 are full boarders, some of whose parents live abroad. The school enjoys a rich cultural mix, although the majority of pupils are from white British families with a professional, business or farming background.
- 1.4 The school does not administer national tests but other data available suggests that pupils demonstrate a wide range of abilities, of which the average is above the national average for all maintained primary schools. The school has identified 82 pupils as having some form of learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), including English as an additional language (EAL). The school has eleven pupils whose first language is not English, who receive specialised teaching in the Junior International Group (JIG) until they are ready to attend mainstream classes.
- 1.5 The school aims: to inspire every child to develop into a confident, well educated personable young adult who has enthusiasm for learning; to nurture individual talents and an enquiring mind within a broad and balanced curriculum; to encourage pupils to show a special interest in their environment and enjoy a wide variety of sports and the arts; to create a caring society, based on Christian values; and to enable each pupil to feel important and to develop a positive and cheerful approach to the daily challenges of life.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims and offers an outstanding educational experience to its pupils. High standards of achievement are evident in much academic work; in creative subjects, performing arts, sports and extra-curricular activities achievement is outstanding. The pupils' outstanding personal development is strongly supported by the broad and interesting curriculum. Well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) contribute to the pupils' good and often excellent progress over time. Younger children receive an outstanding start in the EYFS. The pupils' achievements are supported by good and sometimes outstanding teaching. Pupils say that they enjoy their learning, and particularly appreciate the emphasis on thinking skills which has helped them considerably in the short time it has been in action. They are attentive and interested, can reason and think for themselves and can work equally well independently or collaboratively. All pupils participate in an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is outstanding, being well supported by excellent pastoral care, welfare and health and safety arrangements. Individual pastoral care in a friendly, supportive atmosphere, ensures that all pupils feel safe and happy. This was reiterated by boarders as well as day pupils in their interviews and questionnaires. From the EYFS upwards, pupils are highly articulate and confident, much helped by the exceptional music, drama and dance programme for which the school has gained a national award. They successfully take part in all aspects of school life, contributing to its overall caring and supportive ethos. A strong feature of the school is its group of international pupils who are extremely well integrated into the school, adding a richness to its culture.
- 2.3 Outstanding, well-informed governance ensures that the school's aims are met. Governance gives strong support to senior managers and staff and oversees the work of the school highly effectively. Leadership and management are excellent at all levels, with strong policies and procedures, and clear goals which contribute to the pupils' achievement and ensure the smooth running of the school. Staff work extremely well together and are highly committed to the aims and methods of the school, and have a genuine enthusiasm for the pupils and their work. They are excellent role models. The school promotes successful links with parents who responded extremely positively to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They were particularly supportive of the extra-curricular activities, the pastoral care and the individual but unpressurised help given by staff, and inspectors agreed with this. The school has successfully addressed the recommendations of the previous inspection to provide more library and technical assistance. An appropriate complaints policy is now in place.

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Provide a more stimulating range of opportunities for those who are not involved in matches on Wednesday afternoons.
 2. In the EYFS, ensure that the success of changes is evaluated in terms of improved outcomes for children.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Throughout the school the pupils' overall achievement is excellent. This fulfils the school's aim for all talents to be nurtured so that each pupil can reach their potential and be well prepared for the future.
- 3.2 Pupils, including the most able and those with LDD or EAL, show a good and often excellent level of knowledge and understanding and are well challenged, resulting in much excellent progress. They are being increasingly encouraged to think creatively and actively enjoy and benefit from learning through using their thinking skills. This was very obvious when older pupils compared the speech of Henry V before Agincourt with that of a senior soldier before the Iraq war. Pupils have well-developed ICT skills which are used to advantage in many subjects. Their creative and performing skills, particularly in music, drama and dance are exceptionally high. In all years pupils showed their articulacy in thoughtful discussion, culminating in the house public speaking competition which involved debating to a high standard. Most pupils have good, and often excellent, literacy and numeracy skills and write fluently and with imagination. They work logically in mathematics and many have quick mental mathematics recall. The pupils' presentation of work is good and shows enthusiasm and effort, particularly among younger pupils. Almost all pupils enter Taunton School at the age of 13, some with awards, with a very small number moving to other independent or maintained schools.
- 3.3 The pupils participate enthusiastically in the many extra-curricular activities with considerable success, showing evidence of hard work and the high quality of teaching and coaching. Pupils have had significant success in the national primary mathematics competitions and in drama, dance and music examinations and festivals. Teams and individual pupils are represented at local, regional and national levels in a range of sports particularly at netball, rugby, cricket swimming, cross-country and biathlon, in which pupils have won the national age-group championship. All pupils have the opportunity to represent their school in sports. Musicians of all abilities perform with enthusiasm and skill in highly competent ensembles, choirs and the orchestra. Pupils are well represented in national choral and orchestral ensembles and in county music.
- 3.4 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but on the evidence available, including standardised data, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make good and often excellent progress over time in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability.
- 3.5 The pupils show enthusiasm for learning. The school successfully aims for pupils to develop enquiring minds. Younger pupils enjoy their experiences in a woodland environment adjoining their classrooms. All contribute to the work of the class individually and in groups. Constructive collaborative working across all levels of ability is clearly evident in the classroom and is a strength across the school. In class, pupils generally show good, and often excellent, levels of concentration and behaviour.

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

- 3.6 The curriculum is of excellent quality. It includes a wide range of subjects with enough time given to each. Together with the excellent range of extra-curricular activities and the opportunities for the boarders at weekends, it makes a highly positive contribution to the quality of the pupils' achievement and personal development. Pupils are well prepared for the challenges of secondary education. In Year 8, time is given for the study of extra languages, drama and expeditions such as that on Exmoor. Senior school staff provide 'taster' sessions of different subjects so that pupils know what to expect and look forward to the next stage of their education. Those who enter Year 3 from the pre-prep have an excellent induction to life in the preparatory school.
- 3.7 The curriculum is well planned to provide continuity throughout the whole school which is a result of liaison between pre-prep, preparatory and senior school staff. As well as the national curriculum subjects it includes drama, dance and religious education and a variety of sports and languages. Younger pupils benefit from introductions to French, German and Spanish language and culture. Older pupils study these languages in depth as well as Latin and classical civilisation. Time is given to mathematics and science investigations. The far-ranging curriculum offers opportunities for all and ensures that those with LDD or EAL, as well as the most able, are challenged according to their different needs.
- 3.8 A wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities including dressmaking, cub scouts and pre-prep yoga allows pupils to widen their interests and helps develop self confidence. Recent additions such as free jumping and break dance have given boys more outlets for expression and energy. Music groups include all ages and abilities in high standard choirs and instrumental groups. Each year group has the opportunity to perform in drama and dance productions which are of an extremely high standard. All help to extend educational experience and personal development. In their questionnaire responses pupils requested a more stimulating range of opportunities on Wednesday afternoons for those not involved in matches. The school has already identified this need and inspectors agreed with this comment.
- 3.9 Successful links with the community include drama, design and technology (DT) and science workshops for local primary school pupils, visits to local care homes and churches, civic events, and links with local army groups. Local police are involved in supporting the PSHE programme. Some pupils have links with local choirs, drama groups and sports clubs. Charities, both local and national, are well supported and encourage pupils to think of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves.
- 3.10 Throughout the school, pupils benefit from a full programme of visits and speakers. For those in the pre-prep, visits to historic houses, environmental areas and the sea-side are popular. Residential trips both at home and abroad for those in Year 3 upwards include a Year 7 'bonding' camp at the beginning of the year and an annual European choir tour, which is for those 'who love to sing' whatever their ability. All enrich and support the curriculum as well as giving pupils memorable experiences which develop their self-confidence and self-knowledge.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The overall quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. It makes a significant contribution to the pupils' good and often excellent progress and the high standards many achieve. It fully supports the aims of the school, particularly that of encouraging pupils to think for themselves beyond the taught curriculum. Recent innovation in the use of thinking skills has raised achievement particularly for boys. Both pupils and parents were enthusiastic about this in their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires.
- 3.12 Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and encourage self-belief, supporting the aims of the school. Many pupils realise this, confirming that: "In this school they believe in you lots." Teaching enables all to gain a secure foundation in basic skills as well as increasing understanding and knowledge. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning when appropriate and well planned, interesting and often innovative teaching gives them many opportunities to do so. Investigations and topic research are a strong feature of much teaching. Younger pupils gained much understanding of physical processes from being able to experiment with erosion and deposition in the playground. Well-directed questioning leading to informed discussion is frequently part of lessons and pupils listen closely to each other. Cross-curricular links such as linking mathematics with the building of the pyramids are particularly successful.
- 3.13 The most able pupils are well challenged and make excellent progress. Support for preparatory school pupils with LDD is mainly given through one-to-one tuition and support in lessons to meet their different needs, ensuring good and often strong progress. The learning support department often undertakes 'pre-teaching' of a topic for those with LDD and this is highly beneficial. Pupils are taught techniques and skills so that they become increasingly independent at managing their own difficulties. Younger pupils in the pre-prep are well catered for by the successful phonics scheme and individual help in the classroom. Pupils with EAL receive high quality specialist teaching in very small groups and gradually enter mainstream lessons when they are able.
- 3.14 Teachers are well qualified and teaching by specialists shows a love of the subject which is imparted confidently to pupils. In some teaching the excellent learning environment inspires pupils to achieve a high level of attainment. Teaching assistants contribute significantly to the pupils' academic and personal development. Excellent use is often made of ICT in the classroom; it is well used to match the pupils' different learning styles. The library is undergoing a re-stock to allow more pupils to use it as a reading resource. On-site games and swimming facilities allow all pupils to benefit from excellent teaching and coaching.
- 3.15 High quality, constructive formal and informal assessment allows each pupil's progress to be monitored and tracked throughout the school, and information is well used to guide planning. Targets are set for pupils to improve. Standardised tests help identify any pupil who may benefit from extra support or challenge. Marking is regular, and shows the pupils ways to improve as well as being encouraging and supportive. Older pupils receive achievement and effort grades twice a term which help them to know how well they are progressing.

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 outstanding. They are happy, motivated and purposeful in line with the school's aims. From the EYFS upwards pupils grow in confidence and emotional intelligence, and take pride in both their own and others' achievements.
- 4.2 Pupils develop outstanding spiritual awareness centred on worship and music in the Victorian school chapel and in assemblies. The friendly and trusting atmosphere of the whole school community is valued by all and particularly by those pupils who are part of the school's international group. The experiences and cultures of those who live in other countries are welcomed and discussed, giving pupils an insight into the values and beliefs of others. Self-esteem is developed by celebrating all achievements, whether for acts of kindness, good work or success in activities outside school. In the pre-prep celebration assemblies, pupils are made to feel special even though they are part of a large department. All become self-aware and recognise their own strengths and weaknesses as well as showing appreciation of the world around them.
- 4.3 The quality of the pupils' moral development is excellent from the EYFS upwards. They know right from wrong and understand the need for high standards of behaviour. New pupils quickly assimilate the values of the school. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme encourages older pupils to consider their response to current issues such as drugs and internet safety, and younger ones to think of acts of kindness and how their behaviour affects others. Pupils recognise PSHE as being relevant and important to their own welfare. The pupils' observation of 'golden rules' underpins their usually excellent behaviour throughout the school.
- 4.4 The pupils' social development is outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils and pupils themselves are friendly and courteous. 'Buddy groups,' organised across different year groups, are seen as extremely beneficial by pupils, who feel that they not only get to know those in other years but also that they can discuss ideas and are thus able to influence the work of the school. This prepares them to be responsible outward-looking citizens. The new playground was built at the instigation of these groups. Prefects chosen by pupils accept a high degree of responsibility and develop good leadership skills, as do younger pupils, who take turns as form leaders or librarians. Pupils develop a strong awareness of social issues through generous charitable giving. They show a good understanding of public services and institutions in Britain and this has been identified by the school for further development as part of the PSHE programme.
- 4.5 Excellent cultural awareness is helped by the strong international ethos of the whole school. Events such as language days, the pre-prep African day, a visit to the Tutankhamen exhibition, world dance, a Tudor day, Diwali and a recent trip by some Year 8 pupils to India all develop awareness of people of a variety of faiths and cultures. Pre-prep pupils much enjoyed demonstrating the Haka dance. The school also supports the Bemba villages in Africa, which helps pupils to understand the needs of others. All extend pupils' understanding of racial and cultural diversity. Visits to museums, concerts and theatres help pupils to appreciate the culture and traditions of their own country. All aspects realise the school's aim to develop self-confidence and thoughtfulness and prepare pupils for later life.

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

- 4.6 Excellent pastoral care and extremely well implemented arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety help the school achieve its aims to provide a happy, positive atmosphere in which each pupil feels safe, secure and valued. The caring and friendly staff create an atmosphere in which pupils flourish and grow up to be confident and responsible young people ready for the next stage of their education. Overseas parents particularly commented on the excellent care of their children.
- 4.7 Pupils are well known to all staff. Form teachers and tutors provide sympathetic and strong support and guidance, both academically and pastorally. Pupils feel that staff go out of their way to help them both in and out of class, stating that 'they are there for you through thick and thin'. The school has excellent procedures to guard against bullying. Many pupils said they were unaware of any bullying and all said that if unacceptable behaviour does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils understand the simple sanctions and rewards system and feel that it is generally fair and contributes to positive behaviour. They have a significant awareness of looking after each other and their responsibilities to the school community, and feel that they are known and appreciated as individuals.
- 4.8 Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective. All staff have had appropriate child protection training and the robust policy is well understood and implemented. All necessary measures, including fire drills and staff training, have been taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Risk assessments cover all aspects of school and boarding life, and health and safety procedures are thorough. The school has excellent arrangements for pupils who are unwell and a good number of staff are trained in first aid to complement medical staff in the new health centre. Accidents and administration of medicine are properly recorded within a strong first aid policy. The school has an appropriate plan to improve accessibility for those who have disabilities. Pupils understand the importance of exercise and a healthy diet and many commented on the excellent school food eaten in the main school dining room. Pre-prep pupils learn where their food comes from as part of their citizenship curriculum. Physical exercise is taken regularly by all pupils. Admission and attendance registers are properly completed and stored.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.9 A boarding inspection was carried out by Ofsted a week before this inspection and is being treated as if both were concurrent. This Ofsted inspection is the subject of a separate report. This ISI inspection has considered boarding in the whole-school context only.
- 4.10 Relationships between staff and boarders and boarders themselves are friendly and respectful. In their questionnaire responses boarders praised the help given them by their houseparents and other boarding staff. Boarders are encouraged to be independent and feel that this makes a strong contribution to their self-confidence and personal development. They learn to respect others, and feel that their social skills are strengthened by living in an international community. A varied range of activities is provided for boarders and many commented on the fun they have on weekend trips. In the evenings, boarders can take part in arranged activities or decide how to spend their time for themselves.
- 4.11 Accommodation is comfortable and homely. An ongoing process of redecoration is much appreciated by parents and boarders.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Outstanding governance successfully ensures that the school's aims are met and supports the pupils' high standards of achievement and personal development. The whole-school governing body contains professionals with a range of expertise. Governors have a strong strategic vision for the future development of the school, and for financial planning. They see the EYFS, pre-prep and preparatory schools as an integral part of the whole school and decisions are made with this in mind. Effective committees oversee the work of the school and governors carry through their responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.2 Governors have attended a range of relevant courses to extend their knowledge and expertise. Recently they joined 'thinking skills' training with staff. They are well informed about the work of the preparatory school through visits and reports from the head and heads of department. Some governors take a particular responsibility for the preparatory school and often visit classes from the EYFS upwards, where they observe lessons and talk to teachers. Governors attend school events and meet socially as well as professionally with staff, who feel that they are well supported. They join with senior staff on an annual away day to discuss future development. They are able to offer knowledgeable support to the head and all staff which is much appreciated.
- 5.3 The governing body has been instrumental in providing excellent, purpose-built accommodation and resources necessary to meet the needs of the curriculum.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent at all levels. It enables the school to achieve its aims to give all pupils challenge and opportunity through a broad education and excellent pastoral care. Experienced leadership and a strong senior management team help provide clear goals and a strong sense of direction. This ensures that all pupils receive the highest quality education and pastoral care which will equip them for the next stage in their education and future lives. Since the previous inspection, the roles of senior staff have been reorganised. Heads of faculty have been instrumental in bringing together subject heads, who in turn manage their departments efficiently and help to monitor the quality of work and planning. This has resulted particularly in stronger cross-curricular links. Good liaison with staff from the senior school ensures continuity and progression throughout the school. All staff feel valued and that their voice can be heard. They show exceptional enthusiasm and commitment and are passionate about their teaching and their school. Teachers lead by example, setting high standards for their pupils to follow.
- 5.5 The school development plan complements the governors' strategic planning. Together with well-evaluated subject plans, it sets out areas for development and improvement, whilst at the same time showing a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. All staff are involved in planning and the school's clear vision is reflected in the high quality of the pupils' achievement and personal development.

- 5.6 Well-implemented whole school policies are regularly reviewed and provide guidance to help achieve the school's commitment to high standards. The school has excellent systems for securing, inducting, supporting and training high quality staff who have a range of expertise and experience. The school's recruitment procedures are robust and all staff, volunteers, supply staff and governors are suitably checked. Staff value the thorough appraisal and in-service training which ensures progressive staff development, and all have received appropriate training in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The central register of appointments is properly maintained.
- 5.7 Pupils particularly appreciate the ancillary staff in the office, cleaning, catering and maintenance departments, saying how much they added to their happy experiences at school.

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

- 5.8 The school's links with parents, carers and guardians are of a high quality and fully support its aims. The parents' responses to questionnaires show a high level of satisfaction with the education provided by the school. Many consider their children fortunate to be at the school. They praise all aspects of the school's educational and pastoral provision, particularly endorsing the help their children receive from teachers, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, the attention given to pastoral care, and the attitudes and views promoted by the school. Those parents whose children receive learning support are particularly pleased with the contact they have with teachers. Inspection findings support these views.
- 5.9 Parents can attend formal and informal performances and concerts, and some help in the library, and in classes for younger children. They can contact staff electronically or personally. The parents' association is an active body which organises social and fund-raising events. All parents are happy with the level of general information they receive, including regular newsletters and an extremely informative annual magazine.
- 5.10 Detailed and well-written reports to parents are sent twice a year as well as effort and achievement grades two or three times a term for older pupils. Parents feel that their concerns are usually addressed promptly, normally by the form teacher or tutor but also by senior staff. The school has an appropriate complaints procedure, although this has not needed to be used recently. This meets the requirement of the previous inspection report.

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. Much of its success is due to inspired leadership and a highly-skilled staff team, who give high priority to ensuring that children make rapid progress within a safe and secure learning environment. These factors, together with close partnerships with parents, ensure that each child's needs are met. There have been many positive improvements to the EYFS provision in recent years, including those made in response to recommendations raised at previous inspections. The capacity to sustain current high standards, and for further improvement, is excellent.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. They are underpinned by the high aspirations and clear vision of the leadership, and strong support from managers and governors. Excellent teamwork and good use of resources, together with rigorous policies and procedures, ensure that children are safeguarded very well. The clear commitment to meeting individual needs is evident in the caring ethos and strong inclusive practice. Staff form strong relationships with parents, who responded extremely positively to all aspects of the setting in their questionnaire. Highly successful links with the local community, colleges, universities and provider forums reflect, and contribute to, the setting's excellent practice. The staff's continual striving for success is demonstrated through an effective system for professional development and regular self-evaluation. However, the success of changes to the early years provision are not always evaluated in terms of their impact on outcomes for children.

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

6.3 Provision is outstanding. Staff use their secure understanding of the EYFS framework extremely well to establish clear health and safety routines, and to create interesting learning environments and a rich range of opportunities with excellent opportunities for indoor and outdoor learning. Key people are skilled at creating warm, caring environments so that children under three quickly settle and develop confidence. They ensure children's smooth transition to the Nursery classes for those over the age of three, where they are offered a variety of learning experiences which encourage active learning and independence. In the Reception class, staff employ an excellent range of strategies which enable children to develop their ideas, thinking and language skills very well. Throughout the EYFS, the children's progress is monitored and recorded through a consistent and efficient system of observation and assessment, and resulting information is used well to plan for their differing needs. Provision, as a whole, is significantly enhanced by good specialist teaching, a popular parent and toddler group, and well-organised after-school provision which the children thoroughly enjoy.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. Nursery children participate enthusiastically and are eager to learn and quickly develop warm relationships with staff. They quickly learn to make choices and express themselves clearly. Children in the Reception classes are observant, articulate and inquisitive. They make significant gains in key literacy and numeracy skills, and learn to use ICT with confidence showing an understanding of letters, sounds and numbers. Throughout the EYFS, children's developing creativity, and understanding of the world is evident in their imaginative play, artwork and language. Their physical skills and awareness of personal hygiene and safety develop rapidly through excellent indoor and outdoor activities. Children behave extremely well and develop warm friendships.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 6.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Complaints since the last inspection

- 6.6 Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints received by Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

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, 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.

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools were inspected by an Ofsted inspector the previous week.

Inspectors

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| Mrs Margaret Smallwood | Reporting Inspector |
| Mr Martin Davis | Deputy Head, IAPS school |
| Mrs Helen Skrine | Headmistress, IAPS school |
| Miss Deborah Smith | Former Director of Studies, IAPS school |
| Mrs Anne Culliford | Early Years Lead Inspector |
| Mrs Emma Stratford | Early Years Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school) |