



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION NORMANHURST SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Normanhurst School

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| Full Name of School | Normanhurst School | | |
| DfE Number | 320/6059 | | |
| EYFS Number | EY384680 | | |
| Address | Normanhurst School 68-74 Station Road North Chingford London E4 7BA | | |
| Telephone Number | 020 8529 4307 | | |
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| Email Address | info@normanhurstschool.co.uk | | |
| Head | Mrs Claire Osborn | | |
| Managing Principal | Mr Matthew Hagger | | |
| Age Range | 2½ to 16 | | |
| Total Number of Pupils | 250 | | |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (158 boys; 92 girls) | | |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): | 7 | 5-11: 77 |
| | 3-5 (EYFS): | 47 | 11-16: 119 |
| Head of EYFS Setting | Mrs Susan Fisher | | |
| EYFS Gender | Mixed | | |
| Inspection Dates | 10 to 13 March 2015 | | |

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the 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

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Mr Graham Sims | Reporting Inspector |
| Mrs Linda Griffith | Team Inspector (Former Junior School Head, ISA school) |
| Mrs Deborah Leek-Bailey | Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school) |
| Mr Alistair Telfer | Team Inspector (Head of Department, ISA school) |
| Mrs Eithne Webster | Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years |

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Normanhurst School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from two and a half to sixteen. Founded in 1923, it is part of the Oak-Tree Group of Schools, which is family owned. The role of proprietor is undertaken by one member of the family, who acts as managing principal, overseeing administrative arrangements for all three schools in the group. Since the previous inspection, the school appointed a new head in September 2010 and a new head of the junior school in May 2013.
- 1.2 The school is situated in Chingford. Four large Edwardian houses accommodate the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), classrooms, offices and two information and communication technology (ICT) suites. Additional buildings provide some purpose-built classrooms, a small music room, a studio for art, design and technology, two science laboratories, a library, changing facilities and a hall. The school does not have its own playing fields, but hires nearby facilities for games and physical education.
- 1.3 The school's mission is to provide a balanced and fulfilling learning experience in a secure and caring environment that nurtures the pupils' academic, creative, sporting and personal skills. It seeks to encourage an appreciation of lifelong learning and a desire to participate in and contribute to the community so that pupils become fulfilled and responsible citizens.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, there were 250 pupils on roll, of whom 54 were in the EYFS setting, which admits children from the age of 2½. The junior school has a single class per year group for the 77 pupils in Years 1 to 6. The senior school has 2 classes per year group for the 119 pupils in Years 7 to 11. The pupils come from professional and business families and a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, which reflect those of the local population. There are more boys than girls.
- 1.5 The ability profile of the school, as determined by standardised tests, is in line with the national average. However, there is a fairly wide spread of abilities throughout the school, and the profile varies from year to year. The school provides additional support for 29 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), for 1 with a statement of special educational needs and for 11 who speak English as an additional language (EAL).
- 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 extremely successful in fulfilling its aim to build a happy family environment that cultivates courtesy, respect and responsibility, helps pupils to develop confidence and encourages a desire to contribute to the community. It succeeds well in nurturing academic, creative and sporting skills and helping pupils to develop to the maximum potential. In the EYFS, children make excellent progress as a result of the stimulating provision. The school provides an excellent curriculum, which is adapted extremely well to the needs and aptitudes of the pupils, and a good range of extra-curricular activities. Good teaching throughout the junior and senior schools enables pupils to make good progress in developing reading, writing and mathematical skills and competence in other subjects. The marking of pupils' work, however, does not always provide sufficiently rigorous feedback to show pupils how they might improve. Results at the end of Year 11 have been consistently above the national average for maintained schools. The pupils are articulate and confident. They have excellent attitudes to learning, participating extremely well in class and collaborating with their peers, but are not always given sufficient opportunity to develop independent learning skills, for example by applying their good ICT skills to learning in all subjects, or by responding thoughtfully to teachers' marking.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. The supportive and nurturing atmosphere of the EYFS enables children to make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils in the rest of the school continue to develop into polite, courteous and thoughtful individuals who have a strong set of values, contribute extremely well to both the school and wider communities, and show an excellent understanding of different cultures and non-material aspects of life. Pupils largely enjoy being in the school and feel exceedingly well supported by their teachers, who go out of their way to help them. The quality of care provided by the staff, and the attention given to pupils' welfare, health and safety, are excellent.
- 2.3 The proprietor fulfils all legal responsibilities exceptionally well, provides excellent support for the school's leaders and ensures that pupils are effectively safeguarded. Leadership and management at all levels are excellent. The school has improved in many ways since the previous inspection, the recommendations from which have been implemented effectively. Processes for self-evaluation and development planning are excellent and involve all staff, who are strongly supportive of the school's leaders and the direction that they provide. Leaders take great care to provide sufficient support for pupils with SEND and those with EAL, although teaching assistants are not always deployed or used to best effect. Links with parents are excellent. The school keeps them very well informed and provides workshops and guidance for them. Parents are pleased with almost every aspect of the school, but in particular the range of experiences provided for their children and the fact that they are happy, safe and well looked after.

2.(b) Action points**(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- 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. Ensure that all staff apply the school's marking policy by providing guidance to pupils on how they can improve and checking that pupils respond to their comments.
 2. Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills, especially through the wider use of ICT across the curriculum.
 3. Ensure that teaching assistants are always deployed and used effectively to help pupils to develop independent study skills and manage their own learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 Pupils throughout the school are well educated in accordance with the school's aim of helping all individuals to develop to their maximum potential. Pupils develop well their knowledge, understanding and skills in their academic studies, the creative arts and sport. Pupils are articulate, converse confidently and are eager to contribute their ideas in discussion. They listen attentively to both their teachers and each other during lessons. In the junior school, the pupils read with increasing competence for their age and develop good writing skills. Throughout the school, the pupils make competent use of computers in ICT lessons, but their good ICT skills are not used sufficiently widely in other subjects. Mathematical and scientific skills are strong, especially in the senior school, and the more able pupils make well-reasoned links between current and previous learning. Pupils of all ages develop effective reasoning skills. Artwork exhibited around the school illustrates the pupils' excellent creative skills in art, and design and technology.
- 3.3 Pupils' achievements in their extra-curricular activities are good. Pupils have competed successfully in local and national sports competitions, reflecting the school's aim to help them to develop the confidence to celebrate their individual talents. The pupils have been commended in writing competitions, participated in art exhibitions, represented the county in swimming, and performed in theatrical productions. Those taking music, speech and drama examinations enjoy notable success, most achieving results of merit or distinction. Many pupils have achieved success in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award at bronze level.
- 3.4 In the junior school, pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to similar age-related expectations. The school's assessment data and observations during the inspection indicate that most pupils make progress that is good in relation to those with similar ability.
- 3.5 For the senior school, the following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The GCSE results have been above the national average for maintained schools. A large majority of pupils achieve five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. The level of attainment at GCSE, together with standardised measures of progress, indicates that pupils make progress that is at least appropriate in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Results have been particularly good in mathematics, science and ICT. They have been outstanding for a number of years in art and design, and design and technology. Inspection evidence gathered from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' written work and interviews with pupils indicates that pupils are making good progress.
- 3.6 At all ages, pupils with SEND and those with EAL make good progress because of the effective individual specialist support they receive, which is much appreciated by the pupils and their parents. Able pupils make appropriate progress overall; their progress in a few subjects is excellent.

- 3.7 Throughout the school, pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They are enthusiastic in their participation in lessons, and are keen to answer questions and proffer their ideas. They settle to work quickly and generally persevere, sustaining high levels of concentration. They behave co-operatively in class and are keen to show initiative. The constructive relationships with their teachers contribute much to pupils' good progress and achievement.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The curriculum covers the requisite areas of learning and fulfils the school's aim to provide a balanced and fulfilling learning experience that nurtures the pupils' academic, creative, sporting and personal skills. Pupils in the junior school are taught by specialists in subjects such as music, drama and modern foreign languages. Pupils in the senior school have a diverse choice of subjects at GCSE. The range of available subjects has broadened in recent years, as pupils now study two modern foreign languages and all have the option to take three separate sciences. The school compensates for the lack of on-site sporting facilities by taking pupils to the nearby Olympic site for most games lessons, where they have a unique opportunity to experience training in a professional sports environment.
- 3.10 The curriculum is suited extremely well to the ability profile of the pupils, catering especially well for less able pupils. Option choices are tailored to individuals' needs, and if appropriate, additional alternative vocational qualifications are made available, which help pupils to develop skills for employment and later life. The school has highly effective systems for identifying pupils with SEND and also for determining whether pupils with EAL require additional support. Throughout, it offers excellent support through a range of strategies, such as one-to-one work, the provision of key skills booklets, and transition meetings for both parents and staff prior to and during a pupil's first term in the senior school. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very small minority of parents felt that the school does not provide sufficiently well for able pupils. Inspectors judged that provision for able pupils is appropriate and has improved in recent years, and that these pupils have a focused programme of activities that include a variety of trips.
- 3.11 The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. Pupils are able to access information pertinent to their future aspirations. The popular and highly effective work experience programme for pupils in Year 10 provides valuable insights into the world of work, and links well to a planned programme of careers talks and interviews. A well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, delivered effectively through form tutor periods, covers many relevant topics for contemporary citizens, including how to keep safe when using the internet. These are presented in an impartial manner and prepare pupils extremely well for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern British society. For example, pupils were observed debating the reasons for war, the impact of greed and alternative perspectives of different faiths. An excellent range of visits, lecture days and workshops provides further enrichment of the curriculum.
- 3.12 The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, enhanced since the previous inspection. In response to the questionnaires, pupils and parents expressed appreciation for the range of available activities. Pupils develop their language skills and learn more about traditions of European countries through a wide range of school trips in the UK and abroad, such as a visit to Spain in 2014 and

a pending ski trip to Italy. Activities such as the chess club, drama club, karate and computing broaden pupils' experiences, while booster classes in mathematics, English, linguistics, reading and music provide extension opportunities and further challenge for pupils. Many pupils take up the opportunity to learn a musical instrument or to participate in one of the musical activities, such as the jazz and rock bands.

- 3.13 The pupils benefit from the school's excellent links with both the local and global communities. They learn to collaborate with their peers and develop empathy for others as they work together to raise funds for a school in Rwanda and a children's hospital near to the school. Pupils participate in local, borough and national sporting events. Competitions against other schools in various disciplines add further dimensions to the school's curricular provision and extend pupils' skills. The pupils' cultural understanding is enhanced through the school's links with local churches, a synagogue and other places of worship.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 The contribution of teaching is good.

- 3.15 The teaching is effective in promoting pupils' progress and fulfilling the school's aim to help each pupil develop to his or her maximum potential. Lessons frequently incorporate a variety of activities, such as a quiz, highly skilled questioning, paired work or whole-class discussion, which gain pupils' interest. The teaching is well planned and often dynamic, and makes good use of time. In most instances, teachers demonstrate secure knowledge of their subjects, enabling pupils to develop good understanding. The teaching is well suited to pupils' abilities and needs, often providing different tasks for those with SEND, those with EAL and the most able. It makes good provision for any pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Teaching frequently makes good use of resources, although does not allow sufficient opportunity for pupils to use their competent ICT skills in all subjects. Teaching assistants often provide good help for those with SEND but, at times, are not deployed effectively to help pupils to develop independent study skills and manage their own learning.

- 3.16 Responses to the pupils' questionnaire show that almost all pupils feel that their teachers give them the right amount of work, help them to learn and provide individual help when needed. Parents, too, are appreciative of the quality of teaching. A few parents and a very small minority of pupils do not feel that the school provides appropriate homework. The inspection team found the school to be responsive to pupils' and parents' views and to have adjusted homework in order to strike an appropriate balance.

- 3.17 The school has responded to a recommendation from the previous inspection to develop the pupils' independent learning skills. The teaching encourages pupils to work collaboratively. The change from dividing pupils into ability groups to teaching mixed-ability groups has raised both teachers' and pupils' expectations and helped pupils to respond with greater confidence when invited to offer an opinion. The school has also addressed the issue of extending the learning experiences of the more able by providing helpful professional development for staff and ensuring that they identify gifted or talented pupils and provide them with suitably challenging work. At times, however, over-directed teaching limits opportunities for pupils to think critically and to become fully independent learners.

- 3.18 Excellent relationships between staff and pupils contribute significantly to the quality of the teaching. Through trust and mutual respect, pupils gain confidence to participate and are not afraid to make mistakes or to attempt answering questions or contributing their views. This was seen, for example, particularly clearly in an English lesson dealing with apartheid in South Africa, in which the pupils engaged with great interest, empathy and maturity in a balanced discussion of racism, and pupils of all levels of ability were able to contribute with meaning.
- 3.19 Effective systems, which track pupils' progress from entry and at various points during the year, help to ensure that the planning of lessons is appropriate to the pupils' needs and are used efficiently to set targets for each pupil. The school has recently reviewed its marking policy, aspects of which are implemented well. For example, the school places importance on giving feedback to pupils in ways that do not diminish their self-esteem, with the result that pupils feel confident when they receive constructive comments from their teachers or from their peers. However, feedback is inconsistently provided through the marking of pupils' work. In the junior school, there is an over-emphasis on praising pupils for their efforts. In the senior school, some subjects lack detailed written comments. As a result, pupils are not always given sufficient guidance on where they have made mistakes and what they need to improve. Pupils do not always go back over their marked work to make corrections or respond to any comments.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' personal qualities develop extremely well, in accordance with the school's aim to promote the values of respect, responsibility, effort and empathy, which enhances academic progress and emotional well-being. This continues throughout the school so that, by the time they leave, the pupils are very well prepared to meet the challenges of the next stage of their academic journey or entry into employment as well-rounded, emotionally mature citizens.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They develop a strong set of values and principles that inform their perspective on life and their social behaviour. They show confidence and respect for themselves and for others. This can be seen, for example, in their careful attention in assemblies, in the way they show empathy for those in need and in the way they question sensitively and thoughtfully when engaged in debate. They demonstrate a well-developed ability to consider non-material aspects of life.
- 4.4 The moral awareness of the pupils is extremely well developed, as seen, for example, in an excellent tutorial group discussion of anti-Semitism. The pupils are well behaved, shown by their excellent conduct and non-discriminatory attitudes, and a deep respect for the norms of good behaviour and the rights of other people. The pupils are well aware of the needs of others beyond their school. This is clear from extensive involvement in a wide range of charitable links, often instigated by the pupils through the school's charity committee. They display excellent community spirit, for example through their visits to a local care home, where they talk to residents and share experiences. They develop a good general knowledge of the public institutions, traditions and services of England, of civil and criminal law, and of the basis for democracy.
- 4.5 The pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils of all ages readily open doors and welcome visitors. They are polite and courteous, and engage readily in conversation. They develop good political and economic awareness through a well-planned programme of activities and discussions during their form tutor times. In Year 11, the role of prefect is taken seriously. Prefects assist staff on duty and work with form tutors. They are very visible around the school, encouraging good behaviour and the correct dress code. They also act as mentors for the lower year groups and provide a listening ear to younger pupils. In discussion with inspectors, pupils said that they much value the way younger pupils could approach senior ones for help, and the ways in which pupils support each other. In their responses to the questionnaire, a very small minority of pupils felt that they do not have opportunities to take on responsibilities. The inspection team found that the school offers many such opportunities, for example acting as peer mentors, 'buddies' to new pupils or elected representatives on the school council. Talented pupils have the opportunity to help run some of the school clubs.
- 4.6 The pupils have great respect for the individual beliefs, talents and preferences of others. They show tolerance for and promote harmony between those of different cultural traditions. They have an excellent understanding of other cultures, particularly those of the Western cultural tradition, and traditional British values through their study of literature, music and art, as well as through their PSHE and

religious education lessons. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of faith, belief and traditions through assemblies, outside speakers and visits to places of worship.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The staff provide excellent pastoral care in accordance with the school's aims. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and provide excellent support and advice. The pupils feel that they are well cared for and valued, a view overwhelmingly endorsed by parents. Pupils particularly value the small class sizes, which ensure that they receive individual attention. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Tutors follow their tutees as they progress through the school and this adds to the continuity of tracking and an understanding of the pupils' needs. Monitoring and evaluation of pastoral matters are thorough and highly effective.
- 4.9 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing healthy eating habits and taking regular exercise. Fresh and nutritious food is prepared on site, and a suitable range of sports resources, activities and clubs that encourage physical activity is available to pupils of all ages.
- 4.10 Responding to the questionnaires, a few pupils felt that rewards are not always given fairly, and a small minority felt similarly with regard to sanctions. The inspection team interviewed pupils, looked at the school's procedures and examined documentation recording behavioural incidents, and found that the school implements balanced and fair systems, which result in excellent standards of behaviour at all levels within the school.
- 4.11 The school has an excellent and well-implemented policy to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.12 Staff seek the views of the whole school community through the junior and senior school councils and the charity committee. As a result of this, peer mentoring is taking place, and the decoration of the washrooms and a wide range of charity sponsorship have been actioned. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a very small minority of pupils thought that their opinions are not taken into account by the school. Inspectors discussed this point with staff and pupils, as well as looking at documentary evidence. They found that teachers and senior staff are considered by pupils to be very approachable and listen to their views.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The school's safeguarding procedures are thorough and have due regard to the latest official guidance. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly. Training in safeguarding procedures is provided annually at an appropriate level for all staff.
- 4.15 The school takes all necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. External specialists check fire alarms and appliances regularly. Rigorous fire drills are carried out each term to ensure that all pupils and staff can evacuate the buildings speedily and safely. Risk assessments are carried out for all on-site and off-site activities. Excellent procedures have been established to ensure that pupils

and staff manage the narrow corridors, stairs and restrictions of the school site safely.

- 4.16 Throughout the school, arrangements to ensure pupils' health and safety are highly effective. First-aid kits are available in many parts of the school, and numerous members of staff have had first-aid training. The school has a designated medical room, where staff in the school office can closely monitor any pupil who is ill or injured. Careful records are kept of any accidents or illness. Parents are kept fully informed and senior staff look at records every week in order to identify any trends. The school site is kept secure, with controlled access to all buildings. Equipment, resources and materials are stored safely. Daily routines are organised and managed well to allow pupils from different parts of the school access to the playground and dining facilities, in order to avoid over-crowding.
- 4.17 The admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. They are kept electronically and are backed up and stored in accordance with requirements. Registration sessions are conducted efficiently, and attendance records are analysed in order to identify any patterns of absence.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The proprietor provides extremely effective oversight of all sections of the school and all aspects of school life. He has been influential in helping senior leaders to fulfil the aim to build a happy family school. Through the well-organised centralised support teams of the proprietorial group of schools, he discharges the group's responsibilities for maintaining good educational standards. This has ensured that the school has a highly favourable ratio of staff to pupils, who have access to a good range of educational resources. Excellent financial management is reflected in the school's long-term strategic development plan and accommodation, which is very well maintained.
- 5.3 Through weekly management meetings with the school's leaders, regular contact with staff and frequent visits to the school, the proprietor has an excellent insight into the working of the school. His background in education and his thorough understanding of educational legislation and regulatory requirements enable him to exercise the monitoring role of proprietor extremely effectively and to provide both support and challenge for the school's senior leaders. Changes in strategic direction and experience gained through managing other schools in the proprietorial group have provided stimulus for growth and contributed to substantial improvements in what the school has to offer parents and pupils.
- 5.4 The proprietor is extremely effective in discharging his responsibilities for statutory requirements, especially those to do with safeguarding and child protection arrangements, which are subject to a thorough annual review. Policies and procedures are reviewed and updated regularly. The expertise and advice of external consultants are sought whenever needed.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 At all levels of responsibility leaders are highly effective in realising many of the school's aims, particularly those relating to pupils' personal development, and to the creation of a culture in which all pupils develop the confidence to celebrate their individual talents and show courtesy and respect towards each other. The school's ambition to develop the quality of teaching and pupils' academic achievement to the highest level has not yet been fully realised. However, leaders have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and in developing a culture in which staff are responsive to new initiatives and keen to improve. Leaders discharge their delegated responsibilities well, seeking to ensure that the school's policies are implemented consistently, particularly those relating to the safeguarding of pupils. Procedures for checking and recording the suitability of staff on appointment are extremely thorough and well documented.
- 5.7 Leaders have made many improvements since the previous inspection, which have brought the school much closer than previously to the fullest realisation of all of its

aims. Changes to the structure of teaching groups in the senior school have been effective in raising teachers' expectations of how well less able pupils can achieve. Improvements to the curriculum have provided a broader range of opportunities for all pupils to succeed academically. Weekly staff development meetings, a supportive programme for staff appraisal and extensive opportunities for professional development are leading to improvements in teaching. Arrangements for supporting pupils with SEND or EAL are much improved. Many opportunities have been introduced to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- 5.8 Through a collegiate style of management the school's senior leaders provide very clear educational direction, as reflected in the good and improving quality of education and the excellent provision for pupils' personal development, welfare, health and safety. Through thought-provoking assemblies and well-planned form tutor periods, leaders ensure that pupils acquire a set of values in which respect for others and adoption of democratic processes are fully evident. Staff feel extremely well supported by the school's leaders and value the way the leaders work alongside them to help them to improve.
- 5.9 The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning process is excellent. The highly detailed development plan for the current year identifies pertinent areas for development and a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and maximising the potential of each pupil. Equally detailed plans for previous years have been instrumental in bringing improvement, regularly reviewed and thoroughly evaluated. All staff contribute to the discussion and formulation of new improvement priorities, thereby gaining a good understanding of the direction of the school and also experiencing ownership of the improvement planning process. Procedures for staff appraisal are thorough and highly effective. All staff have individual targets for improvement, which are linked well to the priorities in the school improvement plan.
- 5.10 Managers have been successful in securing a body of well-qualified and highly committed staff who are well equipped to meet the needs of the pupils. The induction process for new staff is thorough, and staff are given opportunities to develop professionally. The training which staff receive, either at induction or through the year, emphasises the importance of safeguarding and the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, and ensures the highest standards of care and concern for each individual pupil.
- 5.11 The quality of links with parents is excellent. From the early years onwards, parents' questionnaire responses show an extremely high level of satisfaction with the education that the school provides, and particularly the care shown for their children, the happiness of their children, curricular provision and opportunities to be involved in the life of the school.
- 5.12 Parents of current and prospective pupils are easily able to access the required information about the school and its policies through the prospectus or the school's detailed website. An informative online newsletter describes events, while day-to-day contact is facilitated through email or text messaging. This system has recently been extended, so that parents can now book appointments, give permissions for outings and communicate with staff using these means.
- 5.13 The school makes significant efforts to seek and respond to the views of parents by distributing a biennial questionnaire and holding regular coffee mornings where

parents are welcome to raise concerns and make suggestions to the school's senior leaders and the proprietor.

- 5.14 The school has an appropriate policy for complaints and, on the rare occasions this has been invoked, the school has followed its published procedures effectively.
- 5.15 Helpful reports provide parents with an excellent summary of their children's progress, attainment and targets. The parents of all pupils who are new to the school receive a settling-in report a few weeks after arrival. These, together with scheduled meetings and informal conversations with staff, allow parents to have a good insight into the progress and development of their children. Parents are also welcome to see staff at other times to discuss any matters of concern or arrangements for providing individual support for their children.
- 5.16 The school also provides popular and informative workshops and booklets for parents, such as a session for parents of younger children on how to support the acquisition of new skills, such as reading and writing. Workshops for parents of older pupils deal with topics such as helping their children to prepare for public examinations or keeping them safe online.
- 5.17 A very small minority of parents expressed concern about the way that the school has dealt with bullying. Inspectors found that great care is taken to educate the pupils about how to respond to any harassment. The school has highly effective systems to deal with the small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour, and the pupils report that little bullying takes place. On the few occasions in which incidents have occurred, documentation shows that the school has followed its procedures to consult all involved, including the parents. There has been no recent occasion when serious sanctions needed to be invoked.

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) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 6.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding at meeting the needs of the range of children who attend, including those with SEND or EAL. The setting consistently achieves high standards for all through the provision of excellent educational programmes, administered by highly skilled practitioners who know the children exceptionally well. Detailed planning is shared effectively with all staff. It takes parents' contributions into consideration, following the recommendation of the previous inspection, and provides for imaginative and varied educational experiences that delight children and inspire their enthusiasm.
- 6.2 For the youngest children, these programmes focus on the prime areas of learning, particularly the development of language. For the older children, the high expectations of all staff, and their expert knowledge and understanding of how children acquire and develop conceptual understanding, enable rapid progress to be made. Imaginative games and activities using high quality resources promote learning extremely well.
- 6.3 Excellent strategies involving parents, including a home visit if they wish, enable most children to settle quickly. Throughout the setting, excellent attention to children's personal development and communication skills ensures that the children become enthusiastic learners. This helps them all to reach the expected levels of development, and many to exceed them, so that they are very well prepared to start in Year 1.
- 6.4 Detailed and precise assessments which include contributions from all who teach and support the children are shared with parents. This enables focused support and intervention so that all children make excellent progress. The required checks for two year olds are fully implemented, and parents are given an opportunity to discuss and comment on the findings with the children's teachers.

6.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 6.5 The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being is outstanding. All staff facilitate the warm relationships that are apparent throughout the setting, so that all children form the emotional bonds that provide the security to enable them to explore, learn and develop. Parents commented extremely positively on the way in which staff relate to the children. The children play well together and are confident when talking to adults, including visitors. They behave exceptionally well, learn to share, and show evident happiness and enjoyment in school. They enjoy activities that enable them to use their imagination. For example, during a walk in the forest, they imagined how dinosaurs might once have roamed in Epping.
- 6.6 The children are looked after extremely well. Nearly all children manage their own personal hygiene needs effectively; they understand the necessity for hand washing and are beginning to learn the importance of physical exercise. The school provides healthy, nutritious snacks and meals that cater for all dietary needs. The younger

children are served at small tables where staff help them and encourage good table manners. The older children feel privileged to sit at the larger 'big children's tables'.

- 6.7 All children are familiar with other adults and pupils in the school as they see them in assembly, the dining room and on other occasions. Parents spoke appreciatively of the way that the EYFS children are considered an integral part of the whole school, taking part in events and festivals and benefiting from specialist teaching, so that they are confident and well prepared for the next stage of their education.

6.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 6.8 The leadership and management of the early years provision are outstanding. The proprietor's involvement with the well-resourced setting is highly effective, providing excellent support for leaders and staff as they continually strive to provide the best possible educational experiences for the children in their care.
- 6.9 Extremely close attention is paid to fulfilling all aspects of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. Rigorous care is taken in meeting all safeguarding and welfare regulations, so that the setting is welcoming, stimulating and safe.
- 6.10 Highly effective systems of self-evaluation and appraisal are used to monitor all aspects of the EYFS. Particularly valuable are the regular 'reflections on observations' sheets for which adults analyse the observations they have made on the children during the week, so that progress can be noted and interventions and support planned.
- 6.11 Staff are encouraged to undertake further professional development, to improve practice and to become familiar with new regulations and initiatives. The appraisal system and formal supervision of staff help them to reflect on and develop their practice. The open and supportive relationships within the setting encourage practitioners to discuss with leaders the impact of their practice on the children in their care.
- 6.12 Children's needs are identified rapidly, and close partnerships exist between the school, parents and external agencies, such as speech therapists, so that early interventions are secured and children can make excellent progress.

6.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 6.13 The overall quality and standards of the early years provision are outstanding. Children, including those with SEND or EAL, achieve very well relative to their starting points. Younger children show excellent understanding of mathematical language appropriate for their age. They recognise basic shapes and numbers. They identify the letters of their name and initial sounds of words. The older children are making excellent progress in learning to read and write. They have made a start at learning a modern foreign language, and some show confidence in using French in mathematics when describing size.
- 6.14 All children have their thinking developed and extended by open-ended questions, and child-initiated learning is seen throughout the setting, thus addressing recommendations of the previous inspection. Leadership ensures that all staff are involved in evaluating all aspects of the EYFS so that the children receive the best preparation for their future education.

- 6.15 All children enjoy school. They frequently express enthusiasm for their teachers. They know that they are safe and well looked after. They are beginning to develop an understanding of risk, and the school maintains order by asking the children to consider the consequences of misbehaviour so that they learn to take responsibility for their actions. The school ensures that everyone involved with the EYFS has an excellent understanding of procedures and their responsibilities for welfare and safeguarding, and all requirements are met.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.