



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
CASTLE HOUSE SCHOOL**

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Castle House School

Full Name of School	Castle House School
DfE Number	894/6002
EYFS Number	EY345539
Registered Charity Number	510515
Address	Castle House School Chetwynd End Newport Shropshire TF10 7JE
Telephone Number	01952 811035
Email Address	admin@castlehouseschool.co.uk
Head	Mr Richard Walden
Chair of Governors	Dr Martin Deahl
Age Range	2 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	142
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (76 boys; 66 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 13 5-11: 88 3-5 (EYFS): 41
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 142
Head of EYFS Setting	Mr Jonathan Griffiths (Head of Lower School)
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	17 Jun 2014 to 20 Jun 2014

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 May 2008.

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) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, 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 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 Serena Alexander

Mr Larry Fairclough

Mrs Kathleen Silvester

Mrs Jenny Clayphan

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Former Head of Prep Dept, ISA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	7
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	7
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	8
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	8
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	10
(a) The quality of governance	10
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	10
6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	13
(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	13
(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being	13
(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision	14
(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision	14

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Castle House School is a co-educational, day preparatory school for girls and boys from the ages of two to eleven. It is located in Newport, Shropshire in a Grade II listed building with spacious gardens. Castle House was founded in 1944 on the site of a former school. The school is owned and run by Castle House School Trust Ltd., a charitable trust with a governing body, established in 1980 to provide a modern education within a caring, non-denominational, Christian ethos. Since the previous inspection, the school has upgraded its information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, has introduced dance into the curriculum and has created an elected pupil school council.
- 1.2 The school is committed to creating a family atmosphere of care and support, in which pupils can achieve their full potential. The school declares its purpose to be a place where an encouraging start matters and where love and kindness count. It aims to make learning fulfilling and fun, with an emphasis on art, music, drama and sport. The school also seeks to develop in pupils qualities of independence, self-motivation and self-confidence. It sets out to do this by nurturing interesting and balanced young people, and by aiming to offer the highest quality of education.
- 1.3 Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are catered for in two classes. CHerubS Nursery provides for pupils aged from two to four years. The school and Nursery provide after school and holiday care. The lower school comprises Reception, plus Years 1 and 2. The upper school is organised into Years 3 to 6. There are 142 pupils on roll. In the lower and upper schools, there are 99 full-time pupils: 43 girls and 56 boys. In the Nursery, there are 17 girls and 19 boys attending part-time and 1 boy and 6 girls who attend full-time. There are 25 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and 20 of them receive specialist learning support. Three pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and one receives help with the development of English skills. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.4 The ability level of the school covers a wide range but is generally above average. Most pupils come from professional and business families living in the local area, but the school also retains its links with the rural community. Very few pupils come from a minority ethnic background.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
CHerubS Nursery	Nursery
Kindergarten	Reception

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2. (a) Main findings

- 2.1 The pupils are well educated in line with the school's aims. They develop skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects. The curriculum covers the required areas of learning and is suitable for all ages and abilities, with sport, music and drama featuring strongly and there is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Throughout the school teaching supports the school's aims. Pupils' work is marked and their performance assessed but this is not consistent across all subjects and the quality of marking is variable. Pupils with SEND and the few with EAL are very well supported. In response to the previous inspection, there are now more opportunities for pupils who are highly able, gifted and talented in extra-curricular provision, markedly in gymnastics where pupils' performance is outstanding, but work in class is not always suitably varied to extend the skills of the more able, particularly in classes where there is an over-reliance on worksheets.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. At all ages, the pupils are self-confident and considerate, showing respect for others. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and an awareness of the non-material world. The introduction of an elected school council meets the recommendations from the previous inspection that the school should ensure that boys and girls experience more positions of responsibility and gain a heightened awareness of democratic principles. The excellent quality of pastoral care is demonstrated by the high levels of mutual respect between pupils and staff. The quality of welfare, health and safety of the pupils is sound overall. The safeguarding of pupils is taken seriously and is effective in day-to-day practice, but recruitment procedures have not always been followed correctly and these are being reviewed. By the time they leave the school, the pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education, successfully reflecting the schools' aims.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is sound. Governors offer a range of professional expertise and have exercised prudent financial management that has now allowed investment in new teaching accommodation. Governors carry out their statutory annual review of safeguarding policies and procedures but have not always referenced this to current regulatory requirements, nor have they ensured through monitoring that recruitment procedures on staff and governors are scrupulously followed before they begin work at the school. The leadership and management of the school are very successful at overseeing the personal development of each pupil. However, they have not met all the recommendations of the previous inspection, nor has the implementation of academic policies been consistently monitored through staff appraisal or otherwise.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure all the required recruitment processes, including, where relevant, references, qualifications, barred list and medical checks, are undertaken on staff and governors before they begin work at the school [Part 4, paragraphs 19(2)(a), (b)(ii)(iv), (c), (3), 21(6)(b)(i), 22(3)(c) (d), (6) and (7) under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors; and, for the same reason, Part 3 paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].

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 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that governors implement thorough procedures for monitoring regulatory requirements including quality of teaching and assessment.
2. Continue to develop and maintain the curriculum provision for the more able pupils.
3. In the EYFS, ensure that all staff have regular appraisals so that training needs are identified and staff benefit from continuing professional development.
4. In the EYFS, create rigorous systems for monitoring the curriculum in order to clarify priorities and identify areas for further improvement.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The overall quality of pupils' achievements is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in line with the school's aims of offering them a range of educational opportunities to fulfil their potential. Pupils develop good skills, knowledge and understanding in all subject areas and in their many extra-curricular activities. Pupils' literacy skills develop well. They are articulate and speak well on a variety of topics in which they are interested; for example, in an English lesson, pupils effectively discussed the change in patterns of rhythm in a poem. They listen to their teachers and to one another carefully. They read fluently and learn to write expressively. Pupils apply their numeracy skills to good effect in a range of subjects. Pupils express their creativity, evident around the school and in subjects such as music, drama and art. Pupils' reasoning skills are good, particularly when they are involved in discussions or asking their teachers relevant questions. In ICT lessons, pupils use their skills well; for example, lower school pupils successfully worked out how to program robotic turtles to draw geometrical shapes. The strong levels of participation in physical activities develop pupils' skills very effectively. At the age of 11, pupils move on to academically selective and non-selective independent and maintained schools and occasionally to boarding schools.
- 3.3 The quality of pupils' achievement in extra-curricular activities is excellent. Gymnasts enjoy outstanding success in local and national competitions. The squad has been selected as Shropshire's most successful primary school team. Several pupils achieve high grades in their external music and drama examinations. Pupils throughout the school are successful in a range of activities. Pupils in Year 6 have gained the gold award in a competition celebrating World Science Day. Pupils have won a national art competition and been finalists in a national chess challenge. These successes make a significant contribution to excellent personal development, giving pupils a greater understanding of teamwork as well as respect for differing abilities.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but on the evidence available from the scrutiny of pupils' work and observation it is judged to be good in relation to national averages. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good rates of progress in relation to pupils of similar abilities. In the pre-inspection pupil questionnaire, almost all pupils indicated that they feel they are making good progress. Pupils with SEND and those who find some aspects of their learning more difficult make good progress because of the strong levels of support they receive in the classroom and in individual and group lessons. More able pupils, when given the opportunity, show they are capable of achieving high standards.
- 3.5 The pupils' success owes much to their excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils of all ages are keen to show their work and to talk about their learning. They approach tasks with enthusiasm and concentrate well. In discussions with pupils at interviews and informally, it is clear that pupils enjoy their learning, which is one of the school's aims. Pupils work well together and have the same level of interest and determination when working individually. The high quality of the relationships they have with their teachers and with each other has a positive impact on their achievement.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.7 The school curriculum covers the required areas of learning, with many opportunities for developing the pupils' qualities in line with the school's aims. In addition to National Curriculum subjects, French is taught from Nursery and dance and drama taught from Reception. Although ICT is also taught in discrete lessons from Reception, its use is not yet embedded across all areas of the curriculum and thus opportunities for pupils to develop and use their skills are limited. When opportunities are offered, such as in mathematics, these are enjoyed and develop both subject and ICT skills. There are regular opportunities for independent reading and all pupils have a timetabled physical activity every day. The school makes a special effort to ensure all pupils are able to play for a school team in a variety of sports.
- 3.8 The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils. Curriculum provision for pupils with SEND and the few pupils with EAL is good; they receive tuition from specialist teachers in individual lessons and are also very well supported by additional assistance in class. Additional curriculum opportunities for more able pupils are less well embedded. Meeting the curriculum needs of individual pupils is limited, in part, by an over reliance on commercially produced worksheets, particularly for younger children. The library is well resourced and accessed regularly by pupils. The gardens and grounds around the main buildings provide an imaginative outdoor learning environment, and are well used both as an outdoor classroom and to explore and investigate the natural world. Subject documentation is reviewed on a rolling cycle but is not yet consistent in approach across the school.
- 3.9 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is on offer, the majority run by school staff who know their pupils well. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, most pupils and all parents expressed their satisfaction with the range of subjects and experiences on offer and most pupils take advantage of them. In addition to individual music lessons, there are opportunities before school, at lunchtime and after school for activities such as drama, dance, chess, cookery, art and handicrafts as well as the innovative electronic communication club. Sports opportunities are numerous and inclusive of both boys and girls, with gymnastics on offer from Nursery. The school's exceptional performance in gymnastics at local and national level is fostered through the variety of extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils in various disciplines.
- 3.10 Pupils benefit from a variety of day trips that are closely linked to the curriculum. These include trips to the theatre, to local places of interest such as Roman ruins, castles and museums as well as 'pond dipping' in the nearby nature park. Older children go camping overnight. Alongside this, a range of speakers visit the school such as the local police who run drugs workshops for older pupils and sessions on internet safety, visiting clergy to take assemblies and representatives from charities usually selected by the pupils. The school has close links with the local community; for example, pupils perform music and sing in local residential homes; school council is engaged with the local road safety department in discussion about a pedestrian crossing; and pupils and staff hosted an open gardens day as 300 people visited the school's gardens. The school raises money for local charities at the harvest service.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.12 Teaching supports pupils' achievements effectively and fulfils the aims of the school. In all sections of the school teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well, and strong relationships enhance the quality of teaching, enabling pupils to make good progress according to their abilities, increase their knowledge and develop their skills. The most effective lessons are taught at a well-judged pace with high expectations, shared learning objectives and effective questioning, with pupils inspired to make the most of the time available to maximise their progress. Resources are used effectively. This was exemplified in a lively and stimulating lesson where pupils had to construct their own insects, with an additional special feature, using specific scientific descriptions to label the body parts. The small minority of less successful lessons are characterised by a lack of planning and pace where pupils are not encouraged to ask questions or set appropriate tasks in order to develop their skills and understanding. The recommendation from the previous inspection, that the school should further refine the provision for pupils who are highly able, gifted or talented across the curriculum has not been fully met. Work in class is not always varied sufficiently well to match the range of pupils' abilities. When they are set challenging tasks, more able pupils make good progress.
- 3.13 Pupils' work is marked regularly. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent. Much is thorough, with constructive comments and targets that enable pupils to understand how they can progress further. In contrast, some marking is cursory and, on occasion, there is little evidence of teachers' comments being followed up. In response to the pupils questionnaires, pupils were very positive, with almost all pupils reporting that their teachers helped them learn and gave them individual help when they needed it; most found their lessons interesting. A few pupils felt that their homework did not help them learn. This was not supported by the evidence seen from the work scrutiny and from pupil interviews. Pupils reported enjoying the work set.
- 3.14 Teaching is supported by a range of regular assessments, including end of topic tests and more formal standardised tests. Results are recorded on pupil assessment profiles and hand-written tracking sheets. Form teachers also keep a personal record of achievement for each pupil. There is a lot of data available but assessment results are not centralised and are not used consistently to plan for the needs of each pupil individually or of each year group as they move up the school.
- 3.15 Pupils with SEND are identified quickly, assessed and supported well. Pupils with specific needs are given an individual education programme and receive appropriate support in class from teachers and teaching assistants, who are made aware of their targets, and in individual and small group lessons with a specialist teacher. Parents are made aware of the provision made for their children and communicate regularly with the school about the progress their child is making. Parents and pupils value this support.

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 The excellent personal development of the pupils reflects the school's aims and Christian ethos. Pupils' spiritual awareness is demonstrated in their appreciation of the non-material world, as they wonder at the quality of light passing through stained and cut glass, and enjoy music, singing and artistic expression. As well as preparing and leading assemblies, they pause to reflect upon the daily topic, or express their faith in hymn singing and prayer. One very young pupil, reflecting upon what it means to be brave decided that what was required was to believe in Jesus, believe in yourself and never give up. Pupils display excellent self-awareness and confidence for their age.
- 4.3 Pupils know, understand and respect the school motto, emphasising kindness, and the school code of behaviour, both of which are regularly promoted and discussed. They understand right from wrong and are well behaved, polite and helpful towards each other and to visitors. They strive to win house points for good behaviour or achievement in their work.
- 4.4 The social development of pupils is excellent. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are respectful and caring. They enjoy interaction across the age range in their school houses and smaller 'tree' groups within houses. Pupils celebrate each other's achievements with genuine pleasure. They express themselves with maturity and enthusiasm in interviews, happily talking about themselves and their experiences. New pupils to the school are integrated quickly and well, supported by their peers. Pupils say that it is easy to fit in and make new friends and that pupils look after each other.
- 4.5 In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a very few pupils did not feel that the school encourages them to undertake roles of responsibility but inspectors found that many opportunities exist in daily school life. Democratically elected representatives from Years 2 to 6 meet regularly on school council, to discuss and evaluate suggestions from their peers, with considerable maturity and realistic economic appreciation. They then report back to the whole school, with clarity and confidence. The school appoints librarians, head pupils, house and games captains and a variety of monitors from amongst older pupils. Pupils in Year 6 select those from their dinner tables who they feel merit the privilege of sitting on the Captain's Table during lunch the following day. This is much valued by younger pupils. Pupils gained insight into how the local council is run when the mayor came to talk to them.
- 4.6 Pupils raise funds to support a number of charities, both at home and abroad, frequently suggesting and nominating these. Recent support for an African medical charity included a visit from its representatives, who explained what living conditions are like for the intended recipients. Pupils express deep concern for those less fortunate than themselves and value their own quality of life.
- 4.7 They show understanding and respect for other faiths, for example in RE lessons, and there are highly harmonious and respectful relationships between pupils of different cultures within the school, with a genuine valuing of their achievements. Pupils understand the Western cultural tradition and enjoyed learning about other traditions on occasions such as Africa day. They appreciate aesthetic and cultural

insights through a wide variety of genres and cultures in art, music and dance, but other opportunities to explore different cultures are limited.

- 4.8 By the time they leave the school, pupils have a high standard of personal development, presenting themselves as articulate young people, with a mature appreciation of skills gained and a strong sense of personal worth.

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

- 4.9 The school's arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.10 The school's aims to provide a caring, non-denominational, Christian ethos are well met. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils are highly positive, with staff providing excellent role models. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents were highly appreciative of the care their children receive and said their children are well looked after, happy and feel safe in school.
- 4.11 Class teachers provide a high level of support and encouragement to pupils. A few pupils responding to the questionnaires felt that their teachers did not show concern for them as a person, that rewards and sanctions were unfairly distributed and that the school does not seek their opinions or respond to them. Inspection evidence from observation and interviews with pupils did not support this view. Staff know the pupils extremely well and are effective in meeting individual pastoral needs. Pupils can use suggestion boxes to share their views with the elected school council. Their ideas for improving the school environment are carefully considered, being implemented where appropriate.
- 4.12 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy by eating a healthy diet and taking regular exercise. Pupils may bring fruit to school for morning snack, drinking water is available throughout the day and a balanced diet is provided at lunch time, with the option of fruit for dessert. Daily physical activity is timetabled for all pupils and there is ample opportunity to be active at playtimes.
- 4.13 A few parents expressed concerns about bullying in their questionnaires. Pupils talking to inspectors understood the unkindness of bullying and were clear that any incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour were taken seriously and properly dealt with. Inspectors found that the school is effective in promoting good behaviour. The code of conduct is readily adhered to and clearly understood by pupils. In parents' questionnaires the vast majority agree that the standards of behaviour are high.
- 4.14 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is sound overall.
- 4.16 Health and safety measures are a high priority throughout the school. Many staff are trained in first aid including paediatric first aid in the EYFS. Any accidents or injuries are recorded and parents are kept informed. Accident records are analysed regularly in order to determine any area where the school could improve its procedures. Risk assessments are thorough and undertaken regularly. There is good provision for those who are unwell or who are injured at school and for those pupils with SEND.

- 4.17 Buildings and premises, and in particular the grounds, are maintained well. Fire and other equipment is checked and the necessary records are diligently kept. Fire drills are carried out regularly and assessed for effectiveness; action is taken if improvements are needed. A fire risk assessment is undertaken annually. Staff undertake appropriate fire training.
- 4.18 Throughout the school, safeguarding and the welfare of the pupils are priorities for all staff and are effective in day-to-day practice. The designated safeguarding lead, who is appropriately trained, is known to all staff and is approachable should any concerns arise. All staff have access to and have read the new statutory guidance, and the school has an action plan to ensure that this guidance is met fully. All staff, including non-teaching, part-time and ancillary staff, have recently received child protection training. The school has a good working relationship with local children's social care.
- 4.19 All current staff have been vetted with appropriate criminal record checks although some of these and other checks have not been undertaken at the correct time. The checking of governors' appointments has also not always been rigorously carried out. Recruitment procedures are currently being improved.
- 4.20 The attendance registers have been maintained accurately and kept for three years. The school is in the process of moving to an electronic admission register and all information required for each child is correctly recorded and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 Members of the governing body are closely associated with the school with many being past and current parents. They offer a range of relevant professional expertise that assists the school in fulfilling its aims. Active governors' committees work with leadership and management to discuss current issues and plan future developments. Prudent financial management over recent years has now allowed for investment in staff and in new teaching rooms that are currently under construction in preparation for the next academic year. This is to allow some reorganisation of current teaching accommodation and resources.
- 5.3 Governors have a good insight into the working of the school through the headmaster's detailed reports and the regular presence of the chairman of the governors and the chair of the development committee. Governors attend many school events, such as open days, and they assisted in playing host at an association national gymnastics championships organised by the school. They are effective in providing support, challenge and stimulus for growth, working closely with the headmaster and leadership team. Systems for an increasingly effective monitoring of educational standards are being implemented through a programme of governors sampling the pupils' curricular experience; however, there is a lack of monitoring of the implementation of academic policies.
- 5.4 The governing body carries out a statutory annual review of the school's safeguarding policy but has not always referenced this, and all other school policies, to current regulatory requirements including those for the EYFS. The governors have agreed an action plan to ensure the school's safeguarding policy and procedures follow the newly published guidance. Safer recruitment procedures are in operation and the suitability of all staff and governors has appropriately checked.

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 sound.
- 5.6 The senior leadership team meets regularly and its members are accessible to members of staff, pupils and parents. They are very committed to the personal and academic development of the pupils through a nurturing community and successfully meet the aims of the school. The results of the parents' and pupils' questionnaires show that a very large majority of parents feel the school is well run and children like being at school.
- 5.7 Although all staff are correctly trained in child protection, not all safer recruitment procedures have been scrupulously followed, with the necessary checks on some staff and governors not being undertaken before they began work at the school. However, currently the suitability of staff has been assured and an action plan is in place to ensure that the most recently published guidance is met. This includes a review of recruitment procedures for all staff and governors to ensure that errors

- made in the past are not repeated. Other school policies are reviewed regularly and by the end of the inspection met current regulations, including those for the EYFS.
- 5.8 In line with the recommendations of the previous inspection, pupils at the top of the school have been given greater responsibility through their position on school council, their recommendations for the 'Captain's Table' and through minor roles such as demonstrating the accompanying actions to songs in hymn practice. Awareness of the democratic process has been heightened through regular elections to school council and visits from the local mayor. The leadership team has made some progress towards implementing the recommendation to refine further the provision for pupils who are highly able, gifted or talented across the curriculum. This has been particularly successful in extra-curricular activities. The newly appointed co-ordinator for pupils with SEND now has responsibility for able, gifted and talented pupils and the school is developing more formal policies to cover their provision.
- 5.9 The senior leadership team provides clear educational direction through the reviewing of written policies but has been less successful in the monitoring of their implementation. The formal appraisal of staff has recently been reviewed and a new cycle has just commenced. Pupil performance is monitored through success in their examinations to senior schools and through a series of standardised tests, but results of these are not yet centralised limiting the scope for the leadership to plan effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. The quality of assessment of pupils work is inconsistent. Subject leaders have started to introduce a system of target setting but this has yet to be fully established and its success monitored. This is recognised in the comprehensive school development plan that encompasses all aspects of the school.
- 5.10 The school maintains excellent links with its parents. Parents and prospective parents are provided with the required information about the school. A large number of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They expressed their satisfaction with the education that their children receive, the quality of communication with the school and the warm relationships that are formed. Parents particularly appreciate the friendly, family atmosphere and the quality of care given to their children together with the emphasis on kindness and building children's confidence. A very small minority of parents expressed concern about bullying and homework, but inspection evidence did not support these concerns. The vast majority of parents would happily recommend this school to another parent.
- 5.11 New parents receive a warm welcome to the school and all parents are kept extremely well-informed about the school and its activities. Parents of children in the EYFS are welcomed into school at the start and end of the day where they can see what their children are doing and they communicate daily through homework diaries. Parents with older children can meet teachers briefly at the end of the day or, if a longer discussion is needed, make an appointment. There are two formal parents' meetings each year for discussion with teachers. Parents also receive a full report at the end of the Summer term which is extremely detailed and informative, and briefer grade reports at half terms and in December and April. All parents receive the school newsletters and increasing use is made of contact by email. The school's website is informative and is updated regularly.
- 5.12 The Parents Liaison Association is highly active and organises numerous events both socially for the whole family like the Easter Egg Bingo Hotdog Supper or gatherings such as the Summer Ball for adults when proceeds are shared between

school funds and a chosen charity. Parents are extremely supportive of events. For example, a large number of enthusiastic parents led the cheering at the recent swimming gala for pupils in Years 3 to 6.

- 5.13 Parents are welcomed into school if a problem arises and they are aware of the formal complaints procedure should a serious problem occur. In the questionnaires, most parents felt that their concerns had been handled well and that they had received timely responses to questions. Inspection evidence confirmed this view.

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 quality of the provision is good in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. Programmes are expertly devised and give children numerous opportunities to make close relationships, to learn both independently and with adult support, and to start to speak clearly and thoughtfully and listen attentively. As a result, children are ready for the next stages of their learning. The programmes help all children to reach the level of development typical for their age. Children's gross and fine motor skills develop well. In the Nursery, children under the age of three are given the opportunity to climb, roll and jump during PE and use chalks to draw round each other in the playground, and in doing so, to gain confidence in applying their motor skills. By the end of Reception, most children have attained all their early learning goals, their emerging writing is fluent and neat and their numerical skills are well developed.
- 6.2 Staff have high expectations, provide exciting, stimulating activities and use questions and information expertly so that children are intrigued and encouraged to think for themselves and to confer in groups. For example, in Reception children were set a challenge to send a basket across a stretch of water, which involved them in negotiating and discussing which ideas were feasible. The recommendation from the previous inspection to increase planned use of the outside area for child-initiated activities has been fulfilled. On occasion, however, lessons do not follow the timetable and then activities, while pleasant, do not ensure that key skills are developed effectively.
- 6.3 Planning of teaching strategies is usually excellent as a result of detailed assessment. This ensures that all children, including those with SEND, with EAL and the most able are challenged appropriately so that they make rapid progress from their starting points.
- 6.4 Parents and staff work closely together, which ensures that everyone is well involved in the children's learning, whether in the setting or at home. Parents are very positive about the care for their children and are particularly pleased with the family atmosphere which helps children to settle quickly and become confident. Parents are informed appropriately about their children's achievements and progress through informal meetings at the start and end of the day and through each child's learning journal as well as through formal meetings and reports.

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

- 6.5 Provision for children's well-being is good. Key members of staff are effective role models and have high expectations that children will behave well and ensure that relationships in each room between children and with adults are outstanding. The atmosphere in each room is warm and welcoming, which encourages children to feel happy and to be confident to work both independently and in groups. The very youngest children form secure bonds with their carers. They played happily alongside each other, for example, when painting the ground while older children collaborated maturely to find solutions to problems when making lighthouses.

- 6.6 Staff ensure that children know how to stay safe, the importance of physical exercise and how to eat healthily with snacks of fruit and nourishing hot meals at lunch. Everyone is used to washing their hands regularly and children are encouraged to manage their own hygiene. Children are prepared well for their transitions, transferring easily from one room to the next because they know all the staff well, including those in Year 1, and they visit their new classrooms and become accustomed to them.

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

- 6.7 The quality of leadership and management requires improvement. Governance is effective in supporting the EYFS. The management team works hard to ensure that provision for the children is good, and as a result, the setting meets the learning and development requirements well. The team ensures that all staff receive training in health and safety measures and staff are highly aware of their importance in day to day practice to ensure children feel safe and secure. Some aspects of safe recruitment procedures have not consistently been applied or monitored to ensure checks on staff have been undertaken in a suitably timely manner.
- 6.8 The lead teacher in each room rigorously checks the quality of her own planning and assessment. They have ensured that links between Nursery and Reception have been strengthened as recommended in the previous inspection. However, at present, there is no oversight of the quality of the setting as a whole, nor is there regular appraisal to give all staff opportunities to identify training needs. Supervision is carried out regularly but informally as individual staff members meet with their appointed line manager. Because of the size of the setting and the number of part-time staff, there is no pattern of regular staff meetings to identify areas for improvement as part of a process of self-evaluation. Nor is there the opportunity to discuss, plan and identify areas for further improvement. The management team meets as necessary. The leader in each room nurtures a strong feeling of working as a united team. Policies have been updated recently to ensure they meet the requirements of the EYFS.
- 6.9 There are close partnerships with parents who are highly supportive and eager to help their children, and external agencies give valued support when needed.

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

- 6.10 The quality and standards in the EYFS require improvement. All children make rapid progress in relation to their abilities and needs and most children exceed the early learning goals by, and sometimes before, the end of the Reception year. Children in both rooms are happy, confident learners and form warm, trusting relationships with adults and other children. Children with SEND and those who with EAL receive good support and the most able children are challenged to work at appropriate levels. Children under three start to recognise their own names and other names too while children in Reception use their extensive knowledge of phonics to read complex words, such as 'sweltering' and 'computer', fluently and to write simple text. Younger children start to understand that bottles of different sizes contain different numbers of tumblers full of water, and in Reception children confidently make sums by doubling digits.
- 6.11 The children's personal and emotional development is outstanding. They feel safe and secure, and their behaviour is impeccable throughout the setting. In the Nursery

children take turns patiently and begin to share resources, while in the Reception, children evaluate each other's successes and give kindly ideas for improvements.

- 6.12 While the children's safeguarding welfare are the top priorities for all staff and early years practitioners, and all individuals strive to enrich further the children's experiences, safer recruitment procedures have not always been scrupulously followed. This has not had a significant impact on the safety and well-being of children which is given a high priority within the setting. The leadership and management team is developing systems to evaluate further the quality of caring, teaching and learning to secure and maintain excellent outcomes for the children.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 6.13 In order to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006, those responsible for the registered provision must:
- implement all appropriate safeguarding arrangements [EYFS statutory requirements, Child Protection 3.4];
 - implement all recruitment checks on staff before they begin work [EYFS statutory requirements, Suitable People 3.9].

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision other than take the action specified above.