



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

NEW HALL PREPARATORY SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

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New Hall Preparatory School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	New Hall Preparatory School		
DfE Number	881/6001		
Registered Charity Number	1110286		
Address	New Hall Preparatory School The Avenue Boreham Chelmsford Essex CM3 3HS		
Telephone Number	01245 467588		
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Email Address	prep@newhallschool.co.uk		
Principal	Mrs Katherine Jeffrey		
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Conrad		
Chairman of Governors	Professor Michael Alder		
Age Range	3 to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	332		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (140 boys; 192 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 258
	3-5 (EYFS):	74	11-18: 0
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	331	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 90
Number of Boarders	Total:	1	
	Full:	0	Weekly: 1
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Jane Ullmer		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	12 Oct 2010 to 13 Oct 2010		
	08 Nov 2010 to 10 Nov 2010		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

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

Under the Care Standards Act 2000, an inspection of boarding was carried out at the same time by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The report of this inspection is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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

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

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 New Hall Preparatory School is principally a co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of three and eleven years. As the junior school of New Hall, a senior boarding and day school, pupils from Year 3 upwards may board on a flexible basis during the week in one of the senior school houses; occasionally there are full boarders in Years 5 and 6. Founded by the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, in Belgium in the seventeenth century, the school moved to its present site in 1799 and was the first Catholic school in this country to educate girls. It welcomes all who are in sympathy with its ethos. The preparatory school became co-educational in 1994; a Nursery class opened in 2004. In 2005, the Religious Community withdrew and a new charity was formed to continue the work of the school. The restructuring of the original trust was concluded in 2009; the trustees are all members of the governing body. One member has special responsibility for the preparatory school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Two members represent the founding Community. Situated on the outskirts of Chelmsford, the modern buildings of the preparatory school are set in the parkland that surrounds a former palace of King Henry VIII, now the main building of the senior school. Since the previous inspection, there have been major improvements to premises and facilities, and changes to the management structure. The present headteacher was appointed in 2008 and the current principal of the whole school was appointed in 2001.
- 1.2 The mission of the school is to educate pupils from many traditions in an environment of academic excellence where relationships are based on values of faith, trust and respect. The school aims to provide a broad and balanced education within a Christian community, where all staff are aware of its values and vision, and to inspire its pupils to develop fully their God-given gifts and talents.
- 1.3 There are 332 pupils on roll, of whom 74 are in the EYFS. One pupil has English as an additional language. The vast majority of pupils are of white British origin, with very few from different ethnic groups. The school accepts pupils over a wide ability range and has identified 49 pupils as having mild learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 28 of whom receive specialist learning support from the school. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There is an entrance assessment in order to ensure that the school is the best educational environment for the child. Expectations are high and the ability profile of the school is above the national average, with most pupils in the average and above average ability ranges. The majority of pupils enter in the EYFS and progress to the senior school, several with academic scholarships. Of those who leave, most gain entry, some with scholarships, to maintained selective senior schools.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Pre-Reception	Nursery
Reception	Reception

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' overall achievements and of their learning, attitudes and basic skills is good. From the EYFS onwards, pupils of all abilities and needs are successfully educated; they make good progress over time in relation to their ability and are successful in their learning. The school fully meets its aim to inspire its pupils to develop fully their God-given gifts and talents within a Christian environment where relationships are based on values of faith, trust and respect. The extensive curriculum and excellent programme of extra-curricular activities ensure that pupils have a thorough grounding of knowledge, understanding and skills across the subjects studied. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of good quality and the provision for gifted and talented pupils is well advanced. Good teaching by enthusiastic, well-qualified staff also contributes to the academic progress of pupils who have very positive attitudes to learning. In response to the recommendations of the previous inspection, assessment and tracking procedures have been significantly strengthened and effectively linked to the raising of attainment. The curriculum has been reorganised and further development is taking place. Reports to parents and marking have been improved. The roles and responsibilities of subject leaders have been reorganised. Opportunities for three-dimensional work in the EYFS have improved, as has the provision of design and technology (DT), but development of this subject is restricted by lack of space.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is very highly developed. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils are educated in an atmosphere of praise and encouragement where each individual is seen as a child of God. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents commented favourably on the happiness of their children, the high quality of the pastoral care they receive, their good behaviour and the benefit of the Catholic ethos. The inspection team were in full agreement with these views. Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are also excellent.
- 2.3 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The governing body is extremely committed and effective, and totally supportive of the ethos of the school. Leadership and management are outstandingly successful. They have a clear vision for future success and strive to provide the best possible education for present pupils. The vast majority of the recommendations of the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. Parents are very pleased with their children's curriculum, the wide range of extra-curricular activities available and the responsive, approachable management. A few parents were concerned about the volume of homework, aspects of the behaviour of some pupils and communication with staff. However, there is a liaison book for parents to use, and also staff are readily available at the end of each day and are happy to discuss individual concerns, including behaviour and homework.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Extend further the provision for design and technology, particularly accommodation, and consider ways of making more effective use of the laboratory for science lessons.
2. Clarify the organisation of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in order to give greater contact and reassurance to parents of younger pupils, in particular.
3. Develop the assessment of the children during child-initiated learning to a fuller extent throughout the EYFS.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The overall achievements of the pupils are good. From the EYFS onwards, pupils are successfully educated and the school's aims are fulfilled. Standards are above average, and pupils make good progress over time in relation to their ability. They enjoy a broad and balanced education, enriched by the aims and values of the school's Catholic foundation, which enables individual pupils, through high expectations, good teaching and encouragement, to fulfil their academic potential. Pupils enjoy an all-round education, achieving a range of successes in curricular and extra-curricular activities, particularly in music.
- 3.2 The pupils' levels of knowledge, understanding and skill are secure in both curricular and extra-curricular activities, and are significant strengths of the school. Good speaking and listening alongside confident reading skills were observed in a variety of lessons. Independent work and thinking are at a high level from an early age; pupils in Year 1 demonstrated outstanding skills when applying the process of elimination, within a problem-solving situation in a mathematics lesson. Numeracy skills and mathematical ability develop well as pupils are continually encouraged to participate and discuss applications of their class work from Year 1 onwards. Pupils are enthusiastic about the availability and use of information and communication technology (ICT) and explain eagerly how they use mathematics programs. Willingness to experiment and to be creative is a strength and has been enhanced with the advent of an innovative curriculum. Outstanding examples of this were evident in a Year 6 music lesson within the improvisation of twelve bar blues, and also in pupils' responses in gymnastic sessions. However, lack of suitable accommodation restricts development and breadth of achievement in practical and creative subjects such as DT and art.
- 3.3 There is a range of notable successes and achievements in the academic, sporting and performing arts fields. The curriculum is supported and enhanced by an extensive range of well-resourced extra-curricular activities in which pupils from an early age achieve significant successes. Both the infant and junior choirs consistently receive awards in local music festivals, as do the junior orchestra and recorder group. Riding, sailing and ski-ing are among the sports in which regional and national success is achieved.
- 3.4 Standards are well above average when compared with the average for maintained primary schools. Although the school does not take part in standardised testing arrangements, the evidence available from lessons, written work and discussions shows pupils to be working at a high level. The pupils follow a broadly academic curriculum, although with an increasing emphasis on creativity, particularly in Years 1 and 2; they proceed mainly to the academically selective senior school or to maintained selective senior schools, with a good proportion of scholarship awards being won. Inspection evidence confirms the above judgement; levels in English and mathematics are tracked through a thorough assessment package and the results reflect the school's aims in realising potential.
- 3.5 Pupils make good progress in relation to their ability; this was evident in most subjects observed over a range of independent and teacher-led activities throughout the age range, and is supported by the data from an individual target tracking

system. The recent initiative to promote assessment for learning has also led to increased progress and given greater opportunity for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to contribute in lessons through discussions, self-evaluation and peer assessment. However, some parents are not yet aware of these changes, as seen in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Teaching enhances progress through a range of innovative methods, using video and audio recording as a reflective tool.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to their learning, approaching their tasks with reasoning, measured thought, reflection and self-belief, and also initiative. High quality examples of this were observed in their autonomous application of ICT skills and their sometimes confident approach to a variety of thrilling movements on gym apparatus. In a lesson about rainforests and deforestation, pupils were well organised and attentive as they discussed and drew from each other's experiences.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by the addition of French from Nursery, drama from Reception and Latin from Year 3. Religious education, whether in formal lessons or to a significant extent in class or school assemblies, hymn practices and chapel times, also makes an important contribution; it underpins the life of the school and encourages a calm and caring approach.
- 3.8 The structure of the curriculum meets the needs and abilities of all age and ability groups within the school. In line with the aims of the school, the curriculum is broad and balanced; it effectively covers all the required areas of learning from the EYFS onwards. The introduction of, and emphasis on, a new creative approach to the curriculum are excellent and are bringing many benefits already, contributing to the raising of achievement by involving pupils in their learning.
- 3.9 There is sufficient breadth and balance in the curriculum to cater for the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those of higher ability or judged to be gifted or talented. Careful arrangements of classes and teachers within year groups from Year 4 onwards in selected subjects allow different ability groups to achieve success according to their level.
- 3.10 The preparatory school has recently appointed a head of learning support and a head of mathematics (who is also the whole-school gifted and talented co-ordinator, appointed in 2007); these appointments are resulting in appropriate curriculum extension for specific needs. However, parents are not yet clear about the division of responsibility for learning support provision and procedures to ensure continuity between the senior and preparatory school. Provision of classroom space for the gifted and talented and higher ability pupils in mathematics, in particular, has restricted the availability of specialist accommodation for science and DT. The previous report raised concern about the provision for DT. Improvements have been made and both staff and pupils are enthusiastic about the subject, but opportunities are restricted to utilise the excellent resources in the specialist science laboratory for practical and investigative work in both subjects. Pupils commented that practical work is often undertaken in classrooms.

- 3.11 The curriculum is supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities that vary from fencing to philosophy. Parents are hugely appreciative and, from a young age, pupils are eager to attend as many activities as they possibly can. Good community links have been established and a variety of charity work is undertaken through school council initiatives, with enthusiastic contributions from pupils who have a great sense of pride in their fund-raising activities.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.12 The quality of teaching is good overall; a significant proportion of outstanding lessons was seen, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Where the teaching is of high quality, it very effectively promotes the pupils' progress and supports the aims of the school.
- 3.13 Considerable efforts have been made over the past two years to improve the quality of teaching. The use of a checklist for a highly effective lesson has ensured that the focus is on learning. Emphasis is placed on sharing with pupils the learning objectives, key vocabulary and success criteria of each lesson. Some excellent examples of work with varying levels of challenge to suit different abilities were seen. Overall, lessons are well planned and well organised; lesson plans which give consistency across a year group are readily available to staff and can be adapted according to the needs of the teacher.
- 3.14 The participation of five members of staff in an assessment for learning research project has led to strategies to encourage independent learning and actively involve pupils in their learning. A feature of a high proportion of lessons is careful time management, which enables consistent use of discussion either in pairs or groups. This retains interest, encourages independent thought and engages pupils in lessons, as do other strategies such as named lollipop sticks, drawn at random, to select the person to answer a question.
- 3.15 Subject leaders have detailed and effective plans for the development, monitoring and evaluation of their subjects and take their responsibilities very seriously. Helpful links are established between subject leaders in the preparatory school and heads of department in the senior school.
- 3.16 Good use of subject specialists, alongside generous resources and a welcoming, well-stocked library, undoubtedly enhances the teaching and learning opportunities, although this puts pressure on classroom availability. Facilities and resources for ICT, and access to these, are outstanding. Efficient and creative use of the interactive white boards in classrooms has now been extended to the use of additional electronic equipment and resources.
- 3.17 The good relationships between pupils and staff, and the involvement of pupils in their lessons lead to a high degree of positive behaviour and co-operation.
- 3.18 Assessment procedures were criticised at the previous inspection, and these have been considerably strengthened and successfully linked to planning for the raising of attainment. Helpful marking, with positive comments, also contributes to achievement. The school's 'triangle' system of indicating a pupil's understanding is used consistently and all pupils recognise its purpose; it is well linked to assessment. However, not all teachers follow the marking policy, for example in the consistent identification of spelling errors.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. The school's ethos permeates daily life both inside and outside the classroom and its aims are clearly met. The strength of spirituality and harmony within the school gives a calm and constructive environment in which pupils have the support and guidance to flourish. The school has high expectations for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils and a clear framework ensures that this is pivotal in the development of life skills for the future.
- 4.2 Spiritual awareness is exceptionally strong, and clearly observed in assemblies and hymn practices, in pupils' creative work, their appreciation of their own beautiful small chapel, and the manner in which they understand their individual role and responsibility within the school and in the wider world. The chapel is used by all pupils as a special place to reflect in its quiet and spiritual atmosphere. At all ages, they display a high level of confidence and self-awareness, positively encouraged by the school management, teaching and support staff.
- 4.3 Pupils have an extremely clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils in each age group understand the expectations for good behaviour at their level. Standards of behaviour are high, along with expectations for older pupils to be good role models for younger pupils. Pupils develop a strong sense of working together from the example set by staff. The house system is highly effective and pupils strive to gain house points; these are proudly displayed in the school hall.
- 4.4 Levels of social responsibility are strong, and pupils understand their role within the school community and how they can support each other and also those in need, both locally and across the world. Guided in their efforts by willing staff, pupils are very proud to be 'eco-rangers', and are very aware of the importance of their 'eco-garden' and of recycling. As class representatives on the school council, they gain experience of democracy in action and take their duties seriously. They discuss and decide on issues of interest for their fellow pupils as well as wider global matters. Pupils' talents are celebrated throughout the school day and special achievements are recorded in the 'golden book'. In line with the school's ethos, and well supported by the personal, health and social education curriculum, a high level of charity work is evident in the active involvement of pupils who organise fund-raising activities for local and world-wide causes.
- 4.5 A very strong depth of understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures, both past and present, is evident not only through curriculum work but also through assemblies, displays, books, pictures, music, art, drama and trips. Pupils have opportunities to discuss a variety of religions and cultures, and are encouraged to understand that all people have a right to their own personal opinions. Pupils' appreciation of others is apparent on a personal level, as well as a wider appreciation for the gifts they have been given as members of their school. There are many examples of pupils supporting each other, listening intently when others are explaining their work, and sharing in each other's success and achievements, whether academic, creative or social.

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

- 4.6 The very high quality of the school's arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils makes a major contribution to their personal development.
- 4.7 Staff provide highly effective support and guidance for their pupils, in keeping with the ethos of the school. Meticulous arrangements for welfare, health and safety enable everyone to feel safe and secure within a caring environment.
- 4.8 Extremely positive working relationships are evident between staff and pupils, and among pupils themselves. There is a true sense of community and an understanding of working together within an atmosphere of trust and respect.
- 4.9 The school has very effective procedures for promoting good behaviour and guarding against bullying; no bullying incidents have been recorded in the current academic year. Good behaviour is positively reinforced through praise and encouragement, and pupils are gently guided in their understanding of respect and thoughtfulness for others.
- 4.10 Safeguarding arrangements are of a very high standard; they follow closely statutory requirements. All staff receive clear guidance and well-organised training at suitable intervals. Staff thoroughly understand their responsibilities and parent helpers are also reminded of their duty to report concerns.
- 4.11 All necessary measures are taken to ensure that risks of fire and other hazards are minimised. Well-trained staff are vigilant and aware, and procedures are highly efficient.
- 4.12 Excellent provision is made for pupils who are taken ill. The medical room is bright, cheerful and well equipped; it is ably staffed during the school day to care for and support pupils when needed. There is an effective and well-considered plan to improve educational access for pupils with disabilities.
- 4.13 Pupils are encouraged to eat a healthy lunch, and they show a clear and developing understanding of the need to eat a balanced meal and to exercise in order to stay fit and healthy. The younger pupils have a calm and supportive lunch time with a closer level of support, appropriate to their age. From Year 3 upwards, pupils have lunch in the senior school refectory and thoroughly enjoy the increased choice and level of responsibility. Pupils speak highly of the food on offer, and the organisation and supervision of the dining rooms ensure that they have an enjoyable and healthy meal-time experience.
- 4.14 The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years. After-school clubs have their own attendance registers.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.15 A boarding inspection was conducted by Ofsted and is the subject of a separate report. The ISI inspection has considered boarding in the whole-school context only.
- 4.16 The boarding experience which is offered to pupils in the preparatory school, although usually limited to a few nights each week, plays a valuable part both in their education and their personal development. It also makes a very important contribution to effective fulfilment of the school aim to foster caring relationships, a sense of team spirit and respect for others.
- 4.17 The welcoming and caring family atmosphere generated by the dedicated and enthusiastic staff in the junior boarding house encourages friendly relationships, and no effort is spared in ensuring that the young boarders have enjoyable and worthwhile activities outside lesson time.
- 4.18 The quality of the accommodation and resources is very high. The recently refurbished accommodation offers a pleasant and comfortable common room, a bright and modern kitchen, single study bedrooms for Year 6 pupils and double bedrooms for younger pupils. There is also a wide range of recreational facilities.
- 4.19 The recommendations of the previous boarding inspection, undertaken by Ofsted, have been fully met.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The governing body provides highly effective and expert oversight of the school. Its members are wholly conversant with the school's aims, having been fully involved in the establishment of the new trust during recent years. They fulfil their responsibilities for the standard of education, financial planning, and investment in staff, accommodation and resources with the utmost skill and commitment. They also discharge their responsibilities for child protection, safeguarding, recruitment, welfare, and health and safety with great diligence and to a very high standard. There are comprehensive induction and training arrangements for governors. The establishment of the new trust and subsequent reorganisation presented the opportunity and impetus to increase efficiency and effectiveness to a high level.
- 5.2 The governing body has a good insight into the working of the preparatory school through the contribution of an appropriately experienced link governor, from the termly reports it receives from the headteacher and from the minutes of relevant committees, such as the education and staffing committee, which reviews safeguarding arrangements annually. A visiting schedule has been drawn up and members of these committees visit the school each term. The comprehensive school development plan, which is drawn up after careful consultation and consideration of the development needs of each section of the school, also aids the governors in their longer-term strategic planning.
- 5.3 A high percentage of parents indicated their satisfaction with the governance of the school. The headteacher and staff are valued and supported by the governors in their efforts to provide an excellent education for their pupils.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of the leadership and management is excellent. At all levels of responsibility, the leadership and management of the school are highly effective and fully committed to pupils' best possible educational achievement and personal development, and to the successful fulfilment of the school's aims.
- 5.5 Policies are carefully drawn up and presented for approval to the governors. This comprehensive range of documents provides an extremely clear framework and very effective direction for the work of the school; it results in the high quality of the education and the excellent personal development of the pupils.
- 5.6 The leadership and management are committed to self-evaluation, analysis of needs and setting priorities, and ensuring that they are achieved in order to enable each pupil in their care to achieve the highest possible standard of educational and personal development. The school development plan is a perfect example of this process, but its added value lies in the earlier stages that involve each subject and section, and result in a strong sense of commitment by the staff to the aims and success of the school. Pupils are also involved and a version of the plan is specially prepared for them and discussed with each class.

- 5.7 At middle management level, leaders of subjects have duties that link into targets in their annual professional reviews. They also display the enthusiasm and commitment of the senior management for the continual raising of standards in all aspects of the education they are providing for their pupils.
- 5.8 Careful attention is paid to recruitment processes at each level in order to provide high calibre staff. Induction, support, continual professional development and training ensure strong awareness of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety issues, and of procedures put in place to protect the pupils. Staff and governors are trained suitably in their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.9 Since the previous inspection, and particularly since the reorganisation of the management structure, continual development and improvement have taken place across the school. Areas requiring immediate attention were identified and there is an ethos of striving for excellence in the curriculum, and teaching and learning. The most recent initiatives to improve the quality of education through assessment for learning are proving highly motivational.

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

- 5.10 The quality of the school's links with parents is excellent. Relationships are highly constructive and firmly based on the values of faith, trust and respect that are fundamental to the ethos of the school.
- 5.11 In their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the education and support enjoyed by their children. An extremely high proportion considered that they can communicate easily with the school and receive timely responses to questions, and that information is readily available. Parents are warmly welcomed by staff, teaching and non-teaching alike, while reception staff are available over an extended day to help with queries or concerns, large or small.
- 5.12 Parents are welcomed into the school community as helpers in swimming and physical education lessons, in particular. They also have many opportunities to be involved in its life through the class representatives on the parents' forum, which discusses issues and concerns, through the parents' association, which is described as active and inclusive, and through a more informal network of friends who are willing to help when required.
- 5.13 Information about the school is readily available; the quality of the recently redesigned newsletter and website is very high. The criticism in the previous report that the quality and frequency of reports were not high enough has been fully dealt with. After extensive consultation with parents, through the recently established parents' forum, reports were redesigned and are now issued termly.
- 5.14 A few parents felt that they do not have sufficient information about their children's progress, and a few others were concerned about homework, either too much or too little. The inspection team considered that the school has careful records of individual progress which are shared willingly with parents and also listens with understanding to individual concerns about homework. A comparatively small number of parents were concerned about provision for younger children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The inspection team found that the school is already considering ways of adapting provision to changing circumstances and needs.

5.15 The inspectors agreed with the vast majority of parents, who expressed their wholehearted approval of the curriculum, the extra-curricular activities, the high standards of behaviour, and the excellent attitudes and views promoted by the school. The school takes appropriate steps to deal with complaints. There are clear procedures to be followed in case of any concern, and very few instances of more serious issues have arisen in recent years.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.1 The effectiveness of the EYFS is good overall. It is successful in meeting the needs of all children. The high adult to child ratio in the Nursery, in particular, enables all children to be recognised as unique individuals, with their own gifts and talents. Children achieve well and make good and, at times rapid progress from their different starting points. The leadership is aware of the need to develop continuously and adapt to change. An effective system of review and self-evaluation enables improvements in planning and provision. Children make good use of the spacious, sheltered outdoor areas that have been created since the previous inspection.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are good, and some aspects are outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous, with particular attention paid to appointing staff and helpers, and to the safety of children at the end of their school day. The team has an excellent framework for risk assessment. The management has a clear vision and suitable priorities for development. Sharing good practice and forward planning are key elements. Staff work exceptionally well together and with other educational professionals to develop their expertise and their planning for children's learning. They regularly review and update their practice. In particular, they recognise the need for learning and assessment to become more child-initiated. Excellent policies and procedures are consistently implemented to promote equality, appreciation of other cultures and awareness of the uniqueness of each child. Generous resources, together with the covered outdoor areas and spacious grounds, are used effectively to promote active learning, particularly in the Nursery, where adult to child ratios are higher. All adults have suitable qualifications and access to good quality training. The EYFS is clearly committed to continuous improvement and is developing closer links with parents. The frequency of meetings with parents is being increased to provide further opportunities for their involvement in their children's learning; this was commented on in responses to the parents' questionnaire.

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

6.3 Provision is good in all major aspects, and outstanding in some. The educational programme is thoroughly planned and provides rich, varied experiences. Adults work exceptionally well as a team to support children's learning and development. The quality of planning enables each child to achieve well in all areas of learning. Assessment systems are thorough, and include the use of relevant observations to assess the progress of all children and to inform planning for their learning. Children with specific difficulties are sensitively and appropriately supported. Group activities in the Nursery, especially, are carefully planned to involve all children in active learning. Key people, and all the staff, work closely together to support the welfare and safety of all children. Adults promote good health and well-being, and

encourage good habits and behaviour, with sensible rules to ensure that children are safe and confident. Healthy snacks are available. All equipment is checked on a regular basis and is in good condition.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for all children are outstanding. The majority of children exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS. Children love school and visibly enjoy learning. They have a very good grounding in phonics, with their 'sound of the week'. They thoroughly enjoy sequencing, counting and number games, and use ICT proficiently. They gain knowledge and understanding of the world, discovering autumnal changes in the woods, investigating bubbles and rainbow patterns, and enjoying role play in their 'veterinary surgery'. They develop good reasoning skills and enjoy a wide range of problem-solving activities. Personal development is strong. Children have excellent relationships with adults, and appear safe and confident. They understand the need to have healthy habits, to be physically active and to eat fruit and vegetables. Children are keen to contribute in their activities. They co-operate and share with one another, and are willing to be helpful and to take responsibility. They understand about respecting the feelings of others and behaving kindly and sensibly.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors and the preparatory school link governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited a boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools were inspected by a team of two Ofsted inspectors over two days.

Inspectors

Mrs Danice Iles	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Janet Cooper	Former Head, GSA school
Mrs Heather Friell	Head of Pre-Preparatory School, HMC school
Mr Giles King	Deputy Head of Junior School, SHMIS school
Mrs Kirsten Jackson	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector