



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

LEICESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Leicester Grammar School

Full Name of School	Leicester Grammar School
DfE Number	856/6006
Registered Charity Number	510809
Address	Leicester Grammar School London Road Leicester LE8 9FL
Telephone Number	0116 259 1900
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Email Address	king@leicestergrammar.org.uk
Head	Mr Christopher King
Chair of Governors	Mr Ian Patterson
Age Range	3 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	1193
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (583 boys; 610 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 71 5-11: 362 11-18: 760
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 1193
Number of day pupils	Total:
Head of EYFS setting	Mrs Margaret Redfearn
EYFS gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	08 Mar 2011 to 09 Mar 2011 04 Apr 2011 to 06 Apr 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 Leicester Grammar School is a co-educational day school founded in 1981 in response to the demise of the maintained grammar schools in the area. Its junior school came into existence in 1992 when a local convent primary school was taken over. In 2008 the whole school moved to a purpose built site in Great Glen, south east of the city, where pupils aged from three to nineteen are educated. Governance is in the hands of the Leicester Grammar School Trust, a registered charity. The school has a Christian foundation but also admits pupils of all faiths, and of none.
- 1.2 In pursuit of all-round excellence, the school aims to develop the academic potential of every pupil. It seeks to enrich each pupil's experience through music, sport and other interests. It wishes to allow the moral and spiritual well-being of pupils to grow and to nurture the individual in a co-educational school with a Christian ethos.
- 1.3 On roll in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 14 boys and 14 girls are in the Nursery, with 21 boys and 22 girls in the Reception classes. There are 362 pupils in Years 1 to 6, 564 pupils in Years 6 to 11, and 196 in Years 12 to 13. Entry to the school is by selective assessment, usually at the ages of 4 and 10. Approximately six-tenths of those entering Year 7 in the senior school come from the junior school. A number of pupils join at sixth form level.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the junior school is above the national average, with almost all pupils having of at least above average ability, and over a quarter having an ability that is far above average. The ability profile of the senior school is above the national average. Most pupils are at least of above average ability, with a significant proportion of far above average ability. The ability profile of the sixth form is a little wider than in the rest of the senior school. Thirty-six pupils in the junior school have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), 25 of whom receive learning support from the school. In the senior school, of 49 pupils identified, 27 receive specialist help from the school, one pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN), and five receive specialist help for English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.5 Pupils come primarily from professional and business homes and over a third of pupils are from ethnic minority families. Pupils travel to school by bus, coach or car from the surrounding area. Approximately ten pupils per year leave after completing GCSE examinations. Virtually all sixth-form pupils proceed to higher education, a few after taking a gap year.
- 1.6 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
Kinders	Nursery
Reception	Reception

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 From the EYFS onwards pupils achieve excellently in their learning and personal development. The school fully meets its aims. Attainment levels are high and all pupils make excellent progress both within and outside the classroom. Their overall success is promoted by excellent teaching. Marking and assessment are generally good. Pupils' achievement is supported by their excellent attitudes to learning and their exemplary behaviour. The breadth and richness of the curricular and extra-curricular experiences ensure a broadly based education.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent and supported by outstanding pastoral care. The school fully meets its aim of developing every pupil's academic potential, providing wide-ranging extra-curricular activities and enhancing their moral and spiritual development. They constantly strive to meet challenges and fulfil high expectations. Their care for one another, often across age groups, is evident in all aspects of school life. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and a good knowledge of the wider world. Pupils appreciate the spiritual dimension in chapel and assemblies, and in subjects such as music and art, and are sensitive to the beliefs and values of others. Their awareness of those less fortunate than themselves is demonstrated through their charity fund-raising and involvement with the wider community. Compliant welfare, health and safety procedures and policies underpin the pupils' development.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent and the trustees are totally committed to meeting the aims of the school. They have shown vision and oversight, and have demonstrated outstandingly skilled financial management. Governors and senior managers have addressed fully the recommendations of the previously separate inspection reports on the grammar and junior schools, and the school has taken considerable care to meet all statutory requirements. Library, ICT and other facilities are excellent, but ICT resources are still to be fully integrated into teaching and learning. Safeguarding and recruitment procedures are rigorous, all risk assessments have been undertaken, the pupil registration process is fully compliant, pupil assessment and monitoring procedures and special needs provision have been improved, the communication of information to parents has been enhanced, and the complaints procedure is robust. Leadership and management are highly effective. The roles of senior and middle management are clearly defined and systems are in place to ensure appropriate monitoring of academic and pastoral matters. The school has excellent links with parents whose replies in the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly favourable.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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. Develop the application of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
2. In the senior school, provide all pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their work.
3. In the EYFS, extend the outdoor learning environment to make even more use of the substantial grounds.
4. In the EYFS, develop learning opportunities to further child-initiated learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements, learning and skills throughout the school is excellent and their attitude towards their learning and to their teachers is outstanding. Their high level of success reflects the school's declared aim to enable all pupils to achieve the best of which they are capable. They reason well and demonstrate competent, transferable numeracy and literacy skills. There are no differences between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils' creativity is evident in their art, music and drama. Some students display high level ICT skills, although there is no extensive evidence that ICT is fully utilised within the taught curriculum. Students read particularly well, display confidence orally and they are extremely articulate. All pupils with LDD, as well as those with EAL, achieve highly in relation to their abilities, and gifted and talented pupils are offered extra challenges in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 3.2 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at the age of 11 have been good in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. Results in GCSE have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained schools. In 2010 seven-tenths of grades were at A* or A. IGCSE results in mathematics, physics and biology were higher than average for schools worldwide and similar to the average for United Kingdom schools, where the benchmark is higher. At A level, results have been far above the national average of those for maintained schools, and were good in comparison with maintained selective schools. At A level in 2010, well over four-fifths of the grades were at A* to B, with almost a quarter awarded being at the new A* grade. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make exceptional progress in relation to pupils of similar ability.
- 3.3 Extra-curricular achievements are outstanding in the junior school, where excellent results are attained in mathematics, music and ballet. In the senior school, students compete successfully in mathematics and science at national level and classical reading competitions regionally. In music, very large numbers of students achieve success in nationally recognised examinations, with many progressing to the higher grades. Pupils are selected nationally and regionally for youth classical and jazz ensembles. Performance is high in a wide range of sports in the senior school in cricket, rugby, hockey, netball, and athletics, and also in football, cricket and cross-country in the junior school. All-round academic and extra-curricular achievements owe much to pupils' positive attitudes; they are fiercely loyal to their school and to those who care for them. Pupils work with enjoyment, support each other and have real confidence in their teachers. They are highly productive whether working individually or cooperatively, they display curiosity and independence of mind and are ready to discuss and share views. They are modest and self-effacing and show a commitment in everything they do. They are particularly well motivated, have an enthusiastic love of learning, and show intellectual curiosity. Their behaviour and work ethic are exemplary and they enjoy extremely good relationships with teachers, with other staff, and with each other.

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

- 3.4 The curricular and extra-curricular provision is highly effective. The school offers a broad, balanced and flexible curriculum which supports its aim of providing enriching all-round opportunities. The availability of dedicated playing fields and the sports centre on the new site has transformed sport. The junior and senior schools now have excellent library facilities which are used extensively and promote independent learning. The curriculum throughout the school includes a well-designed PSHE programme although, for those choosing to take critical thinking in the sixth form, PSHE opportunities are restricted. Some choice is provided in modern languages; French is the core language initially, but opportunities to study German and Spanish occur from Year 9. Classics is available throughout the senior school. Expressive subjects are well represented from the outset, and pupils have many creative opportunities. English language and literature, French, mathematics, and chemistry are core subjects to GCSE, and pupils select from a wide range of other subjects. Demanding IGCSE courses are studied in some subjects. Over 20 A Levels are available and a baccalaureate course has been introduced in Year 12, in which pupils are required to undertake an extended project, community service and either critical thinking or general studies in addition to their A Level choices.
- 3.5 The curriculum is planned to ensure continuity across phases and, although parallel, Year 6 classes operate in each part of the school, creating some duplication, the existence of similar classes in the junior and senior schools enhances cooperation at this level. The school provides well for all its pupils, including those with LDD and students with EAL. A special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) operates well in the junior school and a learning support department now functions actively. A member of staff in the junior school has been appointed to identify gifted and talented pupils. Such pupils in the senior school are catered for through more demanding work, setting arrangements, the input of guest speakers, and the availability of specialist club and society activities.
- 3.6 The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and links with the community such as involvement in a local recycling scheme, and musical contacts with Leicester Cathedral and local churches. The heads' awards encourage all-round effort and promote involvement in extra-curricular activities. Games have an especially high profile and music is outstanding in breadth of activity and quality. Over half a dozen sports are played competitively in the junior school, and a larger number are offered in the grammar school. All are well coached, and high standards are achieved. Club activities ranging from ballet and music to marvellous maths and ICT are highly popular in the junior school. Similarly at senior level such activities as art, photography, and the kit car club are well supported. Trips are arranged to local, regional and national areas of interest which broaden pupils' academic and aesthetic development. Close international links have been established with a school in Tanzania, and schools in Gambia are also helped. Charity activities have been directed at local, regional, national and international causes such as Leprosy and, recently, victims of the Japanese earthquake. The house systems in both parts of the school offer many opportunities for pupils to compete against each other in games, music, and drama, and leadership and organisational skills are also promoted. They are also offered in the senior school via participation in Young Enterprise, outdoor pursuits, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and community service programme.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.7 The excellent achievements of the pupils are strongly promoted by well-structured teaching which is centred on responding to the needs of individual pupils throughout the school. Pupils are enabled to make rapid progress in line with the school's aims, as a result of well focused and effective teaching. The overall quality of the teaching is excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, are enthusiastic, and plan thoughtful and enjoyable lessons which build on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. In many of the lessons observed teachers maintained a brisk pace, engaged their pupils, used good questioning techniques and made effective use of resources. Examples of best practice occurred in a chemistry lesson on bonding, in which a careful mixture of theory and practical work was evident, and in an English lesson where thoughtful and creative ideas from pupils in pairs and groups were constantly reinforced by teacher praise.
- 3.8 Throughout the school pupils are helped to develop a secure understanding of their subjects and they make rapid progress overall. They have opportunities to use ICT, take responsibility for their own learning and are able to think and reason for themselves. The flair and enthusiasm that teachers often bring to their lessons generates much interest in the pupils. From the beginning of the EYFS onwards, pupils benefit greatly from well-planned lessons. The foundations for effective learning established in the early years are well developed by the quality of teaching in the junior school. As a result, teachers in the senior school are able to build on firm foundations.
- 3.9 Teachers give freely of their time out of class to assist individuals to meet the standard required. The junior school special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the learning support co-ordinator in the senior school have effective systems in place to identify and respond to pupils' individual needs. Teachers are also kept well informed by EAL support staff and carefully plan individual help for particular pupils in their lessons. Teachers know their pupils' capabilities and are effective in building on their prior learning to help them to overcome difficulties and achieve their academic potential.
- 3.10 Teaching places considerable emphasis from Year 1 upwards on acquiring the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, while at the same time building self-confidence. Specialist teaching develops high levels of skill in language acquisition and the range of languages experienced by pupils, as they move up the school, facilitates the pupils' understanding that the challenge is not solely rooted in grammar and vocabulary. Teaching promotes creative work across many subjects, and particularly through well-integrated approaches in art and design, and in design and technology.
- 3.11 Marking is generally good and some of it is excellent. However, in the senior school, comments on pupils' work sometimes lack detail, and do not provide enough of a productive focus to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of their strengths and areas for development.
- 3.12 Pupils are able to support their learning by using the excellent junior and senior school libraries. They have many opportunities for internet research within the school and teachers are developing a virtual learning environment (VLE), a valuable resource designed further to support exciting and varied approaches to learning. The ICT facilities available in the school are not currently used to their full potential, either by teachers in the classroom or by pupils when working independently.

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 and in accordance with the aim of the school to provide for the moral and spiritual well-being of pupils. Pupils of all ages have particularly well-developed personal qualities and are confident and sociable, taking opportunities to make positive contributions to school life. They are caring and sensitive to the feelings of others. Pupils are encouraged to participate in all areas of school life and this contributes to their self-confidence. They are respectful to their teachers, courteous to visitors, friendly and outgoing. From an early age, they eagerly take on responsibilities from the wide range of opportunities available to them as school and house officials and sports captains. Pupil-elected school councils exist in both parts of the school, but the junior school body is more developed. Pupils' sense of community is enhanced when they come together for school chapel services and assemblies. Work experience, promoted by the school, and a co-ordinated careers programme, prepare pupils most effectively for the next stage in their education.
- 4.2 Pupils gain a secure set of moral beliefs from chapel services, assemblies, lessons and their teachers who provide excellent role models. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and a keen sense of fair play. School rules, aimed at promoting good order and respect for others, are widely accepted. Pupils appreciate the extensive reward systems, and the regular celebration of success in assemblies. Sanctions are clear and are well understood, but need to be used rarely. Pupils are highly active in raising money for charity, often organised on their own initiative. They are aware of the difference their support makes to those less fortunate than themselves. The peer support system offered to other children by Year 6 pupils in the junior school is greatly appreciated by those who benefit, as is the help provided by the well-trained sixth-form student support group for those in the senior school,. Through the well-developed personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme pupils are able to explore issues, such as euthanasia and IVF technology, and Year 10 volunteers achieve outstanding insight into the challenges of child rearing through looking after 'electronic babies'.
- 4.3 Pupils have a strong aesthetic awareness in many areas of school life. Regular chapel and weekly Eucharist services, and some school assemblies, have a clear spiritual focus. Separate junior and grammar school presentations about globalisation and fair-trade issues inspired pupils to think beyond the boundaries of their own world. A sense of the breadth of spiritual experience is strengthened by many of the topics covered in the lower school religious studies programme, such as work in Year 9 on Buddhism.
- 4.4 The pupils' cultural development is strong. They are sensitive to the beliefs and values of others in a school where over a third of the pupils are from minority communities. Recognition is given to the religious festivals of other faiths. Pupils come to understand the Western European cultural heritage through literature and art and they learn about other cultures in subjects such as geography, history, religious studies and through the wide range of languages they experience. They also develop a respectful attitude to those from different backgrounds as a result of their trips abroad, as well as from meeting visitors from other faiths and cultures.
- 4.5 In the pre-inspection questionnaire parents overwhelmingly confirm that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and views.

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

- 4.6 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are highly effective. The quality of pastoral care is a particular strength, and the aim of nurturing the individual is demonstrated clearly throughout the school. Pupils feel safe, valued and happy, confident that they are surrounded by staff that care for and support them. The school emphasises consideration for others, understanding, self-discipline and courtesy. The staff and senior pupils give their time generously to provide outstanding support and guidance and ensure that all pupils have someone to turn to.
- 4.7 Effective systems, clear lines of communication and carefully kept records ensure high quality pastoral care. Form teachers and year heads work closely with the respective pastoral deputies in both parts of the school to promote pupils' well-being. At key points of transition, advice from experienced staff is available to pupils. Induction procedures are comprehensive, creating a supportive atmosphere in which new pupils make a successful entry at various ages. Staff promote pupils' self-confidence through praise and encouragement. They know their pupils well and this fosters an environment where the pupils thrive. A variety of channels exist to ensure that their voices are heard.
- 4.8 The school has a range of well-formulated policies that address the requirements for effective management of the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. The school has a pro-active approach to guard against bullying. Pupils say that it is rare and agree that staff deal with any issues constructively. The promotion of good behaviour, fully endorsed by parents, is a clear success. Sanctions are few, and are deployed with skill and to good effect. The safeguarding policy contains all of the necessary elements for protecting pupils, and has improved since the last inspection. Its principles and procedures are well known, and supported by designated officers in each section of the school. Their training, and the training for all staff in the school, is fully up to date. A high quality film on internet safety, presented by Year 7 pupils in an assembly, was followed up thoroughly in tutorial groups on the following day.
- 4.9 Procedures to ensure the health and safety of the pupils are excellent. Measures taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards are in place, regular fire drills are held and staff receive fire training. Safety issues are fully addressed and health and safety procedures are effective, with risk assessments covering all aspects of school life. A health and safety committee, chaired by the business director, meets regularly to discuss any matters of concern and operates effectively. Electrical testing is appropriately carried out and health and safety documentation is thorough. Accidents are suitably recorded and there are good facilities, in both junior and grammar schools, for those who become ill during the school day. The school nurse is highly active in helping to ensure the medical and pastoral welfare of the pupils. An accessibility plan has been drawn up for those with disabilities, demonstrating the preparedness of the school to respond to all likely requirements, and this is in line with the relevant legislation. Pupils understand the importance of choosing a healthy diet and participating in physical exercise. A large number of pupils enjoy the school meals, which are nutritious and provide choice. The admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent, and the very high standards of pupils' achievements and personal development testify to the governors' clear vision and strong strategic thinking which enable the school to meet its aims. The governing body as a whole offers appropriate levels of expertise. Governors keep themselves well informed about the school through the work of their various committees.
- 5.2 The governors are most effective in financial planning which has led to the highly successful move of the school to its new site. They have provided outstanding accommodation which has transformed the learning environment. They ensure that a balance is maintained between material and human resources, and ensure the employment of suitable numbers of qualified staff, appropriate to the needs and ages of pupils. The central register of appointments is compliant with regulations.
- 5.3 The governors take a close interest in long term planning, and oversee important developments relating to premises, accommodation and the curriculum. They are highly effective in discharging their responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.4 The governing body includes parents, past and present, who bring a particular commitment and loyalty to the governing body. They are mindful of ethnic and gender balance issues regarding the composition of the governing body. A comprehensive, strategic planning programme is in place with short, medium and long term objectives. Governors recognise the need for training, the induction of new trustees is thorough, and several have completed a course in child protection.
- 5.5 Senior staff and governors enjoy excellent relationships built on trust, openness and a shared vision. Governors receive regular information from the heads of the junior and senior schools, and other members of staff on academic, pastoral and extra-curricular matters. Communications between the junior and senior school common rooms and governors are good. Effective mechanisms are in place to evaluate the work of the head. The governors have implemented all the recommendations of the last report.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.6 Highly effective leadership and management are evident throughout the school so that from the EYFS onwards the school successfully achieves its aims. The headmaster, who is also chief executive, has overall responsibility for the school and his leadership displays vision and drive. Members of the two school management teams (SMTs) share the values and forward-looking approach of the respective heads. They bring together a broad range of skills and expertise.
- 5.7 Since the last inspection, with the amalgamation of the two schools onto a new site, the formerly separate SMTs have been able to work more closely together, and have extended the overall educational opportunities available to pupils because of the outstanding new facilities. The timetable has been modified, the monitoring of pupil performance and target setting have been extended, and greater emphasis has been placed on learning support. Tighter overall monitoring of the work of the

academic departments has occurred, and the evaluation of their performance has been extended.

- 5.8 Management at all levels is highly effective and includes a strong structure of middle and senior management that regularly monitors and reviews staff performance and the curriculum. Frequent meetings between academic and pastoral staff ensure an integrated approach to pupils' development and achievements.
- 5.9 Staff show outstanding dedication, loyalty and commitment in all areas of school life. They are happy and feel valued. Those with middle management responsibilities are given the opportunity to show initiative and to develop their own ideas. Staff are highly motivated and readily respond to the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process. Systems, policies and procedures, covering all aspects of school life, are in place. A strategic plan, to which many staff contribute, sets out short, medium and longer term areas for development. Annual departmental action plans are fed into the overall plan.
- 5.10 Strong emphasis is placed on the appointment of high quality staff, in accordance with safe recruitment guidelines, and their well organised induction programme enables new staff to settle quickly into the life of the school. Appraisal is annual, and professional development is fostered and draws on external expertise for whole-staff training. More opportunities to share best practice exist between the junior and senior schools than at the time of the previous inspection, to the benefit of both staff and pupils. The central register of appointments is fully robust. Senior staff are suitably trained in their roles of safeguarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- 5.11 Teachers are deployed effectively, as are classroom assistants in the junior school and EYFS, providing strong support for all pupils. Non-teaching staff are particularly hard working and dedicated, and make an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal, academic and extra-curricular education through their support roles within a school community which has a genuine family atmosphere.

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

- 5.12 The links between the school and parents are highly effective and strongly support the academic and personal development aims of the school. This close partnership is particularly valued by the school, and communication has improved since the last inspection. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, there was a very high level of agreement among parents that they were satisfied with the broad educational experience provided, with teaching, pastoral care, standards of behaviour and the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views. Almost every parent who replied acknowledged that the teaching helped pupils to make progress.
- 5.13 A small minority of parents felt that they were not encouraged to be active participants in the life of the school. The inspectors found, on the contrary, that the school welcomes parents' contributions and makes good use of their experiences and skills. Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, including attendance at talks, sports fixtures, plays and concerts, and they contribute to the work experience programme and with careers advice. Teachers are readily available to parents who have questions. Prompt responses to phone calls or enquiries are considered to be an important part of the school's relationship with parents.
- 5.14 Regular communication with parents is maintained through a range of printed and digital formats. Parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress

through the reports, sent twice a year, which give detailed information on pupils' progress and many comments include clear guidance to help pupils improve. In addition to the reports, parents are invited to attend parents' evenings at least once each year in both parts of the school. Homework diaries and student planners provide a useful channel of communication between school and home. The school publishes its policies and procedures on the school website.

- 5.15 The Friends Associations in the junior and senior schools each provide substantial support for the school and allow parents to be actively involved in promoting the respective school's successes. Activities include social events and also the raising of funds that are used well to provide pupils with equipment and resources, thus enabling parents to make additional worthwhile contribution to their children's education. The junior school Friends have recently donated an outdoor shelter for the playground. This project followed much discussion in the junior school council; pupils were subsequently involved in its design, and have much benefited from their enterprise and the parents' generosity.
- 5.16 At all levels, parental concerns are given careful attention and are dealt with effectively through direct contact between school and parents. A strong feature of the school's response is its willingness to work closely with parents and take all necessary steps to promote the well-being of pupils. Complaints are dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the school's procedure, which is compliant with regulations.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 This is an outstanding setting with the capacity to sustain improvements. An excellent system of review and self-evaluation ensures the achievement of the school's aims of developing academic potential and ability. It also ensures that the setting continues to provide experiences that broaden, enrich and extend the skills, talents and values of each member of the school community. Staff sustain existing high standards by regularly identifying areas for improvement, creating a stimulating, colourful environment, where children feel valued and safe. The recommendations of the last Ofsted inspection, to take further account of differentiation and develop children's self care skills and independence, have been met.

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

6.2 Leadership and Management are outstanding. Excellent and carefully monitored policies and practice ensure that children are well safeguarded. All adults have been suitably checked, and are well qualified and appropriately trained. Records, policies and procedures are in place and are well implemented, and excellent resources are used effectively. The capacity for sustained improvement is excellent, and is reflected in the perceptive and detailed self-evaluation that identifies priorities and development. An exemplary framework for risk assessments has been established to ensure safety, and is effectively implemented. Parents are strongly appreciative of their children's progress and standard of care. Staff work in partnership with parents, offering workshops and providing strategies to support the children's learning at home. Twice-yearly reports and parent-teacher meetings are provided. Newsletters and the welcome booklet are displayed on the school website, adding to the ease of communication. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the Foundation Stage profiles.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. Assessment through observation is rigorous; information gained is used effectively guiding planning and targeting next steps. Children benefit from a stimulating experience in every area of learning. There is a balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, although this is not as yet firmly embedded. Children are observant and inquisitive and staff ask challenging questions to develop their thinking skills. Provision for the welfare, health and safety of children is exemplary. Good health and well-being are emphasised and children are encouraged to eat healthily. The behaviour policy is well implemented, leading to a happy and busy atmosphere, where children benefit fully from all the opportunities provided.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes are outstanding. Children make rapid progress towards meeting all of the early learning goals including communication, language and literacy and mathematical development by the end of their Reception year, with many likely to exceed them. In communication and literacy, children are able to confidently write their names and begin to construct simple sentences. In numeracy they understand the concept of 'more or less than'. Nursery children can accurately navigate a computer game, and Reception children made excellent progress using the apparatus in a physical education lesson. They are inquisitive, enthusiastic and self-motivated, relating well to one another and to adults. They co-operate well in their learning and begin to make choices and decisions. Children respect and trust their teachers. They feel safe and enjoy playing indoors and out, and there is a possibility of extending the outdoor experience still further. Children enjoy their lunches and understand the importance of staying healthy. They are provided with secure foundations for their future well-being in all aspects of their learning.

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 and other members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, they 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 Neil Gamble	Reporting Inspector
Mr Peter Armstrong	Headmaster, COBIS school
Mrs Jenny Burrett	Headmistress, IAPS school
Mr Christopher Hall	Head of Department HMC school
Mr Martin Kettlewell	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Kathleen Silvester	Former Head of Prep, ISA school
Mr Stephen Smith	Former Headmaster, HMC school
Mrs Sandra White	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Lynda Boden	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector