



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ST NICHOLAS SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	<b>St Nicholas School</b>
DfE Number	<b>881/6023</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>310876</b>
Address	<b>St Nicholas School Hillingdon House Hobbs Cross Road Old Harlow Essex CM17 0NJ</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01279 429910</b>
Fax Number	<b>01279 430292</b>
Email Address	<b>office@saintnicholasschool.net</b>
Head	<b>Mr Keith Knight</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Derek Wilson</b>
Age Range	<b>4 to 16</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>374</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (200 boys; 174 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>0-2 (EYFS): 0      5-11: 179 3-5 (EYFS): 25      11-16: 170</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Maggie Jones</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>25 Sep 2012 to 28 Sep 2012</b>

## 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 November 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. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://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', 'satisfactory' 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**

Lady Fiona Mynors

Mr Robert Haworth

Mrs Jane Le Poidevin

Miss Jacqueline Scotney

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, SHMIS/ISA school)

Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Nicholas School educates boys and girls aged between four and sixteen. It was founded in 1939 in Churchgate Street, a village on the outskirts of the town of Harlow, and moved to its present site in 1977. The school is based in an Edwardian house, with modern additions, set in its own grounds in a residential area on the outskirts of Old Harlow. It is a registered charity, administered by a board of governors. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is an integral part of the Infant Section, which includes Reception and Years 1 and 2. The Junior Section comprises Years 3 to 6, and the Senior Section Years 7 to 11. All are managed as one school.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, a new head has taken up post and the senior leadership team has been extended and restructured. A new science laboratory and food technology room have been developed, and investment made in additional information and communication technology (ICT) provision. The school aims to provide a supportive environment in which pupils can achieve of their best, well prepared for life beyond school, and upholds Christian principles. A particular emphasis is placed on developing all pupils' individual strengths, while ensuring that they respect others.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection 374 pupils were on roll, of whom 11 boys and 14 girls were in the EYFS. There were 64 pupils in Years 1 and 2, 115 in Years 3 to 6 and 170 in Years 7 to 11. The overall ability of the pupils in Reception to Year 6 is in line with the national average, with a broad range represented within that. In Years 7 to 11, the overall ability of the pupils is above the national average, with a significant proportion who are at least above average ability. The majority of pupils come from families with parents who are self-employed, or work in business or the professions, and live within a 20-mile radius of the school. A small number of pupils are of minority ethnic origin. At the age of 11, about a quarter of Year 6 pupils transfer to local independent or maintained schools. At the end of Year 11, almost all pupils continue their education, transferring to sixth-form colleges or local independent or maintained schools.
- 1.4 The school has identified 60 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 18 receive additional support. A small number of pupils have English as an additional language and are fully bilingual.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' overall achievement is good, and in many areas of their work they achieve high standards. The pupils are extremely well educated in line with the school's aims to enable them to achieve of their best. From the EYFS onwards, pupils have good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in all their subjects and activities. Results in public examinations are good in relation to those of pupils of similar ability. These, with the work scrutinised and lessons observed, indicate that pupils make good and frequently rapid progress in relation to those of similar ability. Pupils with SEND progress well because of the support they receive, and the most able make excellent progress. Pupils of all ages have highly positive attitudes to their work. The excellent curriculum, greatly improved since the previous inspection, has a better balance of time for subjects. It is flexible and ensures that pupils' learning across the school is continuous. In the EYFS, exciting opportunities are not always available for all children. The pupils' education is greatly enhanced by the excellent extra-curricular activities programme, transformed since the previous inspection, and the enrichment provided by a wide range of curriculum-linked visits. The library does not fully support the learning of older pupils. The quality of teaching is good and frequently excellent. Teachers are knowledgeable, plan meticulously, assess carefully, and use a variety of teaching strategies to engender a sense of excitement and enjoyment. In a small number of lessons observed, time management was weak and pupils lost concentration.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. They express pride in their school and work and play in a harmonious and supportive environment. Pupils benefit from the excellent quality of pastoral care, strongly supported by efficient systems for welfare, health and safety, including robust safeguarding.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent, and greatly improved since the previous inspection. Governors have established appropriate mechanisms for overseeing the work of the school. Comprehensive strategic planning and prudent financial management have enabled appropriate investment to be made in the school. Governors have ensured that the EYFS now follows the appropriate curriculum, although their links with the setting are not yet fully developed. The quality of leadership and management is excellent overall. Visionary leadership provides clear educational direction for the school. Members of the senior leadership team work extremely well together, and the management of the EYFS is good. As recommended at the previous inspection, management has established rigorous monitoring procedures of all aspects of the school's work. While a variety of middle management roles have evolved over time, they are not always fully effective. Links with parents are excellent and they appreciate the education and care that their children receive.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

- 2.4 The school meets 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. Identify the means whereby the role of middle managers can be made fully effective.
  2. Develop stronger links between the governors and the EYFS.
  3. In the EYFS, ensure that all planned activities are as stimulating as possible to meet the needs of all the children in the setting.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' overall achievement and learning is good.
- 3.2 The pupils are extremely well educated in line with the school's aims to enable them to achieve of their best. In many areas of their work they achieve high standards. In the EYFS, overall achievement and learning are also good, and children are confident in recognising letters, and even at the beginning of the school year they could identify a number of words. They counted beyond twenty and ordered numbers up to ten independently.
- 3.3 From Year 1, pupils have good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill in all their curricular activities. They usually listen carefully and are extremely articulate. Their communication skills develop strongly as they progress through the school, so that by the time they leave they can express their views with confidence, clarity and maturity. Pupils read efficiently with good expression, their writing is frequently of a high standard and they take pride in the presentation of their work. Their investigative skills are well developed and they research topics efficiently. Through logical thought and understanding, they have the confidence to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum. Pupils are highly competent in the use of ICT across a range of subjects for research, data analysis and presentations. Pupils' creative skills are strong, particularly in drama and art. A dramatic display of pupils' work, linked to Picasso, demonstrated their excellent artistic skills. Pupils' physical abilities in many sports are excellent. Pupils in Year 4 were confident enough to practise underwater turns.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve highly in individual and team games, regularly and successfully representing East Anglia in athletics, swimming and cross-country running in the Independent Schools Association national finals. They also achieve well in music examinations, ballet and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, and in 2012 pupils were regional finalists in a national design competition. At the end of Year 11, the majority of pupils transfer to further education at their first choice of local sixth-form college, or independent or maintained school.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at the age of 11 have been above the national average for maintained primary schools. Results at GCSE have been above the national average for pupils in maintained schools, which indicates that pupils are performing at least in line with their abilities, and frequently better. In 2012, pupils gained a higher proportion of A\* to C grades than in previous years, which indicates an upward trend since 2010.
- 3.6 Children in the EYFS make good progress in relation to their starting points, consistently achieving levels above the national average. From Year 1, judged from lesson observation, interviews, work scrutinised and nationally standardised measures, pupils' level of attainment indicates that they make good and frequently rapid progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils who need additional support make good progress, and the most able pupils make excellent progress.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages enjoy and have highly positive attitudes towards their work, which supports their achievements. Children in the EYFS showed advanced skills in

sharing and discussing solutions to problems. They enjoyed working outside while acting out a bear hunt, confident to join in and express their ideas, and demonstrated good creative skills when constructing a car out of crates and tyres. From Year 1, pupils usually display enthusiasm and perseverance in lessons and activities. They work well individually and collectively, listen to teachers and each other, have enquiring minds and show initiative. Their capacity for independence in all that they do in school increases as they progress through the school. On the few occasions when the pace of lessons provided insufficient challenge, pupils lost their concentration.

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

- 3.8 The quality of the curriculum is excellent.
- 3.9 The curriculum is extremely well suited to the pupils' ages, abilities and needs, and supports the school's aims to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to develop their intellectual, physical and creative gifts, across a broad, carefully structured curriculum.
- 3.10 Since the previous inspection, a review of the curricular provision and timetable arrangements has resulted in a better balance of time for subjects and ensured that pupils' learning across the school is continuous. An increased flexibility of opportunities for pupils has enabled them to succeed to the best of their ability. The pupils' skills in ICT, food technology, design and technology, and art have been enhanced by significant investment in ICT provision, and the refurbishment of the accommodation for these subjects. The school's new virtual learning environment is an exciting development to support pupils' education.
- 3.11 In the EYFS the provision is good, with elements that are excellent, to meet the needs of the range of the children who attend. They have a wide provision of interesting and stimulating learning experiences both indoors and outside. These include their ideas and give them opportunities to explore, be creative and think critically. However, these exciting opportunities are not consistently available across the setting. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' rich learning experiences have been enhanced by the introduction of new schemes for mathematics and English, and improved ICT provision. Pupils in Year 6 benefit greatly from specialist teaching for all subjects. All pupils benefit from learning French, and their linguistic experiences are extended by the introduction of German and Latin in Year 7.
- 3.12 The range of GCSE subjects available is extensive, allowing pupils flexibility in their choices. It is enhanced by additional subjects such as astronomy and psychology, which are offered as extra-curricular clubs or linked online to a local sixth-form college. The library does not provide fully effective support for pupils' learning. It is used regularly by Years 1 to 6, but it is underused by older pupils, and the resources provided are not sufficient to their needs for research and learning. A third science laboratory enables pupils to study separate sciences, giving them greater options at sixth-form level. An improved programme for personal, health and social education has been developed which incorporates careers education and work experience guidance. The Business Day for Year 10 gives pupils real life opportunities to prepare for the world of work.
- 3.13 The excellent range of extra-curricular activities, transformed since the previous inspection, gives all access to sporting, creative and academic pursuits. These range from ecological and sporting clubs to Mandarin and drama. The pupils'

education is enriched by an excellent programme of curriculum-linked visits. These include trips abroad which also encourage pupils' independence. The pupils' personal development benefits from opportunities for service to the local community as part of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Year 11 pupils arrange a Christmas tea party for local elderly residents, and the opportunities for work experience in Year 10 rely on local community support.

- 3.14 Systems to identify and support pupils with SEND and to provide challenge for the most able have greatly improved since the previous inspection. New specialist staff have been appointed to give support. The systems work well from Reception to Year 6. In the EYFS, the children's needs are well understood by the staff. More effective identification and support are now being developed for older pupils. Class and subject teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' needs, and use effective strategies and a sympathetic approach to help them to learn confidently. The most able pupils receive additional challenges to match their abilities. In Years 8 and 9, able pupils also benefit from the imaginative assistance of able Year 11 pupils who share their particular enthusiasms. This was observed in a lively discussion on modernism and nihilism.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.15 The overall quality of teaching is good.
- 3.16 In a significant number of lessons observed across the school, teaching was excellent, and strongly supported the pupils' progress and achievement and the aims of the school. In the EYFS, teachers plan children's experiences carefully, based on accurate assessment. This is used to maintain an effective balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities, which enables the key person to work efficiently with small groups. This ensures that tasks match children's individual needs.
- 3.17 From Year 1, a particular strength of the teaching is meticulous planning. Detailed lesson plans reflect a clear understanding of the pupils' individual needs, and activities are planned to enable them all to achieve at the appropriate level. For example, in a Year 7 food technology lesson, pupils were encouraged to choose the task and homework which would challenge them appropriately. Teachers know their pupils well, and the rapport between them adds to the strength of the teaching. In interviews, pupils of all ages stated that they are confident in approaching their teachers and know that help would be readily forthcoming.
- 3.18 Teachers are willing to give of their time to support pupils both within and out of curriculum time. In most lessons, the brisk pace, the variety of activities, the willingness to vary teaching strategies, and the excellent use of technology and other available resources engender a sense of excitement and enjoyment. This is a great improvement since the previous inspection. In a few lessons observed the pace was less brisk and tasks did not fully engage pupils, so that they lost concentration and their learning was restricted. The teachers' high expectations for pupils' behaviour are usually met, and time is nearly always used efficiently in lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable and share their specialist enthusiasm with their pupils. They help them to learn independently, and in many subjects pupils are encouraged to use self-assessment, which they do with confidence. Peer assessment is also being introduced by teachers, which fosters the pupils' understanding of their own progress and achievement.

- 3.19 The quality of marking and assessment is excellent. The teachers' diagnostic comments on pupils' work help them to understand how they can improve. Pupils also value the individual verbal feedback that they receive from their teachers. A school-wide system of subject targets, generated from baseline and national standardised data, forms the basis of the efficient school tracking system. Through regular assessments, pupils are aware of their targets and know whether they are on track, and therefore understand what they must do to achieve their targets. The information from the school's data bank is used highly effectively by teachers when planning their lessons, and informs them of what can be reasonably expected of their pupils in the future.

## **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.
- 4.2 This strongly supports the school's aims to develop pupils' individual strengths while demonstrating respect for others. All pupils are extremely confident and responsible, and have a secure understanding of fairness. They express pride in their school, and work and play in a harmonious and supportive environment. The high levels of respect shown amongst the pupils in their interactions with each other and with the staff clearly demonstrate their high self-esteem and a palpable and strong community ethos. Pupils reflect on their own lives in assemblies, and their involvement in awe-inspiring moments in drama lessons and absolute concentration when listening to solo piano playing demonstrated their awareness of non-material aspects of life.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral awareness is extremely strong. They have a keen sense of right and wrong. They are courteous and considerate, and understand fully their role in maintaining an ordered environment in school and beyond. Pupils on a drama trip were complimented for their good behaviour by members of the audience. The pupils' strong views on injustice and fairness were discussed maturely in interviews.
- 4.4 The social awareness of pupils within their school community is excellent. However, their understanding of political and economic issues across Britain and the world is limited. The spirit of teamwork is a vibrant part of the school community, from working together in lessons, to representing the school in sports teams and taking part in drama and musical opportunities. This is also evident through effective use of the prefect and house systems that enable pupils to have fun while they are completing a variety of tasks. Pupils of all ages undertake their varied responsibilities conscientiously. They care for each other across the year groups. In the EYFS, children learn to play together and benefit from being an integral part of the whole-school community, joining older pupils for play and assemblies. This ensures that they are confident to transfer to the next stage of their education. The support offered to younger pupils by Year 11 mentors when required is much appreciated. Pupils gain an understanding of those who are less fortunate than themselves through extensive fund raising. This can be initiated by individuals, classes or the whole school. All pupils fully engage and support a wide number of charities both at home and in the wider world, organising events themselves.
- 4.5 The cultural awareness of the pupils is strong, and tolerance and harmony are part of the school community. In the EYFS, children learn about different cultures through celebrating festivals and discussing occasions such as Yom Kippur. From an early age, pupils show respect for other faiths and beliefs, having opportunities to consider them in religious education and visits to places of worship. They gain an understanding of their own culture through aspects of the curriculum, and their experience of European culture is also enhanced by visits to Ypres and Berlin.

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

- 4.6 The quality of the pastoral care of pupils is excellent.
- 4.7 This strongly supports the school's aim to develop pupils' confidence in preparation for adult life. The staff provide excellent care and guidance for the pupils. In the EYFS, staff care for the children extremely well. They are exemplary role models and constantly remind children about appropriate behaviour. From Year 1, class teachers provide the focus for pupils' support. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from a staff mentor scheme, and Year 11 pupils may volunteer to be mentors to those in Year 7. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils is excellent. Pupils feel that they can turn to a number of different people if they have concerns. Younger and older pupils support each other.
- 4.8 Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through a range of physical education activities. In the EYFS, children swim in the summer and use a large selection of ride-on vehicles outdoors to support their physical development. They understand about making healthy food choices and are constantly reminded about the importance of personal hygiene. From Year 1, pupils' understanding of the need for healthy eating is encouraged through food technology. Although the school provides satisfactory lunches, the majority of pupils bring their own packed meals. Parents and pupils have expressed their disappointment in the quality of the lunches. The school has plans to develop school kitchens for on-site preparation of food.
- 4.9 Clear systems exist for encouraging good behaviour and preventing bullying. A small proportion of pupils and parents felt that the school has dealt inappropriately with bullying. The judgement of the inspection is that bullying is dealt with efficiently. In interviews, pupils were clear that the rare incidents of bullying were dealt with quickly and appropriately. Pupils also identified inconsistencies in the application of the rewards and sanctions system. The school is aware of this and is seeking ways for improvement. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.10 The school council, with representatives from Years 2 to 11, provides pupils with opportunities to express their views formally. Pupils acknowledge that the council has been effective in making changes. While the council is a useful forum for pupils' views, however, feedback from sessions is not consistently disseminated across the school.

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

- 4.11 The school's arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.12 These ensure that the pupils are looked after extremely well in a caring, family environment where they feel happy and secure. They benefit from excellent relationships with staff, who promote their welfare sympathetically. The policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, including children in the EYFS, are appropriate and implemented effectively. Staff have been suitably trained and understand their duty of care for the pupils. A useful practice is the provision of safeguarding information on identity badges for all staff and visitors, which ensures that they know who to contact if they should have any concerns about the pupils. The welfare of children in the EYFS is promoted effectively.

- 4.13 Across the whole school, including in the EYFS, all necessary measures are in place to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Fire prevention systems are efficient and reviewed. Regular fire practices take place and staff have appropriate training. Risk assessments for all aspects of school life are completed. Good care is provided for pupils who are sick or injured.
- 4.14 The admission and attendance registers are correctly completed and suitably stored for the previous three years. Thorough systems are in place to ensure that pupils' lateness or absences are followed up efficiently.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Strong governance, greatly improved since the previous inspection, has ensured that the school is successful in achieving its aims.
- 5.3 Governors, many of whom have long-standing links with the school, provide effective oversight of almost all aspects of its work. While they have ensured that the EYFS now follows the appropriate curriculum, their links with the setting are not yet fully developed. As recommended at the previous inspection, the governors have established appropriate mechanisms for overseeing the work of the school. An efficient committee structure underpins the work of the governing body, and its members have a broad range of skills to support the school. Comprehensive strategic planning and prudent financial management have enabled appropriate investment to be made in staff, accommodation, resources and excellent new developments.
- 5.4 Governors receive careful induction and many have benefited from relevant training. Experienced leadership has enabled governors to have a good insight into the school's work, its strengths and areas for development. Governors work closely with the school's management as 'critical friends', to give them strong support and appropriate challenge to maintain the momentum for continued growth and development. Governors are sensitive to a need to maintain careful separation between management and governance. Governors regularly visit the school for formal and informal events, and they observe lessons. This gives them a detailed understanding of the education provided, and the standards achieved by the pupils.
- 5.5 The governors are effective in discharging their responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety throughout the school. They have reviewed the policy for safeguarding and receive regular reports on the effectiveness of the procedures.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent overall.
- 5.7 Leadership and management are extremely effective in ensuring that the school achieves its aims of providing a caring, family environment in which pupils from the EYFS upwards thrive, well prepared for the next stage of their life. Consistent policies which reflect the school's ethos are implemented carefully across the school for the benefit of the pupils. The safeguarding and welfare of pupils of all ages are given a high priority by management.
- 5.8 Strong, yet approachable, visionary leadership provides clear educational direction for the school. This vision is shared effectively across the school and supported by newsletters on relevant educational issues from management to staff. The senior leadership team members work extremely well together, with complementary skills, which enables pupils to achieve well and develop as confident young people. The management of the EYFS is good.

- 5.9 As recommended at the previous inspection, the necessary framework for the EYFS is now in place, and the setting has effective systems for self-evaluation and an excellent development plan with clear priorities for improvement. Policies and procedures are implemented appropriately to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, and staff keep up to date with current requirements. The use of resources is effective. Management has established rigorous monitoring procedures for all aspects of the school's work. A comprehensive school improvement plan amply demonstrates that management understands the school's strengths and areas that need improvement, and has practical strategies to achieve them.
- 5.10 While a variety of middle management roles have evolved over time, they are not always fully effective. The roles lack clarity, which results in some inconsistency about expectations and responsibilities. Any shortcomings are quickly overcome through co-operative informal links between staff and managers. Much work has gone into developing subject documentation, which ensures that pupils' learning is now continuous across the school.
- 5.11 The system for the induction of new staff works well and they feel strongly supported. Since the previous inspection, an effective appraisal scheme has been introduced to improve the quality of teaching, and has given staff good opportunities to identify areas for their professional development. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been greatly improved through a regular and rigorous system of peer and management observation of lessons, and work scrutiny. The EYFS has plans in place to implement staff supervision to complement the efficient monitoring and appraisal systems already secure across the setting. All staff are suitably trained in their roles to ensure that they meet the pupils' needs, that their welfare, health and safety are a priority and that they are appropriately safeguarded.
- 5.12 Links with parents are excellent. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed their satisfaction with most areas of the education and support provided by the school, and the high quality of information that they receive. A few parents expressed concern about their children's progress, the support for those who need additional help, provision for the most able, the way that their concerns are handled and the quantity of homework. The inspection judgement is that pupils make good progress, that those who need support receive appropriate help and that challenge for the most able is excellent. The school endeavours to resolve parents' concerns quickly and courteously. The quantity of homework is being monitored by the school, and the use of email communication enables parents to make direct contact with teachers if they have concerns about this.
- 5.13 The school maintains constructive relationships with parents, implementing an open door policy that was observed in action during the inspection. Parents were seen to speak to staff before and after school. In the EYFS, excellent relationships have been established with parents, who appreciate the care given to their children. Effective links with external agencies ensure that when necessary, extra professional help can be provided for children. Parents have plenty of opportunities to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children. The virtual learning environment gives excellent information about the pupils' work. Parents accompany school trips, can observe activities and matches, and volunteer to assist with some extra-curricular clubs. The school works closely with the Friends Association, which supports its family ethos.

- 5.14 Parents of current and prospective pupils have access to the required information about the school. They benefit from the school's informative website. The various publications provide parents with excellent details regarding routines and the curriculum, and the regular newsletters, both whole-school and from particular classes, provide up-to-date news regarding events and achievements.
- 5.15 The quality of pupils' reports is excellent. They are highly informative and give parents a clear overview of their children's progress, indicating how they can be helped to improve.

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