



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST MARY'S SCHOOL, LINCOLN

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Mary's School, Lincoln

Full Name of School	St Mary's School, Lincoln
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Registered Charity Number	527620
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Headmaster	Mr A A Salmond Smith
Chair of Governors	Mrs Hazel Belcher
Age Range	2 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	207
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (85 boys; 122 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 79 5-11: 128
Number of Day Pupils	207
Head of EYFS Setting	Anne Ogley
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection date/EYFS	18 May 2010 to 19 May 2010
Final (team) visit	21 Jun 2010 to 23 Jun 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 June 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 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard 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 Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The report of this inspection is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Mary's Preparatory School is set in its own grounds, sheltered behind the Roman and mediaeval walls of Lincoln Cathedral Close and is built around a spacious garden. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is situated in its own modern building known as Cornerstone, which was specifically designed for the needs of small children. The school opened in 1950, mainly for girls, but taking boys up to the age of seven. It now caters for boys and girls between the ages of two and eleven. Since the previous inspection the school has a new headmaster and deputy head. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors
- 1.2 The school currently has 207 pupils on roll and 45 of these are in the Nursery, nineteen of whom attend part time. Another 34 children are in the Reception classes and, together with the Nursery, make up the EYFS. In addition there are 128 pupils in Years 1 to 6. Just over half of the pupils are girls.
- 1.3 The pupils are drawn from professional families from the local Lincoln community and surrounding area. A few come from non-European cultures and some from European backgrounds. Four pupils have English as an additional language. Twenty-two pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and they receive specialist support from the school. Four pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN). The overall ability profile of the school is above the national average, but with a wide spread of abilities.
- 1.4 The school mission statement states that the school aims to develop happy, confident and capable pupils with strong foundations for life. They aim to inculcate Christian values with high levels of support and encouragement in a caring friendly and purposeful environment, which offers a wide range of sporting, artistic, and cultural opportunities to maximise each child's scope for enjoyment and personal development.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils at St Mary's, including those in the EYFS, attain well and make good progress in their learning because of a wide-ranging curriculum and programme of activities, both inside and outside the school, and the good and effective teaching. Achievements are particularly notable in music, art, sport and literacy. This is due partly to the pupils' enthusiastic attitudes, their impeccable behaviour and their exemplary relationships with one another and their teachers. A feeling of mutual respect and trust pervades the school, and enables it to fulfil its aim to provide a safe and stimulating environment where all pupils can reach their maximum potential whatever their starting point. Whilst the provision for pupils LDD is fully integrated into the curriculum, the provision for gifted and talented pupils is still developing. The provision for extra-curricular activities complements the curriculum well. Although skills are well developed in information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, fewer opportunities are given in other subjects to develop them further.
- 2.2 Excellent pastoral care and good arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety underpin the success of the school in fulfilling its aims and ensuring each child's scope for personal development. Pupils are unfailingly polite to visitors and treat their peers and staff with great respect. Their care for one another is embedded in all aspects of school life. Their social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development is outstanding and is a strength of the school. Their awareness of those less fortunate than themselves shows in their positive approach to charitable giving. The pupils' responses to pre-inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the school.
- 2.3 The aims of the school are fulfilled and fostered by the governing body, which is committed to the academic progress and personal development of the pupils. They have a clear insight of the school and have responded well to the recommendations of the previous report to improve the library, extend ICT provision and improve the system for reporting to parents. Robust policies and procedures for all aspects of school life are now in place. The school promotes strong links with its parents. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents were extremely positive about all aspects of school life, particularly teaching, pastoral care and the open communication with the school. The school fulfils all regulatory requirements, except at the time of the initial visit, in regard to aspects of checks made when staff are recruited, and the central recording of these checks. These deficiencies were fully remedied by the time of the main visit.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended, and therefore it was required to:
- ensure that checks through List 99 are carried out and recorded for new staff who require them and continue to ensure that checks through the Criminal Records Bureau are carried out and recorded before or as soon after as practicable after new staff are appointed. [Regulations 4.(2)(a), 4.(2)(b), 4C.(2)(b), 4C.(2)(d) and 4C.(3), under Suitability of Staff and Proprietors];
- 2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report.
- 2.6 In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school was required to:
- continue to ensure that checks through the Criminal Records Bureau are carried out and recorded before or as soon as practicable after new staff are appointed.

Since the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is inspected under a different system of regulations, within a two day limit, the report cannot mention any regulatory deficiencies which are remedied by the end of the standard inspection.

(ii) Recommended action

- 2.7 The school should take the following steps.
1. Ensure that the quality and methods of marking are consistent throughout the school.
 2. Improve the quality of teaching through the sharing of the best practice already evident in the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils of all ages attain exceptional academic standards. Results in national tests at the ages of seven, and eleven over the last three years for which comparative data are available, have been very high when compared with the national average for maintained primary schools. At all stages of the school, pupils show high levels of knowledge and understanding and well developed skills. The majority pass successfully to the senior schools of their choice, many gaining scholarships. The school succeeds in its aims to provide education that meets the needs of every individual child and give the best possible preparation for the next stage in their development.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, strong literacy skills are evident in the pupils' work across the curriculum. Oral communication is of a high quality at all ages. Pupils are proud of their work; they discuss it enthusiastically and are able to express their own ideas fluently. Their strong creativity is evident in music, drama, art, and design and technology (DT). Assemblies seen, incorporated the sharing of the many successes in these areas, and displays of work around the school are a further testament to the high standards reached. Overall, pupils show a strong grasp of mathematical concepts and apply these effectively, especially when solving problems. In response to the previous inspection, ICT provision has been improved, but whilst skills are very well developed in specialist ICT lessons, fewer opportunities are given in other subjects to develop them further. Throughout the school, the pupils are successful in passing music examinations, a large number gaining merit or honours results. Games and physical education (PE) skills are well developed in a variety of sports and all pupils have the opportunity to represent the school during their time there.
- 3.3 From an early age, pupils are encouraged to discuss their tasks with each other, and to collaborate successfully in group and paired activities, as well as working independently. Excellent examples of this were observed in a science lesson where pupils were devising a fair test, and in a DT lesson where pupils worked together to categorise food. In response to the recommendations of the previous report, pupils make good use of the refurbished library and in a small number of lessons are encouraged to use the library for research. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and this contributes to their successful achievement. Overall, they benefit from a stimulating environment where learning is consistently nurtured and they know that their efforts are appreciated.

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

- 3.4 Curricular experiences offered to pupils are excellent. The broad curriculum, enhanced by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, covers the requisite areas of learning and supports the school's aims, giving pupils opportunities to learn and develop their skills to the best of their ability.
- 3.5 Curriculum planning is thorough within each year group, and the curriculum meets the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities. Based on the National Curriculum, it is enhanced by lessons in religious education (RE), personal, social and health education (PSHE) and modern foreign languages. Time allocation for English and mathematics is high throughout the school, and their early delivery within the school day is identified as an essential part of the school's curriculum. In the lower school, pupils benefit from specialist teaching in ICT, music, PE, French and Spanish. In Years 4 to 6, all subjects are taught by specialist subject teachers. Creativity within the curriculum is a strength of the school, enabled through excellent resources and facilities. Provision for games is excellent. The specialist teaching, availability of the artificial pitch, and access to the external sports grounds all contribute to this.
- 3.6 Support for pupils with LDD and SEN is excellent. Careful records are maintained and effective individual educational plans are in place. There are efficient measures for individual and group support, backed by a thorough monitoring of progress. The school identifies the most able pupils, and specific provision for these pupils in lessons is developing.
- 3.7 Staff liaise across year groups and transitional stages, particularly when pupils are moving from the lower to the upper school; consequently, the pupils are thoughtfully prepared for the next part of their education.
- 3.8 Extra-curricular provision is excellent. In accordance with the school's aim and ethos of encouraging pupils to explore, discover and develop their skills, a particularly strong platform for learning is created through thoughtful cross-curricular planning. It is highly valued by the parent body. Over the year a wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered both in school and at the end of the school day, enabling pupils to pursue many interests. Music, art, drama, ballet, and design and technology offer creative opportunities, whilst cricket, football, rugby and rounders, hockey and netball offer opportunities to develop physical skills.
- 3.9 The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits related to topics within the curriculum. These include visits to the cathedral; theatre visits a history field trip visit to Northumberland, and the Year 5 residential visit to France. In addition, visitors, come in to the school to enrich the learning experience of the pupils. A good example of this was the "Greek soldier" who brought history to life for the lower school. Constructive links with the local community are made, through curricular visits, links with local businesses, the university and involvement with other schools in sports competitions and matches. Success in London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art examinations and the UK Chess Challenge Mega Final further complement the pupils' development.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 Overall, the teaching is good throughout the school, though the strongest teaching tends to be in the lower years. It successfully supports the aims of the school to give pupils stimulating learning experiences, providing foundations for their future life and developing independent learning and resourcefulness. It makes a strong contribution to their levels of achievement.
- 3.11 Teachers have thorough subject knowledge and in most lessons they use this to plan suitable lessons, to explain key ideas and to ask well focused questions designed to assess pupils' understanding. Where clear learning objectives are given at the outset, pupils make rapid progress. In an English lesson pupils made particularly notable progress when reasoning the use of powerful verbs in their poetry writing, and were able to give a concise explanation of the learning objectives achieved. A wide range of teaching methods is used which make good use of the resources available. In the most successful lessons the work is at an appropriate level and teachers have an understanding of learning needs and styles. In a small number of less successful lessons, objectives were unclear; teaching lacked a sense of urgency and employed undemanding tasks that did not allow pupils to proceed at their own pace, so preventing them from being fully engaged in their learning. As a result, progress was slower. Classroom behaviour is exemplary, with pupils always willing to add to class learning in a most constructive manner when invited to discuss or to offer their own views and ideas. Time is used effectively and resources including the newly stocked library and the interactive white boards are used well, as noted in a mapping lesson based on climate and its impact.
- 3.12 A comprehensive marking system is in place, although it is not being used consistently across subjects and year groups. The most effective marking is constructive and sets clear targets for improvement and progress. Pupils say that they find this extremely helpful and that it encourages them to work harder. Expectations for the presentation of the pupils' work are also inconsistent across the school; the school has included the improvement of this in their development plan.
- 3.13 The school places considerable emphasis on assessing how well pupils are doing. The system provides a strong platform for judging standards and progress within the core subject areas of English, mathematics and science. This also ensures that a pupil's needs can be identified and met. Targets are reviewed regularly using a traffic light system, or through verbal feedback to pupils in the lower school pupils.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The development of the pupils' personal qualities is outstanding during their years at the school, and is supported by outstanding relationships within the school community, and the high degree of pastoral care shown by all staff. Pupils are responsible, well mannered and tolerant. The school meets its aims to inculcate Christian values in a caring, friendly and purposeful environment.
- 4.2 Spiritual awareness is excellent, and has improved since the previous inspection. The religious studies programme, daily assemblies, and the Woodard priest's visits to the school, combine to give pupils confidence and self worth, together with concern and respect for others. They understand awe and wonder and they appreciate singing, prayer and music; this was evident in the uplifting singing during the Year 5 French assembly. The RE programme links well with moral, social and cultural matters, giving pupils a good understanding of religions other than Christianity. Pupils have a strong sense of self esteem as a result of the recognition they receive for their achievements both in class and in the achievement assemblies.
- 4.3 Moral development is also a strength. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and the necessity of rules and the boundaries needed for a community to function harmoniously. They appreciate the school's rules, recognising them as fair, and they consider that staff apply sanctions justly. Through fund raising and charitable work, pupils are eager to support less fortunate peoples. The recent pupils' cake sale successfully raised money for their adopted school, Lethukukhanya in Africa.
- 4.4 The social development of pupils is excellent. They interact with each other with tolerance and mutual respect. They respond well when given responsibilities, these include such offices as duty officers at break and lunch time, register monitors, heads of house and team captains. The school council's members are elected, and pupils enjoy experiencing democracy in practice through the workings of the council. They are pro-active in suggesting ways to improve the school and feel that their voice is heard.
- 4.5 The quality of cultural development is excellent. They have a strong appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures. The school works hard to ensure that all its pupils have a strong understanding of a wide variety of cultures. For example, electronic contact is maintained with Lethukukhanya through a pen-pal club, and reciprocated visits take place. Involvement in musical ensembles, learning of famous artists and taking part in and watching drama productions add depth to their cultural experiences.

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

- 4.6 The quality of welfare, health and safety of pupils is good overall. The quality of pastoral care is excellent and supports the pupils' outstanding personal development. The staff provide excellent support and guidance for all pupils, through their role as class teachers or as support or administrative staff, so fostering the pupils' personal development and academic achievement extremely well. Relationships between pupils and staff, and among the pupils themselves, are excellent and form the foundation of both the ethos in the school and its quality of care. In class and around the school, respect for each other is evident and pupils respond readily to the challenge to make a contribution in the many roles of responsibility available. The warm family atmosphere that permeates the school is appreciated by both pupils and parents.
- 4.7 Pupils say they are well cared for and that they have an adult to turn to should they have a problem. The anti-bullying policy ensures that any issues that may arise are dealt with quickly and effectively and comprehensive arrangements in place to protect pupils from bullying. Pupils believe that bullying is very rare and agree that staff deal with any difficulties quickly and constructively. Pupils talked enthusiastically of the friendship bench, and said that they all looked after each other. They are polite and courteous and behave well in lessons. The school rules are clear and effective and place a strong emphasis on the encouragement of positive behaviour. The school has a strong culture of praise, and rewards good behaviour and effort through a scheme of merits. The pupils feel that this is fair and are eager and proud to acquire certificates and house points. The comprehensive PSHE curriculum, timetabled since the previous inspection, promotes valuable discussions amongst pupils.
- 4.8 The safeguarding policy document meets requirements but in the past had not been fully implemented in terms of staff recruitment. This has now been rectified and all required procedures are carried out. In other respects such as the training of staff, the policy is implemented well. Appropriate measures are taken to ensure the health and safety of the school community with risk assessments covering all aspects of school life. Fire prevention measures are in order and a fire risk assessment is undertaken regularly. Fire drills are held every term and all alarms are regularly tested. Registration of pupils is methodical and absence is followed up quickly. The school maintains appropriate admission and attendance registers. The medical care of the pupils is excellent, and staff are trained in first aid in line with requirements. The school has an accessibility plan in place designed to improve the educational provision for those pupils with disabilities and is in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.
- 4.9 Pupils enjoy the school meals which are nutritious and give an impressive range of choice. They understand the importance of a healthy diet and the need to participate in regular exercise.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good. The quality of governance has enabled the school to make effective progress in all areas. It has undergone many changes recently and many new governors have now joined the governing body offering a wide range of experience and professional backgrounds. Governors provide strong support and are committed to the aims and purposes of the school. There is a clearly defined structure, and effective and supportive sub-committees. Regular and well-minuted meetings of the whole board, and the meetings of its clearly focused committees ensure that governors are well informed and able to fulfil their responsibilities for the overall strategic planning, educational development and management of the school.
- 5.2 Governors are strongly committed to the school, its pupils and staff and to its continuing development and success. They take their responsibilities for welfare and health and safety seriously, and reacted swiftly and decisively to a number of past failures to implement fully the safeguarding policy, caused by omissions in the staff recruitment process. Procedural deficiencies have now been rectified.
- 5.3 They are aware of their responsibilities and determined through prudent financial planning to ensure that the schools accommodation and human and material resources are of a high quality to meet the pupils' educational needs. They have responded well to the recommendations of the previous report to improve library provision and the facilities for ICT.
- 5.4 The governors are proud of the school in particular, the friendly caring family atmosphere and the articulate confident well rounded pupils it develops. They are happy to support the many school events as far as practicable. They support the headmaster well.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.5 The quality of overall leadership and management of the school is good. Structures and routines are clear, comprehensive and well communicated. The recently established senior leadership team has been a catalyst in improving quality, whilst keeping the fulfilment of the school's aims firmly in focus. The strengths in its work are reflected in high academic standards, good teaching and outstanding personal development, as well as the happy and friendly ethos that pervades the school.
- 5.6 Through the headmaster and the senior leadership team, the school is led with commitment to be achieving the best possible standards in academic pursuits, pastoral care and personal development. A clear vision and educational direction is emerging. The leadership team works well together, and provides consistently good quality support to the headmaster and also to colleagues. This significantly contributes to the successful management of the school and to the fulfilment of its aims.
- 5.7 The ethos and direction of the school is clearly set by the management team and all staff work hard to maintain these principles in the life of the school. For example, the whole-school development plan has resulted from wide staff consultation and all staff are committed to the implementation of this. Communication and consultation

are purposeful and informative and enable all staff to make their views known and contribute to policy and practice. Procedures and policies throughout the school are clear and appropriately detailed. In most cases they are well implemented by staff and contribute successfully to the smooth running of daily school life. Subject co-ordinators have a clear oversight of their subjects and manage them well,

- 5.8 Staffing levels are good, and staff are well qualified. All staff are trained in the areas of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The school pays careful attention to the development of all of their staff, and an appraisal system is effective. The school has made good progress in implementing the recommendations from the previous inspection, in improving the curriculum, resources and facilities. At the initial visit, past failures to carry out and record all the required staff recruitment checks were identified. Swift remedial action, building on the good monitoring and review processes already put in place by management, has already achieved a robust system to ensure full compliance in the future.

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

- 5.9 Links between the school and parents are excellent and strongly support the academic and personal development aims of the school. The school maintains many open and varied channels of communication and actively encourages parents to liaise closely with teaching staff and play a part in the education of their children. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that parents are overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the school, and are very happy with the education their children receive. They commented favourably on the high standards expected of pupils and the support given to pupils to achieve these. An almost unanimous positive response was given on pastoral matters. Comments included reference to very caring and perceptive staff and a very inclusive school where all pupils are fully involved in school life. The inspectors concurred with these views.
- 5.10 Parents have ample opportunity to be involved in the life of the school. They are welcomed into school for special events, such as assemblies and concerts and parents are invited to lunch with their child each year. New parents are invited to coffee mornings to meet current parents as part of the induction program for their children. They attend matches and help with fund-raising activities and visits.
- 5.11 Parents of pupils and prospective pupils are given access to all relevant information about the school. Two written reports are sent out each year to keep parents informed of their children's attainment and effort in all subjects. These reports are detailed and of good quality, presenting a clear picture of pupil's achievements and show targets for improvement. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- 5.12 Communication is good and includes an electronic system that enables email and text messages to be sent to parents, providing details of any emergencies, calendar changes and absence enquiries. The weekly newsletter highlights events that have taken place as well as successes.
- 5.13 The school has a clear and appropriate complaints procedure. Parental concerns are heard promptly and treated with care and consideration. The headmaster and teaching staff are visible on site at the end of every day so that parents can approach them to raise concerns or queries; as a result the vast majority can be dealt with swiftly and informally.

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 overall effectiveness of the early years is excellent. It achieves its aim to provide an environment of nurture, love, support, respect and celebration which thereby enables the children to realise their best potential. Constant self-review ensures that the setting sustains improvement and meets its own exacting standards of care and provision. The staff recognise the unique qualities of each child and show excellent understanding of how to meet their individual needs. Children of all abilities receive carefully constructed support with their learning, enabling them to make significant progress.

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

6.2 The leadership and management of the setting are good. Comprehensive arrangements are now in place for the recruitment of staff, including checking their suitability, and all staff are suitably trained for their safeguarding and other professional responsibilities. The head of EYFS sets clear direction for developments, with a strong focus on the well-being of each child's personal achievement. Inclusive practice is strongly promoted so that all children have their welfare needs met and achieve as well, regardless of background or ability. All records, policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting are now firmly in place and implemented rigorously. Documentation, including risk assessments, is regularly reviewed and resources are used effectively. Planning is thorough and detailed ensuring breadth and balance across the six areas of learning. It also demonstrates an appropriate flexibility which allows it to acknowledge the rich diversions which flow from bright and lively minds. Links with parents are strong and parents are highly supportive of the setting. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, and in discussions, the parents expressed appreciation of their children's progress, the high standard of their care and the way in which parents and family are welcomed as active partners in the life of the setting. There are strong links with the local authority EYFS consultant and when required the setting can access external agencies

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. Children learn and develop extremely well through stimulating play and valuable first hand experiences. They are highly involved in their learning, supported extremely well by staff who encourage active engagement and reflection, through skilful questioning and appropriate reinforcement and feedback. A well-judged balance is maintained between adult-led and self-initiated activities involving choosing, exploring and discovering. Planning is extremely detailed across all areas of learning and ongoing assessments identify what children can and like to do and what they need to do next. Children have access to a wide range of resources which they use most effectively. The highly stimulating outdoor environment gives them first-hand experience of weather, seasons, and the natural world and free flow between inside and outside is made possible by excellent levels of staffing as well as the effective design of the building.

Children are well supported by their key person who promotes their welfare and guides them towards self-sufficiency. The children enjoy the healthy snacks provided for them and the sociable nature of snack time and lunchtime.

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

- 6.4 The children progress very well and are on course to meet all the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception; many are likely to exceed them. They learn to communicate fluently, enjoy books and express their thoughts and feelings with developing confidence. Role-play demonstrates strong social skills, co operation and a high level of linguistic competence. Children develop excellent observational and investigative skills and they make significant progress in knowledge and understanding of the world. The children's personal social and emotional development is outstanding. They are inquisitive, enthusiastic and self-motivated, relating extremely well to one another and to adults. They enjoy all forms of physical activity and show excellent spatial awareness when playing on outdoor equipment. They develop an awareness of healthy eating, hand washing and keeping themselves safe. They are exceptionally well behaved, resulting in a calm working atmosphere, enabling them to acquire very good work habits for the next stage of their education.

What the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

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 chair of 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

Linda Donowho

David Goulbourne

Barbara Ottley

Louise Savage

Reporting Inspector

Head (SHMIS School)

Former Head, IAPS and GSA school

Early Years Team Inspector