



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

SEVENOAKS PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Sevenoaks Preparatory School

Full Name of School	Sevenoaks Preparatory School
DfE Number	886/6015
EYFS Number	EY380652
Registered Charity Number	1100021
Address	Sevenoaks Preparatory School Fawke Cottage Godden Green Sevenoaks Kent TN15 0JU
Telephone Number	01732 762336
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Email Address	luke.harrison@theprep.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr Luke Harrison
Chairman of Governors	Mr Edward Oatley MBE
Age Range	2 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	363
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (200 boys; 163 girls;)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 33 5-11: 218 3-5 (EYFS): 68 11-13: 44
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 363
Head of EYFS Setting	Mr Nik Pears
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	30 Apr 2013 to 03 May 2013

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 September 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. 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.

Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

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 the chairman 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

Mr Robin Lewis

Mrs Helen Higginson

Mrs Margaret Marsh

Mr Alexander Mitchell

Mrs Lynda Boden

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS School)

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS School)

Team Inspector (Headmaster IAPS School)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Sevenoaks Preparatory School was founded in 1919, becoming an educational charity in 2003, under a governing board who act as trustees. It is situated in 20 acres of wooded countryside in north-west Kent which provide sports and recreational facilities. The school's two main sections are the pre-prep, for pupils aged two to seven, and the prep, for those aged eight to thirteen. The pre-prep contains the school's registered Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting for children aged two to five. Its buildings are located in close proximity to those for the older pupils. The former proprietor/headmaster chairs the governing body.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection a new multi-purpose building has been erected and was opened in 2009. This provides accommodation for dining, music and drama. The school has recently gained planning consent for development of its pre-prep site. The current headmaster, a former pupil, moved from deputy headmaster to the headmastership at the start of 2012.
- 1.3 The school seeks to provide an education for life. It aims to achieve this through the pre-prep 'Golden Rules and the 'Way of Life' in the prep, together with an academic approach that focuses on the needs of the individual. In addition, the school sets out to encourage every pupil to be the best they can be, both inside and outside the classroom. The school's ethos is central to its aims and emphasises strong pastoral care of pupils, nurturing each one and supporting parents and children alike.
- 1.4 Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the national average. A significant proportion of pupils are well above average ability with a few pupils being below average ability. Pupils come from a variety of cultural backgrounds; their families generally represent the breadth of professions found in the area. The vast majority of pre-prep pupils continue their education by entering Year 3 in the prep school. A proportion move into local maintained education as they leave Year 6 but most remain until they transfer to local and more distant day and boarding independent schools at the end of Year 8.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection there were 194 pupils in the prep school. In the pre-prep there were 70 with a further 100 in the EYFS, of whom 61 attended part-time. Pupils are admitted from age two. Overall, 18 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and four receive support in and out of class. Sixty-nine pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 54 receive specialist support according to circumstance. No pupils have statements of special educational need.
- 1.6 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 school is successful in meeting its aims and accords strongly with its ethos of care for the individual child and their family. A good quality educational experience is offered to all pupils. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is good; in the EYFS it is outstanding. These standards are due to the pupils' highly positive attitudes to learning. They reach good standards both in their academic studies and in the wide variety of extra-curricular activities in which they may choose to participate. Their numeracy and literacy skills are well developed as are their skills in information and communication technology (ICT). In the EYFS pupils rapidly acquire their skills in reading, writing, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. Throughout the school, pupils' success is underwritten by a broad, varied curriculum, enhanced by French from Nursery and the addition of Spanish in Year 6. The curriculum embraces those identified with SEND and EAL and supports the good quality of the teaching. Since the previous inspection the school has commenced a focus on marking and assessment which is beginning to inform pupils better and to be used more effectively by staff for planning. Some marking is excellent but this good work is not yet consistent across all subjects and year groups. Lessons are underwritten by thorough policies which have yet to embed fully into the school's practice. EYFS provision is excellent as teachers and assistants have a particularly close understanding of each child's needs.
- 2.2 Throughout the school, pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils' are supported through highly effective pastoral care, provided with consistency by all staff. In this work staff are guided by welfare, health and safety policies which have recently been strengthened and are beginning to embed in the school's practice. Relationships within the school are particularly positive; adults, without exception, are vigilant and available at all times to support and encourage pupils so that they ensure pupils' happiness and enjoyment during their years at school. Older pupils willingly and cheerfully undertake their responsibilities for assisting in various duties and, especially, helping in the pre-prep at breaks and lunchtimes.
- 2.3 Governance is sound. The school's aims are exemplified and fostered by all governors and they are especially focused on the personal development of all the pupils. Governors have strong insight into the school's working and receive termly reports from the headmasters. The structure of the governing body is being reconsidered and this work is planned to include the strengthening of governors' procedures for scrutinising and reviewing the school's policies and providing strong professional challenge to the school. Leadership and management overall is sound, in the EYFS it is excellent. The school's emerging development plan has yet to be shared with all staff. This, in part, addresses a recommendation of the previous report as does the school's current review of its policies to underpin the daily, practical events of the school. Self-evaluation and the monitoring of staff members' work and the effectiveness of the school's procedures are yet to have an effect in practice, in response to another recommendation of the previous inspection report. Safeguarding procedures have recently been strengthened and are robust with all checks on staff, regular assistants and visitors applied fully and correctly. Links with parents are excellent. Parents are highly satisfied with all aspects of the school's educational and pastoral provision and they receive regular, helpful reports on their children's progress.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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. Strengthen governors' monitoring and checking of regulatory policies and procedures.
2. Unify the school's overall, year group and subject development plans with the appraisal system so that staff share responsibility for the school's vision and aims.
3. Complete the current review of school policies and documentation to improve their consistency and ease of use.
4. Increase monitoring to strengthen the consistency of teaching, so that the educational challenge to pupils is raised in all curricular and extra-curricular areas.
5. Create greater formal opportunities for pupils to air their views and accept further responsibilities.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 At all stages in the school, pupils achieve good standards across the curriculum and in extra-curricular areas, fulfilling well the school's aim to ensure the good academic, personal and social development of individual pupils. Throughout the school, pupils show good levels of knowledge and understanding, and many well-developed skills needed to reach these standards. Their ability, for example in all curricular and extra-curricular activities to read and to think logically, is good. They apply their previous knowledge thoughtfully and particularly strongly in creative, practical and physical areas. In PE and games pupils demonstrate considerable competence at all developmental levels. They work confidently in mathematics. Their speaking and listening skills are good; they speak carefully and confidently without being precocious in lessons, interviews and informal conversations. They respond thoughtfully and concentrate well in lessons. Work in exercise books and files is well organised and presented across all year groups. In ICT they demonstrate excellent skills and use these to great effect in other subjects.
- 3.3 All pupils enjoy and engage positively in the range of options available within the curriculum and some pupils take part in the broad range of extra-curricular activities offered, achieving good standards. A variety of pupils' high-quality artwork is displayed around the school. Good standards are achieved term-by-term in drama and musical performances. Sporting success against local schools is celebrated and much enjoyed by the pupils and this serves to develop good teamwork and leadership skills.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations and commensurate with their ability. This level of attainment, as judged in lesson observations, pupils' written work and curriculum interviews with them, indicates that pupils make good progress in line with pupils of similar ability. The attainment of pupils with SEND is particularly strong. The school's own monitoring of SEND pupils' progress shows that they make greater progress than expected and attain well in relation to their difficulties, whilst fully engaging in the broader curriculum. Pupils with EAL progress well and are aided by effective staffing levels and the particularly close attention paid by staff to the specific needs of individual pupils.
- 3.5 The curriculum is carefully planned to support pupils' academic development and pupils' good progress is seen both in lessons and over longer periods of time. In the best lessons pupils make rapid strides.
- 3.6 On leaving the school, pupils successfully move on to the senior schools of their choice. In recent years some have won academic awards to these schools and scholarships in art, drama, music and sport have also been achieved, adding to the school's historical role of scholarship success.
- 3.7 Pupils are proud members of the school community. They are highly supportive of the staff and each other and are normally well-motivated both in and out of class. Pupils work well, both independently and with others, being well-behaved and demonstrating a good, positive approach to learning. As a result of these attitudes,

pupils of all abilities and aptitudes, including those with SEND and EAL, achieve good success both in their academic work and in the other wide ranging opportunities with which they are presented. Pupils with particular academic abilities achieve well. They are not consistently challenged and thus do not always attain the levels of which they are capable.

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

- 3.8 Curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.9 The carefully structured curriculum encompasses all the requisite areas of learning and provides well for pupils across the spectrum of ages, abilities and needs. Pupils' talents and development are well supported in line with the school's aims.
- 3.10 Pupils benefit significantly from the well-planned programmes for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Sex and relationship education, starting in Year 5, further enhances this programme. Weekly religious education (RE) lessons, developed in response to the previous report's recommendation, give additional strength. These alternate with PSHE lessons in Years 7 and 8. Subject time is well balanced and, although clear priority is given to the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills in the younger years, other subjects receive generous coverage, especially for older pupils. Specialist teaching, in subjects including PE, music, French and ICT, adds expertise and diversity from Year 3 and helps prepare pupils for their transition to Year 6, where all subject teaching is the responsibility of specialists. Setting, particularly in Years 7 and 8, provides an appropriate curriculum delivery and helps prepare pupils for their main transition to senior schools.
- 3.11 Pupils' linguistic skills are enriched by the provision of French from Nursery and Spanish from Year 6. An exchange with a school in Lille, and the French pupils' return visit during the inspection week, was much enjoyed.
- 3.12 Many pupils benefit from individual, instrumental music lessons whilst all thoroughly enjoy class music. Pupils receive ample opportunities to participate in musical and dramatic productions. Imaginatively planned art and design technology lessons include the building of mini-theatres and puppets to teach food safety and hygiene rules.
- 3.13 A comprehensive range of day and residential visits, with close curricular links, such as a trip to Bodiam Castle and a field study of the Cuckmere valley, further extend pupils' knowledge and experience. In almost all respects the curriculum is well planned, but in some subjects, limited provision is made for pupils to undertake independent, investigative work.
- 3.14 Throughout the school, provision for pupils with SEND is strong and procedures for identifying those requiring support are effective. Detailed individual education plans are carefully maintained. Communication between the special educational needs co-ordinators and other staff is regular and frequent and includes staff meeting discussions as well as comprehensive information on the school's intranet. These formal procedures ensure pupils' needs are well met through individual and group withdrawal sessions as well as support within the classroom. Pupils with EAL are sensitively supported. Those identified as more able learners receive support mainly through setting and additional tuition sessions. Plans are in hand to create additional challenge in class for these pupils through more focused lesson planning.

- 3.15 A wide variety of clubs and extra-curricular activities, ranging from the Little Oaks after-school club and street dance in Reception and Years 1 and 2 to fencing, judo, archery, debating, critical thinking and a wide range of sporting and creative arts activities, are provided for more senior pupils. This strong, diverse programme is planned termly, although not all pupils currently take best advantage of these opportunities.
- 3.16 Pupils benefit well from local community links, visiting the local church at Christmas, enjoying visits from the schools' advisory police officer, links with the Rotary Club and work for a chosen charity. Pupils particularly enjoy their visits to the local Age UK drop-in centre. All pupils undertake a wide range of successful fund-raising events. Of especial significance is a project which combines enterprise education with social responsibility. Pupils are encouraged to set up and develop their own businesses, with profits supporting a particular charity's work amongst AIDS orphans in Africa.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.17 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.18 A significant proportion of teaching, in all areas of the school, is excellent. The best teaching is well-planned. It is based on a thorough understanding of pupils' needs and thereby strongly promotes pupils' progress and the school's aims. Teachers' high expectations of what their pupils might achieve are appropriate on many occasions, enabling them to progress well.
- 3.19 Throughout the school, some teaching fosters pupils' independent learning, particularly strongly. In an ICT class pupils worked with diligent attention as they developed their understanding of rotational symmetry; in design and technology they created their own resources to teach others about food hygiene and safety. Not all teaching, however, gives a consistent and sufficient degree of challenge to all pupils, including the most able, to ensure that they achieve the high standards of which they are capable. In particular, those lessons which are based on worksheets frequently give little opportunity for pupils to develop their own thinking and ideas. Pupils with SEND and EAL are well supported. Teachers have individual plans for these pupils and use them to ensure they make good progress, especially in the development of self-confidence and independence.
- 3.20 Teachers, at all levels, have secure subject knowledge. They have available a good range and quality of resources which they use well, sometimes with excellence, to support and illustrate their teaching. As a result, teaching generally is informative, memorable and enjoyable and pupils' learning is well enhanced. The best teaching, for example an examination of 20th century artefacts in a history class, particularly excites and grips pupils' interest and imagination. Pupils make rapid progress where lessons and challenge are well paced. In a lesson on sprinting techniques, for example, they quickly improved their 'personal best' times. Marking is inconsistent across the school both in year groups and within subjects. The most effective marking gives pupils excellent guidance on their attainment and progress. Pupils react positively to such information and to the helpful, evaluative comments with which it is accompanied. In some classes pupils respond to their teachers' written remarks with their own reflective, written thoughts. In other subjects and year groups, work is rarely marked and, when marking does take place, is both cursory and accompanied by insufficient feedback. The school is addressing some of this weakness through the recently created Assessment for Learning group.

- 3.21 Good assessment systems have been established across the school. These track well pupils' progress within and between year groups and help underpin the identification of pupils who need support or would benefit from extension work. The systems are beginning to be used by staff to aid their planning.
- 3.22 In the pre-inspection questionnaire some pupils felt that their homework did not help their learning particularly well. However, inspectors found that homework is generally set with care, being targeted accurately to the pupils' needs.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 Throughout the school the development of pupils' personal qualities is excellent. Pupils are responsible, well mannered, self aware and tolerant. They work together harmoniously, developing a strong sense of responsibility for others and the wider world, and benefiting well from the supportive and warm environment which the school provides with excellence. The school meets well its aim to create a safe, caring and happy environment within which all pupils feel valued and safe. By the time they leave the school pupils' standard of personal development is excellent.
- 4.3 Spiritual development is excellent. Pupils are confident and self-aware. They are able to articulate their developing spirituality because the school has the "Way of Life" and a school song, through which a clear set of shared values is provided. In the pre-prep, the Golden Rules fulfil the same function. Pupils have a good insight into world religions which they gain through the effective delivery of RE and PSHE, a strength which has improved in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection report. Pupils show a good awareness of current world issues which they discuss with interest. They choose prayers for assembly to emphasise their concerns. Pupils have a strong sense of self-esteem as a result of the recognition they receive for their successes, both in class and in assemblies. They take full advantage of these opportunities to explore beliefs, self-knowledge, relationships and the meaning and purpose of life. The headmaster's addresses, stories, poems, class plays and singing are amongst the many activities involved in developing well pupils' sense of harmony with oneself and the world and provide an uplifting experience to the start of the day.
- 4.4 Moral development is excellent at all levels. Pupils strongly develop the knowledge, skills, understanding, qualities and attitudes they need in order to make responsible moral decisions and act on them. A group demonstrated these highly-tuned moral qualities when discussing segregation and civil rights in America. These and other lessons and discussions ensure that pupils have appropriately strong understanding of relevant political and economic matters both nationally and internationally. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, and this is reinforced in lessons and assemblies. Pupils understand the boundaries to behaviour, and recognise rules as fair. A clear ethos of mutual trust exists throughout the school. Pupils are unfailingly helpful and kind to one another and understand well that there are others less fortunate than themselves.
- 4.5 Pupils' social development is excellent. They are at ease talking with adults and with pupils from different year groups. Pupils develop strongly the attitudes and awareness they need to make an active contribution to their communities. They support others through the Oak Award and have collected £400 for a children's hospice. They are confident with setting themselves targets and enjoy the school's rewards systems. Various badges of merit and house allegiance are worn with pride by pupils of all ages. Pupils benefit from opportunities to contribute to school life, for example as sports captains. Older pupils undertake responsibilities through the prefect system, such as helping in the pre-prep at breaks, which are understood and respected by the younger pupils.

4.6 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. In all parts of the school pupils demonstrate a strong appreciation of, and respect for, their own and other cultures and faiths. As well as in RE, they encounter and discuss cultural issues thoroughly in subjects such as English, French, geography and history and in assemblies. They enjoy visits to the theatre and, for example, to the local arts festival. The whole school, including the catering department, celebrated a European language day. As a result, pupils develop strong knowledge, good skills, and considerable understanding and appreciation of culture and cultural difference both in the UK and overseas. This knowledge is reflected in the harmonious relationships they enjoy with families from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

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

4.7 The school's arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.

4.8 Staff are highly supportive of every child and, thus, the school meets its aim of nurturing each pupil. This is due to the high quality of relationships between the staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves, which are strongly undergirded by the school's warm, family-style ethos in which pupils happily thrive.

4.9 Pupils value highly the school's strong sense of community and trust the community's adults. As a result they know whom to approach if they encounter problems and feel individually valued, safe and supported. Good behaviour and safeguards against bullying are promoted effectively. Children are secure in the knowledge that if bullying did occur they can rely on staff to deal with it promptly and fairly. The few negative comments in the responses to the pupil questionnaire regarding the fairness of sanctions and staff members' consistency in their application could not be supported by the inspection team.

4.10 Pupils' health is strongly promoted. They take full advantage of the many, varied opportunities for exercise, in and out of class, within the extensive and well equipped grounds and playing fields. Healthy eating is encouraged and well discussed in lessons. A wide range of nutritious and healthy food is available in good quantity at every meal.

4.11 Limited formal means exist for seeking pupils' views. Nevertheless, pupils much value and use those available. The food focus group enables them to express their views on meals and pupils in Years 7 and 8 are encouraged, in special assemblies, to suggest ideas for school improvements. The establishment of a school council is being considered.

4.12 The school has a suitable plan for educational access for pupils with special needs and/or disabilities.

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

- 4.13 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.14 The welfare procedures for safer recruitment have recently been strengthened. They are now in the process of being embedded. All staff have been trained appropriately in safeguarding procedures and the designated child protection officers have received higher level training in accordance with their responsibilities.
- 4.15 All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk of fires and other hazards. Checks and tests on fire safety and electrical appliances are carried out correctly and fully recorded. Fire evacuation drills take place regularly and detailed records are kept. Safety is a priority; general risk assessments are thorough and ensure that matters requiring attention are quickly identified and resolved. Strong risk assessments are undertaken to ensure the safety of pupils whilst on trips and other school activities.
- 4.16 Arrangements for health and safety are excellent. Policies supporting health and safety matters are compliant. All staff receive regular training in first aid which ensures that they are able to help children should the need arise. Qualified nursing staff oversee the medical facilities and arrangements for sick or injured children. Pupils are looked after with great care. All staff are strongly briefed about individual pupils' needs and conditions, including pupils with SEND.
- 4.17 The team of non-teaching staff shares the school's ethos and aims, maintaining the buildings and grounds to a high standard and strongly supporting teachers in their work. All this is of particular benefit to pupils.
- 4.18 The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored for at least three years.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 All governors have particularly close interest in the school and bring a wide range of relevant expertise and experience to their role. They spend considerable time on the site, often being practically involved with pupils or staff. Governors are welcomed as part of the school family and are ideally placed to obtain and update their strong knowledge of the school's procedures and workings and thereby help the school fulfil its aims. Governors receive regular, termly reports from the headmaster and the head of the pre-prep. Governors exemplify the school's ethos of care and service to others and senior leaders enjoy a weekly meeting with the chairman. As a result, governors, staff at all levels and especially those in senior positions, are able readily to access the wide range of wise counsel represented on the governing board. Governors work hard in areas such as finance and building, to enable the school to procure and develop its buildings and staff. The high quality of buildings and the equally high standard of maintenance bear testimony to the effectiveness of these endeavours.
- 5.3 Governance systems are generally sound and provide oversight of the school in line with the school's aims. Nevertheless, they are undergoing review in order to strengthen and improve governors' effectiveness and the quality of professional challenge they give to the school. This includes plans to improve the discharge of their responsibilities through monitoring of educational standards, policies, documentation and compliance with the independent schools' regulations. The governors have received training in safeguarding procedures and are becoming effective in discharging their responsibilities for child protection, welfare, and health and safety throughout the school. Governors carry out their annual review of safeguarding matters with careful attention.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians is sound.
- 5.5 Members of the senior leadership team lead the school through example and are firmly supportive of the school's aims. Senior leaders are beginning to plan with diligence, addressing the school's emerging needs. Some short and medium term planning has been successfully implemented and this includes a review of all the school's policies, procedures and documentation. These and longer term initiatives are contained in the embryonic five year development plan. Welfare and safeguarding procedures have recently been strengthened and are now robust.
- 5.6 Leadership and management provide sound educational direction. Senior staff are increasingly effective in identifying and setting priorities relating to the evaluation and development of the education provided for the children. The personal involvement and caring standards exemplified by senior leaders contributes strongly to the excellent personal development shown by pupils at all levels.

- 5.7 The schools vision for its future and its consequent development planning are currently the result of consultation only at senior level. In consequence, their impact upon various aspects of school life and provision for pupils is restricted and there is no culture of regular self-evaluation. As a result, priorities are not identified with consistency, although some targets have been identified and achieved with efficiency. The regular, systematic monitoring of policies and procedures is not yet embedded, especially in the prep school.
- 5.8 Senior leaders and managers at all levels are successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff and ensuring they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all children. Pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety now receive effective attention with all staff being trained in these areas. All appointees and current staff have been appropriately checked. New staff are inducted well and receive child protection training which is updated at least every three years.
- 5.9 A programme of annual staff appraisals and regular lesson observations is carried out and an enhanced version of this process has been developed for imminent deployment. This addresses, in part, one of the recommendations of the previous report but the appraisal system has yet to be dovetailed into the development planning at area and whole school level. Although senior leaders give strong support to colleagues at all levels of responsibility and a system of professional development and training is operated, staff members' training needs do not yet receive systematic review. The consequential benefit to pupils of regularly updated teaching is thus less.
- 5.10 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated their strong support for the school. They expressed great approval for the wide range of options and extra-curricular activities provided and considerable satisfaction with their children's happiness and security whilst at school. They are especially pleased with the educational standards and caring support the school provides and the quality of the communication they have with the school.
- 5.11 Communication is excellent and is maintained via regular, constructive, contact with parents, both formal and informal. Formal communication includes the regular newsletter, the school's website, the school magazine, *Prep Post*, academic reports and parents' evenings. Staff speak informally with parents at the start and end of the day and through emails and telephone calls. A strong feature of the school is the family-friendly atmosphere which pervades each school day.
- 5.12 The parents' social events committee (SEC) supports the school and helps families make the most of their time at the school, primarily by organising events to bring parents and children together. Some of these events are to raise funds, but many are simply for pleasure and include bonfire night, the Christmas bazaar, a ball and summer family day. Parents may attend matches, plays and concerts and many do so. All this enables parents to relate strongly to the school and to be involved particularly effectively in their children's education. As a result, the school's family spirit is particularly well fostered.
- 5.13 Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with comprehensive and colourful packs about the different aspects of the school which contain all relevant information. Current parents receive clear and useful written and oral reports each term about their children's work and progress. Concerns are handled sensitively

and quickly and in full accordance with the school's complaints policy, although it is rare that this has to be used.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 6.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. The educational programmes provide interesting and challenging experiences, giving all children, including those with SEND, many excellent opportunities to express themselves clearly, confidently and with enjoyment. All children learn and develop extremely well through stimulating play and valuable first hand experiences. A highly effective balance of adult led and child initiated tasks enables children to respond well to the high expectation of the staff.
- 6.2 Parents were overwhelmingly positive in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, expressing appreciation of their children's progress and the standard of their care. Parents are offered regular opportunities to discuss their children's progress and to add comments to their 'Learning Journeys', thus creating a valuable home-school link, and encouraging parents to take an active role in their children's development and learning. The youngest children enjoy exploring numbers, using pictures on the wall, while older children attempt writing for different purposes, for example, lists, stories and instructions.

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

- 6.3 Provision for the children's well-being is outstanding. "Key persons" model and promote strong relationships, particularly for the very young and those needing additional support. Children are taught well the site's boundaries, how to use equipment safely, to manage risks and keep themselves safe. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and effectively implemented. Fire procedures are practised regularly. The school environment provides the children with a vast range of challenge, giving them great scope to explore their surroundings, use their imagination, and develop their learning through play, both with adults and with each other. All children are supported effectively and make rapid progress. Staff develop children's thinking and encourage their curiosity through challenging questioning. Children's work and interests are valued, being reflected in high-quality, colourful displays. Staff promote welfare, health and safety extremely well and children are encouraged to exercise and eat healthily. The behaviour policy is implemented well, resulting in a happy and busy atmosphere, where children benefit fully from all the opportunities provided. They are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. The youngest children have a developing awareness of the need to be sensitive to the views and feelings of others, while the older children understand that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs, and that these need to be treated with respect.

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

- 6.4 Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors' involvement is effective and excellent arrangements ensure that all children are effectively safeguarded; all adults have received appropriate checks. Staff are well qualified and suitably trained in understanding the development of young children, child protection and health and

safety. Policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting, including those for safeguarding, are implemented rigorously.

- 6.5 The capacity for sustained improvement is excellent. The pre-prep head and the EYFS co-ordinator carefully evaluate and monitor each child's progress, working together with parents to support their children and especially those needing particular help with learning and development. External agencies are involved when necessary. The education programmes are carefully monitored, and regular self-evaluation takes account of the views of staff and children. Linked with this, a thorough system of review informs future planning, providing a friendly, stimulating, caring environment, where pupils feel valued and safe. Good management and particularly effective use of resources, including those outdoors, ensures highly successful outcomes for all children.

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

- 6.6 The quality and standards of provision are outstanding. All children learn and develop extremely well, making outstanding progress in relation to their starting points, preparing them extremely well for the next stage in their learning. Nursery children, for example, enjoyed finding and identifying mini beasts using magnifying glasses during their outdoor play sessions. Kindergarten children, in numeracy, enthusiastically guessed shapes from their teacher's description and Reception children skilfully linked and blended sounds to form simple words and sentences.
- 6.7 Outcomes are excellent. Children make rapid progress towards meeting all of the Early Learning Goals, with many exceeding the targets. They co-operate well and are active learners who explore, investigate, and make good choices and decisions. As a result of this thorough preparation they make highly successful transitions to the next stages of their learning. The children's personal and emotional development is outstanding. Even the youngest happily share resources, take turns and organise themselves effectively, becoming yet more independent by the end of their reception year. Children trust and respect their teachers and relate well to each other. They are provided with secure foundations for their future well-being in all aspects of their learning. As a result, they respond to school life with great enthusiasm and enjoyment.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 6.8 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

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