

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

St Bede's Preparatory School

Full Name of the School	St Bede's Preparatory School
DCSF Number	845/6011
Early Years Number	EY340176
Registered Charity Number	278950
Address	Duke's Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 7XL.
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Headmaster	Mr Nicholas Bevington
Chair of Governors	Major General Anthony Meier
Age Range (of the whole school)	2 to 13 years
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	2nd to 5th March 2009
Head of Early Years Setting	Mrs Nova Shoemith
Early Years Age Range	2 to 5 years
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	23rd and 24th February 2009

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. The inspection was carried out by ISI, a body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting EYFS provision in schools belonging to the ISC Associations. Section 7 of this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the Statutory Framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found 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. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 St Bede's Preparatory School (St Bede's Prep) is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged two to thirteen. Boarding is available for pupils from the age of nine. The school was founded in 1895 and is located in Eastbourne, East Sussex. The school overlooks the sea and is at the foot of the South Downs on the edge of Eastbourne. Separate games pitches are a ten-minute walk away along a coastal path.
- 1.2 The school forms part of the St Bede's School Trust, a registered charity, which also includes a senior school and an international language school. Administration and maintenance arrangements are shared, and some senior school staff teach St Bede's Prep pupils. The present single governing body for all the trust establishments was constituted in 1999, through the merger of the separate boards formerly responsible for the preparatory and senior schools. A new chair of governors has recently been appointed. The headmaster of the senior school is the chief executive responsible for the three schools. St Bede's Prep is led by its own headmaster under the aegis of the chief executive. A new headmaster for St Bede's Prep took up his appointment in September 2007. The two most recent former headmasters teach in the school.
- 1.3 The school aims to encourage pupils of all talents to achieve their goals. It sets out to promote learning and the acquisition of skills through a variety of teaching methods and to expose pupils to a range of challenges and opportunities. It seeks to value the achievements of each individual in any field, to provide a broad and flexible timetable of lessons and activities, and to foster respect amongst pupils for all in the community.
- 1.4 Currently, 410 pupils are on roll (241 boys and 169 girls). Of these, 56 pupils (26 boys and 30 girls), of whom 37 are part-time, are under the age of 5 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school refers to pupils in Nursery to Year 2 inclusive as being in the Pre-prep, and those in Years 3 to 8 as being in the Prep. A total of 30 pupils, aged 9 to 13, board. The ability profile of the school is broadly in line with the national average. There are 6 pupils with a statement of special educational needs, and a further 136 have been identified as having some degree of learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD).
- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of ethnicities. The great majority of pupils are of white British heritage. A few pupils are of Chinese and other Asian, or African backgrounds, or from Germany, Russia and other European countries. Eight pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language (EAL). The majority of pupils transfer to the senior school at the age of thirteen, or to other independent day and boarding schools.
- 1.6 After-school care is offered for children in the EYFS from 3.45 pm to 5.45 pm to fit in with the timetabled school day that largely operates in the rest of the school. It is organised by the school and staffed by EYFS specialists.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a broad educational experience of good quality, which has been improved since the last ISI inspection. This encourages each individual to develop personal skills and feel valued in an environment that promotes learning, in keeping with the school's aims.
- 2.2 The curriculum contributes well to all areas of learning. It enables pupils to develop good numeracy, human and social skills, and to speak, listen, write and read with confidence and enjoyment. The Early Learning Goals are thoroughly covered for the youngest children. In Year 1, pupils embark on a programme based on the National Curriculum and prepare in due course for entrance examinations to senior schools. Judicious input from specialists from the very first, beginning with sports, music and French, enhances provision. Subject specialists are used increasingly as pupils move up the school. Teaching in ability groups begins gradually in Year 3, and by Year 8 almost all subjects are taught in this way. These features help pupils learn in an arena that uses staff expertise well and meets pupils' needs effectively.
- 2.3 Linguistic skills are enhanced by the provision of French for most pupils and Spanish for some, and Latin and Greek for those who are considered able. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to learn and use mathematical concepts through a range of subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision is good. Design technology is taught alongside art and also as part of the integrated studies programme that includes appropriate human and social education, religious studies (RS) supports pupils' spiritual development well, and the school chapel provides a suitable reflective backdrop to underpin the Christian aspect of the RS provision. Aesthetic and creative activities are a key focus for enjoyment, with drama and music having a significant place in the school's cultural life. For example, each year group produces its own play every year. Sporting facilities are good. Dance enjoys a particularly strong profile.
- 2.4 The programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is appropriate. It is based on a suitable policy that covers each aspect and reflects the school's aims to foster respect. The teaching is carried out in separate lessons and includes citizenship education. Visits and visitors enrich the curriculum. Regular destinations include the theatre and the planetarium. These arrangements are co-ordinated well with the curriculum and inspire greater achievement. Recent visitors include an Amazon explorer and an Everest climber. The excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities, for day and boarding pupils alike, is well supported. Cookery, cheerleading and hip-hop feature for the younger pupils. Trampolining, archery and stone carving are included for the older pupils. Pupils' educational experiences are further enhanced by good curricular links developed with the community. One example, of many, is the local coastline work carried out by Year 4 pupils.
- 2.5 The compulsory part of the day, particularly for Years 3 to 8, is long. Most pupils are required to be at school for over nine hours on most days, with some year groups being taught for considerably more than the DCSF guidance for a Monday to Friday week. The effect of this is some tiredness apparent especially for primary-age pupils, and this leads to faltering concentration at times. The time allocated to subjects across the curriculum is unbalanced in some year groups, particularly in Years 1 to 5. In these year groups, there are many more English lessons than mathematics lessons each week. No appreciable difference in standards between the two subjects was noted by inspectors, to justify the allocation. A further imbalance occurs regarding sport. Whilst the school has enjoyed great success in the sporting arena, there are fewer options to enjoy sports skills development for non-team

players during the school day, when matches are played. This is because sports options and team games are run alongside other choices, for instance to appeal to the gifted and talented, and those with different skills and interests.

- 2.6 Good preparation for the next stage of pupils' education includes effective transition and liaison arrangements between sections of the school. New pupils are given 'buddies', who, pupils say, "look out" for them. In preparation for the move to senior schools, the school works alongside parents to help ensure a smooth transition and prepare pupils for their futures.
- 2.7 Curricular planning is good as it covers the implementation of a broad range of subjects and experiences. Subject schemes of work are good. The best pay attention to depth of coverage, provision for differing needs, use of resources and adherence to whole-school policies, such as marking. Through the school, the full curriculum is offered to most pupils, but some, by agreement with their parents, receive a different curriculum studies programme instead of studying a modern foreign language and Latin. This alternative programme is led by the learning support department with the aim of reinforcing core skills, from which pupils may be withdrawn for individual learning support lessons. The large number of pupils with LDD, the small number with statements of special educational needs, and the few who learn English as an additional language all benefit from the excellent support programme. It includes individual education plans and very closely monitored intervention in and out of lessons. 'Master classes' are available in a number of subjects for Years 3 to 8, and in art for Year 2, and are a strong feature of the curriculum for the most able, and gifted and talented pupils. The nurturing of individual talent is a school aim, reflected well in its provision.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.9 Day and boarding pupils achieve good standards of knowledge, skills and critical understanding, in relation to their abilities, improving on the standard at the last inspection. They develop satisfactory skills for work and study, as in the last inspection. The school's main aims are fulfilled through its successful emphasis on encouraging pupils to achieve, which assists them to have confidence in their ability and to do as well as they can.
- 2.10 Pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and, when teaching is at its best, show well-developed powers of thinking and being creative in their ideas and work. Because of this, their learning results in good academic achievement. In the EYFS, children soon develop good skills and abilities. Throughout the school, pupils are confident learners who enjoy their lessons. By the end of Year 8, standards are good in relation to pupils' abilities. Pupils read with understanding, they enjoy writing creatively and they have good speaking skills. In a Year 8 English lesson, pupils discussed *Of Mice and Men*, comparing the play script with the novel, reading and commenting with mature understanding of the nuances of the characters. Pupils of all ages are confident and articulate, showing a sense of fun and an enthusiastic enjoyment of school. They can apply mathematics and mathematical concepts effectively. For instance, they use graphs and charts to support coastal erosion investigation work in geography. Pupils' numeracy skills are well developed and they use ICT competently to support their work.

- 2.11 Pupils who are identified as needing help with their learning, and those who have EAL, achieve well because relationships between staff and pupils are good, inspiring confidence, and because staff have a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs. There is consequently no significant difference between the attainment of pupils of differing abilities.
- 2.12 By the end of the EYFS most children achieve the Early Learning Goals expected for their age, and some have already embarked on the Pre-prep curriculum. Standards are good in relation to pupils' abilities, throughout the school. National tests are not taken. Pupils' attainment in other standardised tests and standardised measures of progress is consistently good as they move through the school. The many pupils who enter at a later point achieve well too, from their generally lower starting points. Year 8 pupils are successful in the Common Entrance examination. In the past three years, an increasing number of scholarships have been won.
- 2.13 Pupils also do well individually and in the sports teams. The first eleven football team were undefeated in 2008 and champions in competitions organised nationally. Pupils are successful in other fields, too. For example, intricate painted panels, representing the first day at school, were produced alongside professional artists during the school's Arts Festival. They are an excellent example of team achievement. Pupils won places to perform with a nationally renowned opera company recently, singing in *Hansel and Gretel*.
- 2.14 Pupils develop satisfactory skills to organise their work by themselves, taking their own notes, and they work well in co-operation with each other and in teams. Pupils' occasional late arrival results in some lessons having a fractured start. Pupils are enthusiastic learners once they have arrived, and the majority settle well. In a few lessons, their concentration falters, and when this happens, progress slows.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.15 Day and boarding pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good and makes a significant contribution to their personal development, maintaining the standard at the time of the last inspection. Cultural awareness has shown the greatest improvement. Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the curriculum, especially in RS, and more generally through the care shown by the staff towards the pupils. The school fully meets its aims to foster respect for the community and confidence in its pupils.
- 2.16 Spiritual development is good because pupils respond well to spiritual experiences in their everyday life in school, such as through RS lessons and their use of a chapel that encourages contemplative reflection and emphasises the school's Christian ethos. Prayers drawing on individual faith and reflection feature in assemblies, alongside visits from outside speakers such as a local vicar. Most recently, a speaker talked about fair trade, providing a good opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own and others' beliefs and values. Pupils show their spiritual awareness in other areas of the curriculum, for example when enjoying being creative and expressive in the many drama and music activities. They also showed particularly meaningful understanding in a Year 7 English lesson, in their discussion of a pupil's prize-winning poem.
- 2.17 Pupils' moral awareness is well developed, reflecting the school's aim to develop an ethos of respect and consideration. In the EYFS, children show good levels of moral awareness. Further up the school, pupils understand that when someone does something wrong, their actions should not be imitated or tolerated. Pupils' sense of fairness is clear and they express it well. This was especially apparent during discussions with the school council. Pupils of all ages were able to explain the school sanctions policy. They show a clear understanding of right and wrong behaviour, and of 'fair play', as shown by some older pupils who explained

why they feel that, just occasionally, the way the rules are applied in the school are not always fair.

- 2.18 Pupils' good social awareness is reflected in their willingness to accept responsibility for their actions, for instance when their behaviour has not been as positive as was required. Pupils respond well when responsibility is given to them, for example as leaders and monitors in Year 2, and as school counsellors from Years 3 to 8, and show good leadership qualities. Their sense of belonging to their 'section', or house, is strong. Their broad general knowledge of public institutions and services is developed through the PSHE curriculum; in particular citizenship includes the study of central governance and democracy. Year 7's visit to the Houses of Parliament provides further insight.
- 2.19 Kenyan food tasting in Year 3, and Year 4's work on the 'Flavour of India', are two interesting examples of activities that have improved pupils' cultural awareness since the last inspection. Their good development is supported by a rich variety of experiences, such as a cross-year choral trip to Bruges and Brussels, and a Year 5 trip to Dieppe linked with the fishing industry in Hastings and Newhaven. These experiences contribute well not only to their cultural understanding but also their personal development. Many cultures are present in the school, and this means pupils gain good understanding of diversity through friendships and discussion, particular among boarders. As a result, they present a harmonious community. Work in several subjects including art, music, history and RS also encourages pupils' cultural understanding.
- 2.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.21 Teaching and assessment throughout the school have improved since the last inspection and now make a good contribution to pupils' achievement and to their personal development, in fulfilment of the school's aims. Whilst a comfortable majority of lessons observed were good, some inconsistency was evident and use of the improved assessment tools is not yet embedded.
- 2.22 One of the strengths of the best teaching is that it encourages pupils to enjoy and take an interest in their work. Lessons are usually lively and interesting, helping pupils to learn. Staff know pupils well, which helps them to make good progress. Provision for those with learning needs is outstanding because it is very well structured and sensitively led. Provision for the more able is good and developing. Teaching arrangements for those who are gifted, for instance in art, drama and dance, nurture their talents well. As a result of the good overall teaching and the individual attention to pupils' needs, all groups make equivalent progress from their different starting points.
- 2.23 The ethos of care encourages pupils to apply effort to their work. In a Year 8 ICT project, pupils worked hard to manipulate presentation media skilfully to produce advertisements for an imaginary charity concert. Teachers celebrate pupils' creative efforts through high quality displays around the school. A well-paced and lively Year 2 dance lesson encouraged pupils to make sustained physical effort. Some lessons include tasks that encourage skills of deduction and prediction, for instance in a Year 3 science lesson during an experiment on the movement of water through plant material, and in a Year 8 geography project where pupils explored hypotheses. However, too few opportunities are provided overall for pupils to think things through for themselves.

- 2.24 Lesson planning is good. The best lessons inspire pupils' enthusiasm by including a variety of interesting activities and good use of resources, including the interactive whiteboards, to support learning. The majority of lessons encourage pupils to behave responsibly. In these lessons, the positive learning atmosphere is palpable and pupils are clearly enjoying their work. In a few lessons, however, some over-casual behaviour is tolerated and classroom management in these lessons is too informal, limiting progress.
- 2.25 Teachers know their subjects well and show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils. For instance, in Year 4, three ability groups worked on literary devices at different levels, each appropriate to their differing abilities. Teachers make good use of a range of resources. The library is an attractive, popular resource that has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers successfully encourage its use as a place for reading for pleasure and research. The music studio is well resourced with electronic keyboards and in a Year 8 lesson, the use of headphones allowed the teacher to work individually with pupils. The immediate vicinity of the coastline is used well to enhance pupils' learning. Facilities for ICT are good and they are used well to support learning in a number of subjects.
- 2.26 Assessment is good overall. Some staff, but not all, make excellent use of the range of information that school managers provide, to assist them in pitching work at the right level for each individual. Marking, although regular, is variable in quality. The best provides encouraging and helpful comments to assist progression. The school has strengthened its understanding of pupils' ability and progress since the last inspection by establishing their starting points and expected progress against nationally standardised data. Use of this data is not fully embedded as a tool to improve progress and standards. Target setting is beginning to be used, but is not used sufficiently to help pupils understand how to make progress. Assessments regularly compare performance with national norms and are used effectively to prepare pupils for entry into senior schools, evidenced by their success in Common Entrance examinations.
- 2.27 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 Pastoral care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory overall, for boarding and day pupils, maintaining the standard of the last inspection and contributing to the school's aim to place priority on developing pupils' skills for life and working as a team. In the EYFS, attention to children's welfare is good. The after-school care provided for these children fulfils statutory obligations. In both parts of the school, day and boarding pupils enjoy good levels of pastoral care but some aspects of health and safety had been overlooked until inspectors reported them to the school. Although prompt remedial action was taken to address many of these, concerns remain about the safety of some upper floor windows in the boys' boarding accommodation.
- 3.2 Caring and hard working staff, who are strongly committed to the school and the welfare of its pupils, provide good support and guidance. The school community works well together to inculcate the consideration for others and helpfulness which are evident in the pupils. Visitors are met with polite consideration from pupils of all ages. Constant encouragement assists the development of good relationships between staff and pupils. The majority of parents and pupils appreciate the good standards of care. Most pupils feel that they are helped to settle in, that teachers help them learn and that they are given support when they have difficulties.
- 3.3 Pupils are supported by an effective and functional care system. Policies and procedures are clearly set out in writing and suitably implemented. Communication between home and school is well supported by increasing electronic means such as the use of text messages. Pupils' diaries are a well-intentioned home-school vehicle for both academic and pastoral communication, but their use is patchy.
- 3.4 The school has an effective anti-bullying policy which includes appropriate advice. Pupils say they feel that bullying is not an issue; if it occurs, they know that it will be dealt with promptly. The system of rewards and sanctions is effective but in the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a significant minority felt that these are not consistently applied. Pupils enjoy the reward system, collecting points to contribute to the 'section' or house. Badges for 50 and 100 points are popular, and the headmaster's commendations are coveted.
- 3.5 The deputy head is the child protection officer for the whole school. He is suitably supported by other staff. Training is up-to-date and has been in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Boarding Schools' Association requirements. An suitable child protection policy provides detailed guidance about procedures for effective implementation. Appropriate checks regarding suitability have been carried out on staff who have contact with pupils. All checks are recorded on the required single central register.
- 3.6 The school's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting pupils' health and well being are generally suitable and records are up-to-date. Procedures for health and safety have been improved since the last inspection. These include the allocation of trust-wide responsibilities so that an overview can be gained. As a result, a more efficient system operates to assure the health and safety of pupils. The school takes appropriate measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards, including risk assessments for school outings, residential trips and practical lessons. However, its risk assessments in other areas are not sharp enough. Some windows in the boys' section of the boarding house lack safety bars or a sufficient mechanism to limit their opening space, for example, and the school had not identified the

potential risk arising from this. Due regard is given to ensuring that legal obligations are met regarding disability, race and gender discrimination, and special educational needs.

- 3.7 There are sufficient trained first aiders on the staff. Pupils' medical records are available to authorised persons, to ensure they are aware of important issues. Appropriate arrangements are made for pupils who are ill during the course of the day including the use of a suitable rest room. Entries in the admissions register are suitably recorded but arrangements for completion of the daily attendance registers are unsatisfactory. This is because some indication marks do not follow the school's policy and some registers have been altered. The registration policy indicates that some registers are not to be taken in the afternoons, though they are, in practice. Registers are kept for the required time.
- 3.8 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing healthy eating habits and taking regular exercise. The school provides meals for day and boarding pupils. Efforts are made to see that the food provided is nutritious. The Food Committee, whose membership changes for each meeting, meets monthly to discuss food options and encourage healthy eating. Considering the long day, many pupils feel they need more than the piece of fruit available in the afternoon break on most days, to give them enough energy to finish the school day. Inspectors agree. Pupils' awareness of health and safety issues is good. They are encouraged to understand why they need to develop healthy habits, through science and PSHE lessons. For instance, Year 3 pupils discuss what constitutes balance in their diet. Sports grounds, located a ten-minute coastal walk away from school, ensure pupils take regular exercise in order to reach the facilities.
- 3.9 The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) have regard to the DCSF Guidance *Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers* in relation to the safety of the window openings in the boys' boarding accommodation [Regulation 3.(4)] (see also [Regulation 5.(u)]);
 - (b) maintain attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 [Regulation 3.(9)].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.10 The school's links with parents and the community are good overall, maintaining the standard noted at the last inspection. Parents expressed some concerns about the length of the school day. The school is aware of parents' views.
- 3.11 About a third of the parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They expressed some satisfaction, for example in the support provided for their children. Several reservations were expressed by a significant minority of parents. These included the way the school handles concerns, a perceived lack of encouragement to be involved in the life and work of the school, insufficient information given about their child's progress and opportunities to discuss this, and the standard of pupils' behaviour. Most of the written comments referred to the structure of the timetable, particularly the length of the school day for younger pupils. Inspectors investigated these concerns.
- 3.12 The school and inspectors agree that behaviour is not as good as the school wishes and efforts have been made to improve it. These are having a positive effect and behaviour is satisfactory. Inspectors agree with those parents who commented that the length of the compulsory part of the school day is overlong for primary age pupils, even taking into account the work done at school that is 'homework'.

- 3.13 Inspectors found that parents have good opportunities to be involved in the school and are provided with plenty of information about their child's work and progress, and opportunities to discuss this. They receive a good introductory handbook when a pupil joins, and a boarding information handbook as boarders start. Further annual informative booklets are provided, for instance describing the curriculum. For some year groups, meetings are held for all parents to hear about the coming year's curriculum. Weekly newsletters keep parents informed. They are invited to many events, including plays in the school theatre. They assist with school events such as Sports Day, Prize Giving, the Christmas Fair and school trips. Written reports are regular. For Years 3 to 8 they are sent seven times per year. Two of these reports contain detailed comments and often show parents how their child could make further progress, whilst the others provide a record of their child's achievement. Altogether, parents are able to receive a very full picture of school life and their child's progress. However, not all parents feel their voice is heard or their views are considered by the school. The school is considering the establishment of a parents' association to give parents the opportunity to feel more involved with the school. School records show that concerns are properly and promptly handled. A suitable policy is in place.
- 3.14 The school has good and worthwhile links with its community. These include many local connections, such as participation in a county Youth Forum. Pupils recently devised a programme for a local radio station. Firework displays, harvest festival and an annual charity ball are further examples of regular community events. Pupils from local schools attend some additional classes in Latin and a science challenge project at the school. The school also has worthwhile associations with communities further afield, for instance with an African orphanage through the church.
- 3.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.16 The quality of boarding is satisfactory overall. Relationships are good and additional activities enrich boarders' experience. This enables the school to offer a supportive boarding environment for those pupils who live away from home, and helps prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, in keeping with its aims. Boarding makes a sound contribution to pupils' personal and educational development but the accommodation was not fully satisfactory in certain respects at the time of the inspection.
- 3.17 Relationships among boarders are good. The house staff have a good rapport with pupils. The atmosphere is relaxed and pupils say they feel comfortable sharing any concerns with boarding staff. Boarding staff understand their responsibility to care for pupils and communicate effectively to the teaching staff any concerns they may have about individual pupils.
- 3.18 The range of extra-curricular opportunities available out of school and at weekends is good. Boarders can join in the excellent activities provided on weekdays for day pupils and they are provided with some separate activities in the boarding house in the evening and at weekends. Boarders enjoy many of the visits and outside activities they are offered, such as theatre trips, camping and barbeques. Some of these, such as a running club, encourage them to develop healthy lifestyles.

- 3.19 The accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Boys and girls are accommodated in the same house and share common areas. The joint area for relaxing is restricted in size and facilities. The refurbishment of the girls' area of the boarding accommodation is complete and it is comfortable. The sleeping area for the boys is still undergoing work to improve it. The National Minimum Boarding Standards were not examined as part of this inspection and no assurance is given here that the standards are met. With this proviso, the recommendations of the report from the last boarding visit by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in November 2004 were considered by ISI inspectors. Significant change has occurred since that inspection, including the amalgamation of boys' and girls' boarding into one house that previously used to accommodate only girls. This renders many of the recommendations no longer relevant. Satisfactory progress has been made on those that remain. The current refurbishment of the boys' accommodation triggered a safety matter during the inspection concerning windows on the upper floor. This is noted earlier in Section 3.1 of this report that deals with health and safety.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Governance provides satisfactory support for the school overall, maintaining the standard noted at the last inspection. This assists the school to fulfil its aims well. However, checking of risk assessment processes and attendance registration procedures has not been sufficiently rigorous.
- 4.2 Governors offer a good range of expertise and experience. A new chair was appointed recently who has made a good start in ensuring the governing body is provided with comprehensive guidance about its responsibilities and roles. The governing body maintains satisfactory oversight of the school through termly meetings and a committee structure that works effectively for property development and finance. The arrangements to oversee the educational aspects of the school are less defined, though educationalists on the governing body provide useful expertise, and arrangements for reporting through the chief executive ensure that governors are kept informed.
- 4.3 Governors understand their roles and responsibilities in respect of secure recruitment and health and safety. Financial oversight is strong, under the day-to-day care of the bursar, and the procurement of resources throughout the school is efficient. Financial development receives good attention. Educational development is fully delegated to the school under the responsibility of the chief executive officer. Regular checks are made through reporting processes. Termly day visits by pairs of governors, with follow up reports, are a good feature that improves the governors' insight into the working of the school. This practice enables governors to provide a satisfactory and improving level of advice, support, and stimulus for growth and improvement.
- 4.4 The governors' requirements in terms of regular reporting from key personnel, such as the headmaster, ensure that most of their responsibilities are discharged appropriately.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Leadership and management are good overall. The headmaster is well supported by experienced senior managers. Together they have guided considerable improvements since the last inspection and kept the fulfilment of the school's aims centre-stage. However, on occasion, details of day-to-day organisation are overlooked or unchecked and so pupils are unclear about arrangements and progress is compromised.
- 4.6 The clear direction and leadership provided by the senior management team have been a beacon for change and improvement to the quality of education provided. Some parents and pupils have expressed concerns over the changes but the impact on standards is evident, for instance in the increased number of scholarships won for various disciplines at the age of thirteen. The positive impact on pupils' personal development is also beginning to become apparent. Senior managers share a purposeful relationship which contributes substantially to the improvements that are under way and to the fulfilment of the school's aims.
- 4.7 The new whole-school development plan is of good quality, and shared with staff, who have all contributed to its formulation. The current priorities are clear. Subject department plans link well into the main document. Subject policies are built on a secure framework and form a consistent base upon which to review and develop the curriculum. Regular management meetings assist corporate decision making and provide suitable support for the day-to-day

running of the school, which helps to put decisions into practice. Arrangements are in place to review most of the policies and procedures, although there are shortcomings in the way the school monitors risk assessment and registration procedures.

- 4.8 The EYFS is well managed. Management of other departments is variable. A start has been made on monitoring teaching and learning, but it is not yet fully effective. Because of this, both teaching quality and pupils' attitudes to learning vary.
- 4.9 Teaching staff and classroom assistants are secured and deployed astutely, and contribute significantly to the pupils' learning and welfare. Catering, maintenance and facilities staff provide a very good service to the school. Recruitment procedures for staff are good and thoroughly applied. All statutory checks are made prior to confirmation of appointment and suitably recorded on a single central register. Governors also undergo these checks for suitability. The induction procedure for new staff is comprehensive and supportive. Newly qualified teachers are given a suitable programme that enables them to achieve fully qualified status. The annual appraisal process is co-ordinated well to identify training needs which are underpinned by the requirements of the development plans.
- 4.10 The arrangements for providing appropriate resources are well managed by the bursar for the whole school and ensure that pupils' needs are met. The buildings are well maintained and hold good quality displays of pupils' work. The library has improved since the last inspection and now provides a comfortable haven for reading for both pleasure and research. Current large-scale building work is being carefully managed to ensure as little disruption as possible to pupils' learning. Those boarders whose accommodation has been refurbished are pleased with their term-time home.
- 4.11 Day-to-day organisation of the school is satisfactory overall and it is good in the EYFS. In the rest of the school, information is not always efficiently distributed to staff and pupils. For instance, some staff have not fully understood the implications of the behaviour policy and the need to be consistent. Pupils and staff say that day-to-day changes are frequent and that some pupils are not informed of such changes in a timely fashion or clearly enough. This was evident during the inspection and led to occasional lateness and frustration for pupils, through no fault of their own. Administrative support, managed for the trust as a whole, provides a suitable service to the school.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4].
- 4.13 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) have regard to Standards 40-52 of the National Minimum Boarding Standards and make all windows safe [Regulation 5.(u)] (see also [Regulation 3.(4)]).
- 4.14 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school's aims are successfully fulfilled through an emphasis on encouraging pupils to achieve. This focus has prevailed during the rapid development that has set it on a course of improvement. Children get off to a good start in the EYFS and staff build on this throughout the school. The school community is underpinned by Christian values in which pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well developed. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Teaching and assessment, though still variable in quality, have improved since the last inspection and are good overall, and this enables pupils to achieve good standards in relation to their abilities and develop well in their personal skills. Hard working and caring staff know their pupils' needs and abilities well and provide effective pastoral care. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Improving behaviour has been a focus of the school and new strategies are beginning to work. The curriculum is broad and the vibrant range of extra-curricular activities extends learning well but some imbalance occurs in the core curriculum. The compulsory part of the day is very long for most pupils and the timetable structure is too complex. Boarders enjoy the boarding experience because relationships are good. Except in the EYFS, a significant minority of pupils and parents are still coming to terms with some of the current arrangements. Some aspects of governance and management are insufficiently rigorous.
- 5.2 Good progress overall has been made on the recommendations of the last inspection but some still remain to be dealt with. The skills of heads of department have improved and the emphasis on staff training has been strengthened but, in some subjects, monitoring of teaching and the use of assessment data are not fully established. Because of this, the full impact of good procedures on pupils' educational experience and standards is not yet realised.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not meet Standards 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils) and 5 (premises and accommodation).

Next Steps

- 5.4 To build on the rapid, recent changes which have taken place, the school should take the following steps.
1. Improve communication with pupils, staff and parents.
 2. Strengthen the balance of the curriculum and simplify its structure.
 3. Raise the standard of all teaching and learning to that of the best by:
 - improving monitoring by heads of department;
 - using assessment more consistently to set targets, measure progress and inform planning;
 - sharing good practice, raising expectations and improving classroom management.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) ensure all upstairs windows are safe in the boarding house by providing safety bars, or a mechanism to limit their opening space [Regulation 3.(4)] and [Regulation 5.(u)];
 - (2) maintain attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 [Regulation 3.(9)].
- 5.6 Any failures to meet EYFS requirements are detailed in Section 7.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 2nd to 5th March 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching 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 boarding house and the rest room. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 23rd and 24th February 2009 by two inspectors. The inspectors observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff and governors. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Mary Allen	Head, IAPS school
Mr Peter Mulhern	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Adrian Taylor	Head, IAPS school
Mr Eddy Newton	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Amanda Rowse	Former Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr David Walters	Senior Teacher, IAPS school
Mrs Gail Purt	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Gillian Bilbo	Early Years Team Inspector

7. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) offers education for children from two to five years of age. At the time of the inspection, seven boys and five girls attended Nursery 1 for children under the age of three, of whom ten were part-time. Eleven boys and twenty-two girls attended Nursery 2 and 3 at the ages of three and four, and eight boys and three girls attended the Reception classes full-time, at the ages of four and five. Four children have been identified as needing support with their learning, and two children are learning English as an additional language. No child has a statement of special educational needs. Nursery education is organised by the session. Extended day care is provided for children in the EYFS from 8.15 am until 5.45 pm. The last Ofsted inspection of the setting was in January 2007. The setting seeks to provide an environment which values the achievements of each individual, and within which children can work as a team and have respect for all in the community. It aims to encourage children of all talents to gain skills through active learning, and to achieve their goals.
- 7.2 The overall effectiveness of the setting in meeting children's needs is good, with outstanding features. Key staff are highly successful in settling children into routines quickly, and observing each child's progress carefully. This ensures that children make a rapid start by laying a secure basis for developing key skills and nurturing individual talents. Effective adult support and guidance ensure that all children feel confident to explore, ask questions and work independently. Well-timed intervention challenges and extends thinking. Careful provision for the welfare of the children, together with the secure family atmosphere, contributes strongly to their excellent personal development and well-being. Extended day care is managed effectively by EYFS staff. Children who attend are cared for well and provided with a suitable range of activities.
- 7.3 Children make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities. On entry to Reception, most children are achieving in line with, and sometimes above, age-related expectations in all areas of learning. They are working securely within the Early Learning Goals in most areas and are well prepared for work in Year 1. Children show curiosity and develop independence as they actively explore and solve problems, for example using a computer programme to develop number skills, or examining the garden environment with magnifying glasses. They are keen to try new and challenging experiences in their adventure play area. The emphasis staff place on developing speaking and listening skills ensures children make particularly good gains in their language and development.
- 7.4 Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy their learning, and are well aware of how to behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. They take considerable care when climbing steps and moving around the site as a 'walking train.' They demonstrate excellent hygiene practices, when they wash their hands and clean the tables before making chocolate igloos, for instance. They are aware of the benefits of healthy eating and are physically active. All children have swimming lessons. They learn to make choices and decisions. They readily take turns, share and show high levels of consideration to others. Children are extremely well prepared for their future well-being because the school successfully develops their skills in language, mathematics, and information and communication technology, and encourages them to work productively with others. Exciting role-play activities, as part of their 'Frozen Lands' project and on visits to the beach, raise their awareness of the natural world and the need to care for their environment.

- 7.5 The school's promotion of children's learning and development is good. Clear expectations of what children can achieve ensure they progress well in all areas, with particular emphasis on creativity in painting, music and movement, and constructional and technological skills. Care is taken to ensure the curriculum is fully accessible to all. Visual cues are used extensively. Information from observations is used appropriately to plan each child's next steps and to meet their individual interests. Assessment is being further developed to track progress, but is not yet fully in place. Children's relationships with staff and with each other are excellent. Children are valued and provided with the support needed to become independent learners. Planned purposeful play both in- and out-of-doors provides good opportunities for children to become active learners. The stimulating, well-resourced garden significantly enhances their learning. The school recognises that resources in some areas and storage space are limited.
- 7.6 The school's effectiveness in promoting children's welfare is good, with some significant strengths. Key persons are allocated to small groups of children so they get to know them and their families exceptionally well. This, in turn, generates a great deal of trust and underpins the strong home-school partnership. Procedures to ensure that children are protected and safeguarded are effective. Exceptional care is taken to greet children on arrival and to ensure a safe handover to parents and carers at the end of sessions. Arrangements for first aid and handling medication are meticulous, and all staff are keenly aware of individual needs, such as allergy or dietary requirements. Children understand the need for rules and routines. As a result they behave impeccably. The setting carries out suitable risk assessments in addition to regular indoor and outdoor safety checks.
- 7.7 Leadership and management are good. The head of the Pre-prep provides a strong focus for the staff, to ensure that children's learning flourishes. Staff are reflective, continually adjusting their practice to meet the needs of all children and to help them do their best. A range of appropriate policies and procedures is in place but these are not yet fully embedded into the day-to-day work of the setting. Staffing levels are good and maintained at a level that supports individual children and creates a stimulating learning environment. Staff are appropriately qualified and required recruitment checks have been carried out. Together, senior managers and governors monitor the work of the setting through self-evaluation and development plans. They know how the setting can continue to improve and this is demonstrated in good progress made since the last inspection. This good teamwork successfully promotes the setting's inclusive ethos to ensure that the unique needs of each child are met.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.8 To improve still further the good quality of its provision, the setting should:
1. continue to develop the use of information from assessment to track the progress of children throughout the setting;
 2. ensure policies and procedures are fully implemented;
 3. use the opportunities provided by the new accommodation to review the learning resources and their storage.
- 7.9 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Act 2006.

Complaints Since the Last Inspection

- 7.10 Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.