



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HIGHCLARE SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Highclare School

Full Name of School	Highclare School
DfE Number	330/6060
EYFS Numbers	St Paul's: EY244472 Woodfield: EY287857
Registered Charity Number	528940
Address	Highclare School 10 Sutton Road Erdington Birmingham West Midlands B23 6QL
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Email Address	headsecretary@highclareschool.co.uk
Head	Mrs M Viles
Chair of Governors	Mrs L Flowith
Age Range	1 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	698
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (241 boys; 457 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 85 5-11: 246 3-5 (EYFS): 162 11-18: 205
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 698
Head of EYFS Setting	St Paul's: Mrs J Harris Woodfield: Mrs C Antcliffe
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	21 Sep 2010 to 22 Sep 2010 18 Oct 2010 to 20 Oct 2010

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2004.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Highclare School is a day school founded in 1932 in Sutton Coldfield. It occupies three sites on the Birmingham and Lichfield Road including the Abbey, a former Benedictine monastery. At the time of the inspection, pupils from 18 months to the age of 7 were accommodated at Woodfield, the original site just south of the town; pupils from the ages of 3 to 11 were at St. Paul's, just north of the town; and pupils from the ages of 7 to 18 were at the Abbey in Erdington. All three sites had both boys and girls, though not in all years. There was a total of 698 pupils (241 boys and 457 girls). This total included 145 part-time and 102 full-time pupils who were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for pupils up to the age of five; of these, 85 were under three. In addition, 246 pupils were in Years 1 to 6 and 205 pupils were in Years 7 to 13. Day care is provided before and after school, and in the holidays.
- 1.2 The school is managed by a board of governors, who had announced shortly before the inspection that the education of pupils up to the age of 11 would be concentrated at Woodfield and St. Paul's, and that of older pupils at the Abbey, with co-education throughout. Each site is managed by its own head under the overall leadership of the headmistress. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds in Sutton Coldfield, Lichfield, Tamworth, Birmingham and Walsall. They come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest group being white British.
- 1.3 Pupils are admitted without academic selection. The range of ability for pupils up to Year 6 is slightly above the national average, for pupils in Years 7 to 11 it is above the national average, and in the sixth form it is in line with the average for pupils taking A level. Throughout the school, the range of ability is wide. Sixty-nine pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), all of whom receive support. Five pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom two require support in school.
- 1.4 A high proportion of pupils leave before Reception, to join local maintained schools. Similarly, many move at the age of eleven, mainly to local grammar schools, and others at sixteen to other schools or colleges. At each stage, new pupils join and the school population thus experiences considerable pupil mobility. Most sixth-form students go to university after leaving school.
- 1.5 The school is non-denominational with a broad Christian ethos. Its aims include focusing on individuals, adding value through a diverse programme of academic studies and activities, and enabling each pupil to achieve individual excellence.

- 1.6 In the report, the terms primary pupils and primary schools are taken to refer to all three parts of the school in which primary aged pupils are educated: Woodfield, St. Paul's and Abbey Junior. Older pupils are referred to as secondary pupils and Abbey Senior as the senior school. National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Kindergarten	Nursery
Transition	Nursery
Reception	Reception

Primary Schools

School	NC name
Junior 1	Year 1
Junior 2	Year 2
Junior 3	Year 3
Junior 4	Year 4
Junior 5	Year 5
Junior 6	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
U3 (Upper 3)	Year 7
L4 (Lower 4)	Year 8
U4 (Upper 4)	Year 9
L5 (Lower 5)	Year 10
U5 (Upper 5)	Year 11
L6 (Lower 6)	Year 12
U6 (Upper 6)	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Throughout the school, from EYFS onwards, pupils of all abilities and needs achieve well. They become increasingly articulate, confident and industrious, with well-developed basic skills. Primary pupils achieve considerable examination success at 11+, as do secondary pupils later. Results at GCSE are in line with the average for selective maintained schools, as have been the most recent results at A level. When given the opportunity, pupils work well both collaboratively and independently. They achieve many notable individual and team successes. Teaching is good overall, with a few primary and many secondary lessons being outstanding. Teachers know pupils extremely well and provide a high level of individual support, which underpins their good progress. The best lessons are challenging and allow pupils to contribute to their own learning. The less successful lessons are too teacher-led and less challenging, especially for the most able. The great majority of marking is regular and detailed, and the best shows pupils how to improve their work. However, in the senior school, variety in methods of grading work sometimes confuses pupils. Assessment data is thorough; it is well used at primary level but is not used fully to monitor the progress of senior pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with careful liaison between the three primary sites, enabling pupils to gain a firm foundation to their later education. Provision for pupils with LDD is thorough and supportive, enabling pupils to progress well. The pupils' education and personal development are enhanced by a good range of activities and links with the wider community.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. They develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, coupled with considerable awareness of moral and social issues. They take their responsibilities seriously, and develop a mature sense of cultural identity. Excellent pastoral care is the key to maintaining the family ethos at the heart of the school's life. Pupils' questionnaire responses were, overall, positive about the school, and the criticisms of relationships with teachers made by some pupils were not borne out in discussion during the inspection. In the senior school, personal tutors provide valuable additional support. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are excellent in almost all respects; however, a small number of references had not been completed when staff took up their posts, though these had all been obtained since.
- 2.3 Governors provide clear and strategic direction, enabling the school to make many improvements since the last inspection. They work well with senior managers, and give careful attention to all areas of school life. They discharge their responsibilities for the oversight of welfare, health and safety well in almost all respects. Across the schools, leadership and management is strong and liaison good; however, primary subject coordinators are not allocated sufficient time to monitor teaching and learning fully. The shared commitment to the school's ethos enables all staff to work constructively together for the benefit of the pupils. Links with parents are well developed, though some parents of children in EYFS would appreciate more guidance on learning at home through clearer individual targets in reports. Parents were highly supportive of the school in the questionnaire, a view with which inspection evidence concurred; criticism by some of support for pupils with LDD was not borne out during the inspection.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it was required to:
- ensure that references are always obtained before staff start work [Part 3, paragraph 7 (a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].
- 2.5 Well before the initial visit, the school had rectified the above shortcoming as far as possible, as noted in the text of the report.
- 2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.7 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Throughout the school, share good practice in teaching strategies, particularly to develop further opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
 2. In the senior school, clarify the grading of pupils' work and make greater use of information from assessment to inform planning.
 3. Provide adequate time for subject leadership in the primary schools.
 4. Improve reporting within the EYFS to ensure that targets are identified for each child.
 5. Develop, as planned, the outdoor areas within the EYFS to further support children's learning across the curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

Primary schools

- 3.1 Pupils' achievements are good; the school succeeds in its aim to motivate each pupil to achieve their full all-round potential. Good teaching and support enable pupils with LDD to achieve success.
- 3.2 Pupils read well. From an early age they write interesting sentences to express thoughts and ideas; by Year 6 they understand different styles of writing and create effects by using appropriate vocabulary or punctuation. Pupils are articulate and confident and they converse easily with both peers and adults. They have good mathematical skills, and use computers confidently. Year 5 pupils showed very good independent research skills and thought when using computers to design the covers for their Tudor monarchs folders. Pupils achieve considerable success in entrance examinations to secondary schools. They participate with enthusiasm in clubs and activities. They achieve well in a range of sports; individual pupils have recently been selected for athletics and cross-country national championships and much success has been achieved at local, regional and national level by sports teams. Speech and drama results are strong, and many pupils achieve merits or distinctions. Art of a good standard is on display; musical achievement is currently less pronounced, as the school was already aware at the time of the inspection.
- 3.3 Pupils' attainment is shown by standardised measures of progress to be high in relation to national age-related expectations, as also indicated by everyday work. These tests show that pupils make good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability. For example, predictions from Year 3 tests about performance in Year 6 are often far exceeded.
- 3.4 Pupils have good attitudes and work hard. They apply themselves, even when the task is less exciting, and have well-developed powers of concentration. They take pride in presentation, and exercise books are neatly maintained. Some good examples of independent learning were seen, for example in excellent individual projects completed by pupils in Years 2, 4 and 5, but similar opportunities for independent learning are not yet fully developed as the school is aware. Pupils work effectively in pairs or small groups and are helpful to and considerate of their partners.

Senior school

- 3.5 Pupils' achievements are good. They are articulate, cogent and well educated in line with the school's aim of motivating each pupil to achieve his or her full potential. Both curricular and extra-curricular activities give pupils opportunities to develop a wide range of basic and more advanced skills.
- 3.6 Pupils of all ages and abilities demonstrate high levels of literacy and, when given the opportunity, for example in Year 10 drama or in history and chemistry projects, work well both co-operatively and independently; however, they do not always have this opportunity. Pupils are numerate, applying mathematical skills in a range of subjects including science and geography. Their information and communications technology (ICT) skills are well developed, as seen in their written work and on

display. In physical activities, pupils participate with enthusiasm and respond well to peer instruction and leadership. Sixth form pupils show excellent skills in literacy analysis and answer mathematical questions fluently. Pupils of all ages and abilities exhibit impressive creative abilities, frequently gaining prizes in national competitions and achieving honours in individual speech and music examinations. Some sing in a choir with a nationally recognised orchestra and others play in local music ensembles. They succeed in local, area and national sports competitions, and several represent the Midlands at national level. Many sports teams are local or regional champions. On leaving the sixth form, the great majority gain entry to university.

- 3.7 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Pupils' attainment is good in relation to national standards. Results at GCSE have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and in line with the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Over half the grades awarded were A* or A. At A level, results have been largely in line with the national average for girls in maintained schools. Results in 2009 were higher than in other years, demonstrating performance above the national average and in line with results in maintained selective schools. In both 2009 and 2010, about three-quarters of grades were at A or B level.
- 3.8 These levels of attainment indicate that pupils make good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability. By the time they reach the sixth form, they are confident, competent young people with well-formed views and high expectations. Standardised measures of progress also show that pupils make good progress relative to pupils of similar ability up to GCSE and appropriate progress in the sixth form.
- 3.9 Pupils' attitudes to learning are first-rate and they clearly enjoy their lessons. They are engaged and responsive both to teachers and to their peers, listening well and arguing persuasively. In the majority of lessons, the quality of pupils' learning is high; they work very well with others and can think for themselves.

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

Primary schools

- 3.10 The curriculum is good, broad and balanced, meeting the school's aims and preparing pupils well for the next stage of their learning, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. It meets the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities and enables them to reach high standards. All requisite areas of learning are covered well, with a strong emphasis on English and mathematics. French is taught from Reception. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is embedded into the curriculum and makes an important contribution to pupils' excellent personal development. Since the last inspection, ICT has become more integrated into the curriculum throughout the school. The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure continuity and progression across the years and across the three sites. Common policies and regular meetings contribute to the shared ethos and corporate identity.
- 3.11 Pupils' individual abilities are well understood, and provision for those with LDD has improved. Detailed individual education plans (IEPs) are shared with teachers who

plan carefully for these pupils and liaise well with learning support staff. In addition pupils may be withdrawn either individually or in groups. Pupils with EAL receive good support to enable them to benefit from the curriculum. The school has identified the needs of gifted and talented pupils and has started to produce ideas to extend their work in class, but this is not done consistently.

- 3.12 A good range of extra-curricular activities has been developed since the last inspection and encourages pupils to extend their interests and experience different pursuits. These include sports, line and street dancing, choir, drama, gardening and Spanish. Links with the local community also bring a richness to life at the school. Visitors to the school, coupled with visits by pupils to events or places elsewhere, extend the curriculum further and are a strong feature of pupils' experience. Representatives of the air ambulance and lifeboat services, community police and nurses all came to talk to the pupils in health and safety week. Pupils also benefit from links with local churches and other faith communities. Year 2 pupils at Woodfield visit a local residential home throughout the year. Energetic fund-raising for local, national and international charities such as the local children's hospital, the air ambulance service and the Haiti earthquake appeal foster strong involvement with the community.

Senior school

- 3.13 The curriculum is broad and fulfils the school's aims well, both in academic and non-academic activities. At GCSE and A level, an extensive range of options is provided; this has been enhanced since the last inspection by the addition of drama, textiles and triple science at GCSE, and psychology in the sixth form. Younger pupils have access to the full range of subjects including two languages, two humanities and a good range of creative subjects. The time allocation for physical education (PE) in Years 10 and 11 remains rather short, but this is balanced by the option of GCSE PE, and by the sports activities offered. ICT is now successfully integrated into teaching and learning; examples are seen in pupils' work and displays, Year 11 pupils use it for reinforcement in French and interactive whiteboards are widely used in teaching.
- 3.14 Many pupils speak enthusiastically of PSHCE, where lessons encompass a broad range of issues of relevance to their development. Discussions, group work and presentations involve pupils in forming views on issues affecting their daily lives. The highly successful industry day for Year 10, the effective study skills course in Year 7 and visitors from local institutions such as the Birmingham Civic Society make up an interesting and extremely effective programme. The careers programme includes practical tasks on preparing CVs and personal statements, and gives pupils insights into the world of work. Sixth-formers speak highly of the support and guidance they receive in applications to higher education.
- 3.15 Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported by the production of comprehensive IEPs which are well-used by teachers. Small classes enable teachers to cater well for pupils with a wide range of needs and abilities, including the most able. Pupils with EAL are also supported well. However, although teachers provide some good opportunities for additional challenge for the most able pupils, this is not done consistently.
- 3.16 A good range of opportunities supports the formal curriculum, both through out-of-school activities and the enrichment programme timetabled in Years 7 and 8. Links with the community further broaden pupils' education through educational visits such

as the history visit to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, and business workshops taking place both in and out of school, visiting speakers and work experience placements for Year 11 pupils.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

Primary schools

Teaching is mostly good and the school's aim to provide high quality teaching is generally met well. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk, good use is made of open-ended questions and resources, tasks and teaching methods are varied and pupils are motivated and enthused. Pupils respond positively when teachers provide occasions for independent, paired or group work, but opportunities for these are limited. Planning is detailed and shows, overall, a good awareness of pupils' differing needs. Support for the less able is invariably good, but the more able sometimes lack extension tasks or alternative work which would encourage them to apply and use their knowledge and skills in a range of ways. The minority of lessons which are satisfactory rather than good are well delivered but lack challenge or opportunities for pupils to take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.

- 3.17 Teachers have good subject knowledge. Specialist teachers, or teachers with a special interest in a particular subject, are well deployed. Resources, particularly the interactive whiteboards, are generally used effectively. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and teachers know their pupils very well. They praise pupils regularly for their efforts and achievements, thereby promoting pupils' self-confidence and self-respect.
- 3.18 Marking is conscientiously undertaken. Some teachers, but not all, give clear guidance as to how a pupil might develop or improve their work. Regular assessment of pupils' progress in creative writing, mathematics and science give a clear picture of their development. Detailed records of pupils' test results and assessments are passed from one class teacher to the next, so that teachers have a clear indication of each pupil's stage of development. Data from standardised tests are used comprehensively to identify any potential strengths, weaknesses or problems. Assessment and recording are much improved since the last inspection.

Senior school

- 3.19 The quality of teaching is good overall; a significant proportion of lessons observed were excellent, reflecting the school's aim to meet the differing needs of pupils well and enable them to achieve success.
- 3.20 In all lessons, teaching is focused on pupils' needs; pupils say that they feel supported in their learning and consider their teachers to be helpful. The best teaching provides opportunities for independent learning to which pupils respond well. Planning is meticulous; schemes of work are thorough, clear and well organised. Whilst most teaching is enthusiastic and varied, with a pace that stimulates interest and application, in some lessons there is an over-reliance on the delivery of information by the teacher and the taking of notes. Teaching universally demonstrates a very high quality of subject knowledge, combined with good use of resources. In an English lesson, superb questioning allowed pupils to explore Emily Bronte's text to a high level of understanding, and in a mathematics lesson good use of computer software enabled pupils to further their understanding of correlation.

- 3.21 Marking is regular, thorough, contains helpful comments and is of good quality. In some marking, for example in English, mathematics and history, excellent target setting is much appreciated by pupils. However, some pupils say they find the variations in the way in which work is graded confusing; it is not linked to the grades used in report criteria. In the best practice, test data are analysed and shared formally to set subject targets, assessment criteria are in pupils' exercise books and self-evaluation is used effectively, but these are not done consistently across the school.
- 3.22 The school holds a substantial amount of standardised baseline and progress data in a system set up since the last inspection. This is used annually to set GCSE and A level targets, and more regularly by the senior leadership team to monitor pupils' progress. However, whilst it is an excellent resource, it is still underused.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Primary schools

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils develop considerable self-respect and self-discipline, as well as tolerance and respect for others, as is fundamental to the nature of the school community.
- 4.2 The pupils show high levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness which are developed, in part, by the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Each pupil records their special achievements in a file which they proudly maintain throughout their school life. Their spiritual awareness is well developed through their appreciation of artistic and themed displays of their work.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral awareness is strong. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, and respond positively to the rules and rewards structures in school. They appreciate the success of others in merit assemblies. They benefit from having strong relationships and express care and concern for each other. For example, in a powerful school assembly on friendship, pupils offered mature solutions to the issues raised. Pupils are aware that they are responsible for their own actions, and that the friendly atmosphere within the school is based on their considerate behaviour towards each other. An example is the buddy system, which supports the anti-bullying policy and is fully endorsed by the pupils.
- 4.4 Pupils have a strong sense of responsibility. The many positions available allow pupils to contribute to the smooth running of the schools. They are proud of their roles, and senior pupils demonstrate a caring approach to their juniors. The school councils allow cross-year groups to meet and be aware of issues influencing all age groups. In their meetings they discuss and then select their ideas for changes and improvements to their school. The pupils are extremely active in helping those less fortunate than themselves, raising money for a variety of charities.
- 4.5 Pupils develop a mature sense of cultural identity and understand and respect the cultures of others. Strong PSHCE and religious studies programmes ensure that pupils learn and respect cultures other than their own, with assemblies being used to celebrate religious occasions and festivals. Pupils also show a good understanding of their own cultures and histories.

Senior school

- 4.6 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, reflecting the way this priority is placed at the heart of school life. The ethos of the school, as a caring, supportive and well-ordered environment where personal development is encouraged, influences every part of school life. It enables pupils from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds to feel safe and equally valued.
- 4.7 Pupils exhibit a notable degree of spiritual awareness and self-awareness. They welcome opportunities for reflection in assemblies, form time and PSHCE. They are responsible towards one another, show respect for others as well as for themselves, and are tolerant of those who are different from them. Sixth-form pupils show a good appreciation of questions about the existence and nature of God.

- 4.8 Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, which is reflected in the calm, ordered ambience of the school. They have a well developed sense of fair play. They understand and respect school rules and show a high degree of consideration and courtesy. Pupils told the inspectors that there is no bullying in the school and appeared shocked at the suggestion that there might be. In a Year 10 drama class, issues of 'bullying' and 'right and wrong' were tackled well by pupils working independently in groups. The standard of behaviour is very high. Pupils work in partnership with one another and with their teachers to achieve harmonious working relationships. They show consideration to each other at break times and in the dining hall, and they take pride in themselves and in the school.
- 4.9 Pupils develop well socially in their form groups, their houses and through sports, clubs and societies. Older pupils learn to interact with those younger than themselves. They provide good role models and are cheerful and articulate. The pupil voice is heard increasingly in the school, mainly through the school council. Pupils feel that the school takes their opinions on board and acts on them when it is reasonable so to do; some criticism of this in the pupils' questionnaire responses was not borne out in discussion during the inspection.
- 4.10 The pupils' cultural development is shown by their extensive participation in drama, music and art. They learn about many aspects of their own and others' cultures through their PSHCE lessons and the enrichment programme, as well as in other parts of the curriculum. Year 13 pupils were seen examining women's rights thoughtfully, Year 11 pupils spoke clearly of their study of France and French culture and, in a Year 8 music lesson, pupils listening to sitar music took part in an active discussion on Indian culture.

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

Primary school pastoral care

- 4.11 The quality of pastoral care for primary pupils is excellent, underpinning pupils' excellent personal development. The school fulfils its aim to develop in pupils values of self-respect and self-discipline, alongside tolerance and respect for others and the environment.
- 4.12 Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Staff provide good role models, know their pupils well and make a considerable contribution to creating a caring and nurturing family environment. In consequence, pupils are kind and considerate towards each other and say they enjoy all aspects of school life. Older pupils provide good role models for younger ones. Pupils as young as Year 2 are very aware of the attributes which go towards making a good person and set their own targets to try to achieve this. Parents said how much they appreciate the care shown towards their children; a typical comment indicated that they feel that their children receive "the warmest, most loving care from all the staff."
- 4.13 The school has a positive attitude towards good behaviour and promotes it through a culture of praise, combined with a system of house points for older pupils and red points and star awards for younger pupils. Merit assemblies enable pupils to acknowledge the successes of others; they also increase the self-esteem of pupils, who are eager and proud to acquire merit certificates and points for their individual houses.
- 4.14 Staff have high expectations of pupils, who in turn understand what is expected of them. Pupils say that they understand the need for school rules and sanctions and

consider them fair. The anti-bullying policy sets out clear procedures to deal effectively with any incidents, and there are appropriate levels of supervision on the playgrounds and around the school. Pupils believe that bullying is rare and that any incidences are dealt with swiftly.

Senior school pastoral care

- 4.15 The quality of pastoral care for senior pupils is also excellent, reflected in the way pupils develop into mature and thoughtful young people. Pastoral care is considered by most pupils and parents to be a strength of the school, upholding the intention to ensure an environment appropriate for learning to take place in which pupils can feel safe and secure. The last inspection report identified the high quality of pastoral support and guidance offered by many staff. This has been maintained and further improved.
- 4.16 The care of, and attention to, the individual is meticulous and owes much to the exceptional way in which teachers know their pupils. Throughout the school, pupils are well behaved and enjoy excellent relationships with each other and with their teachers. The school is a friendly and tolerant community, where members give freely of their time in guiding and supporting others. Form-based pastoral arrangements are strengthened by the system of personal tutors. This well-established initiative assigns a small group of pupils to a tutor throughout their time in school, from their induction to their leaving. The relationship between a pupil and their personal tutor is strong and long-standing, providing each pupil with a second point of reference and another adult to whom they may turn. However, form time is limited and pastoral staff are aware that form teachers do not spend enough time with their pupils.
- 4.17 Measures to promote good discipline are effective. Rewards and sanctions are well understood and are applied appropriately. Although in the questionnaires some pupils criticised staff fairness, discussions in school gave no support to these criticisms. On the contrary, pupils said they fully understand the systems and thought that they are applied fairly. Procedures to handle sensitive issues such as bullying are clear. The school has a suitable anti-bullying policy, which is widely disseminated and understood, and which is reinforced by initiatives such as an anti-bullying week.

Welfare

- 4.18 Arrangements for pupils' welfare are good, enabling them to enjoy their education in a safe and secure environment. A wide-ranging safeguarding policy ensures that procedures are clear and well-known by all staff, who are appropriately trained. Those designated persons for each part of the school receive the additional training they need. The school follows the guidance in safer recruitment almost entirely, apart from a few instances where references came after a member of staff had started work. Fire procedures are secure. Health and safety arrangements ensure that comprehensive risk assessments are carried out for areas of the school, for trips and visits and for any activity involving pupils. Good medical facilities on all sites ensure that pupils' needs are catered for sensitively and effectively. The school has an appropriate policy and plan for improving access for disabled people.
- 4.19 Healthy eating is encouraged. There is an appetising, varied menu at lunchtime which also caters for vegetarians and includes salads. Healthy snacks are encouraged at break-time and pupils say how much they enjoy the school meals.

There are appropriate outdoor spaces for play and physical activity and pupils are eager to participate in sports activities.

4.20 The admissions and attendance registers are satisfactorily maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is good overall, and demonstrates an excellent vision of how the school can be restructured to broaden provision for pupils, provide greater equality of opportunity and make better use of the school's facilities, whilst continuing to fulfil its aims. This commitment to a new and more appropriate structure is underpinned by a clear sense of purpose and understanding of how the school fits into the local provision of schools. Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their work, combined with considerable dedication; they have taken good advantage of opportunities for training to equip them further for their roles. Frequent meetings of the full board are supported by an appropriate committee structure. Only the chair has professional experience in education.
- 5.2 Governors give good stewardship to matters of education, standards, resources and finance and have a good insight into the school's work. They are kept well informed by regular reports from the headmistress, by good attendance at school events, and by shared meetings with members of the senior leadership team from time to time. Although business and financial matters have necessarily taken a good deal of board time, governors have given attention to educational and staffing matters as well. They are maintaining this as a high priority at a time of change.
- 5.3 Governors discharge their responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety well in almost all respects, though a small number of omissions in staff recruitment procedures had gone undetected.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Strong leadership is enabling the school to accomplish significant structural change whilst delivering a high quality education and exceptional support to pupils in accordance with its aims. The school has a clearer sense of strategy and overall vision than at the time of the last inspection. Its family ethos is valued by all, reflecting its commitment to positive relationships between parents, pupils and staff. All staff work well together to maintain this common ethos and commitment to pupils.
- 5.5 Strong leadership on each site and careful co-ordination ensure that pupils flourish both academically and personally in each part of the school. Staff work well together across the school, for example through meetings of subject co-ordinators as well as through effective senior leadership team (SLT) meetings. Junior school co-ordinators have a clearer role than previously and a developing role in the monitoring of teaching and learning. However, this is mainly carried out by senior management since co-ordinators have limited time available, with some looking after several subjects. Senior school heads of department and senior management are aware of the quality of teaching, through regular observation and review. Heads of department appreciate opportunities for liaison through their meetings and all staff appreciate the open access they have to the SLT.
- 5.6 Induction, appraisal and professional development, have been improved since the last inspection and are valued by staff. Staff are trained well in child protection and welfare issues, to ensure that school policies are followed. Appropriate attention is given to almost all aspects of staff recruitment, though references for a few staff were obtained shortly after their appointment.

- 5.7 Staff have played a full part in self-evaluation and the creation of improved development plans, both at subject and whole-school level. These provide detailed action plans to guide those with particular responsibilities both on everyday and longer-term goals.
- 5.8 The great majority of parents and pupils appreciate the efficiency with which the school is run. Pupils benefit considerably from the dedication and support they receive from teaching and non-teaching staff.

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

- 5.9 The school's links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. These constructive relationships are fully in keeping with the school's aims. The overwhelming majority of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were positive and appreciative of all that the staff on the three sites do for their children; in particular, they appreciated the attitudes and values inculcated in pupils. Inspection evidence supports these views. There were few issues raised by significant numbers of parents, and parents were much more pleased with the range of activities for younger pupils than at the time of the last inspection; criticism by a few parents of support for pupils with LDD was not borne out during the inspection.
- 5.10 A significant number of parents are involved in supporting their children's education in school, such as hearing readers and accompanying trips. They attend events, such as sporting activities or productions and some organise fund-raising events. Parents feel welcome in school and are kept fully informed of school news in weekly newsletters as hard copy or online, as well as receiving all the information required by law.
- 5.11 Parents receive clear and informative reports about their children's work and progress. The frequency of these reports varies according to the age of the children but there are also many opportunities to meet with the school staff, both formally and informally, as the school's 'open door' policy intends. Parental concerns are responded to promptly and efficiently by the school. An effective complaints procedure operates.

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

(The following paragraphs apply equally to the Early Years Foundation Stage departments of Highclare Woodfield and Highclare St Pauls.)

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS in meeting the needs of the children is good, with some outstanding features, and fulfils the school's aim of encouraging independent learning within a happy and secure environment. Achievement in all areas of learning and development is consistently high, with personal, social and emotional development being a particular strength of the school. Care for the under-threes is of a very high standard. There is an excellent sense of teamwork and a shared vision, both of which ensure consistency across the whole EYFS.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are good overall, with some outstanding features. Excellent safeguarding of children is ensured through rigorous recruitment procedures and comprehensive policies which are maintained to a very high standard and reviewed annually. An exemplary key person system allows children and staff to form genuine bonds. Detailed risk assessments are in place and checks are carried out daily. Resources are plentiful and easily accessible, and the active promotion of equal opportunities and inclusion ensures that children's needs are fully met. Staff development is encouraged, with training needs identified through effective appraisal. Since the last inspection, some EYFS classes have been relocated onto the ground floor of the Woodfield site, allowing greater free-flow access to the outside environment, which demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement across the setting. Parents comment positively on the support which staff provide as children move from one class to the next. Annual reports are thorough, although they do not identify individual targets, and a small number of parents have asked for more guidance on supporting learning at home. A concern was expressed regarding ratios in the nursery, but ratios observed were suitable. Links to other agencies, particularly the Local Authority and Pre-school Learning Alliance, are very strong.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision in the Foundation Stage is good, both for children under three and for older children. Safe and stimulating resources, both indoors and outside, provide a varied and challenging environment appropriate to the age and abilities of the children. There are, however, plans to develop the outside areas, which it is intended will further enhance the children's learning experiences. The balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities encourages active learning and investigation, particularly for the under-threes. Information gathered prior to admission provides the basis for planning, and ongoing observations enable staff to adjust provision to the individual needs of the children. Children's progress is recorded and shared with parents through individual learning journey portfolios in an informative and accessible format. Clear routines, such as washing hands before eating, are quickly established with the under-threes through excellent role-

modelling and gentle reinforcement. The quality of before- and after-school care is good.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are good overall and on occasions outstanding. Under-threes make good progress in all areas of development and are well-prepared for their move into the Transition Class. All children achieve well by the end of Reception, with some making excellent progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Outcomes for children are good overall, and on occasions outstanding. Progress is consistently good across all areas of learning and development; it is equally good for children under three and those over three. All children achieve well, with some making excellent progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Children are happy and enthusiastic. They work and play independently, with appropriate support given by staff. Children begin to understand risks and how to keep themselves safe. Hygiene practices throughout the provision are very good and consistently reinforced. The school's healthy eating policy helps children to make appropriate choices about what they eat and drink. Well-placed resources in the outdoor environments encourage children to use emergent writing skills and help them to develop excellent communication and literacy skills. Number experiences are incorporated into children's play activities and as a result numeracy skills are very good. ICT is used throughout the setting and children are confident in using computers independently. Children develop excellent social skills, co-operate well, and learn to respect each other.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Complaints since the last inspection

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. They visited provision for pupils who are ill or injured. 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 Ian Newton	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Val Clark	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sheila Hayward	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Mary Allen	Headteacher, IAPS School
Mr Bill Chadwick	Deputy Head, HMC School
Mr David Edwards	Deputy Head, IAPS School
Mr Richard Lloyd	Deputy Head, GSA Junior School
Mrs Judith Marles	Class Teacher, IAPS School
Mrs Joan Mumby	Headmistress, GSA School
Mrs Catherine Peuleve	Head of Lower Years, HMC Junior School
Mrs Pamela Sheppard	Curriculum Manager, IAPS School
Mr Chris Manville	Early Years Lead Inspector
Miss Lucy Sumner	Early Years Team Inspector (Head of Lower School, IAPS School)
Mrs Bridget Forrest	Early Years Coordinating Inspector