



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**HIGHCLARE SCHOOL**

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## Highclare School

Full Name of School	<b>Highclare School</b>
DfE Number	<b>330/6060</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY287857</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>528940</b>
Address	<b>Highclare School 10 Sutton Road Erdington Birmingham West Midlands B23 6QL</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0121 3737400</b>
Fax Number	<b>0121 3737445</b>
Email Address	<b>headsecretary@highclareschool.co.uk</b>
Head	<b>Dr Richard Luker</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Louise Flowith</b>
Age Range	<b>1 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>637</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (297 boys; 340 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>43</b> 5-11: <b>239</b> 3-5 (EYFS): <b>149</b> 11-18: <b>206</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>637</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>18 – 21 November 2014</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

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

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

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr Graham Sims	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Ann Stranack	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Ms Teresa Dunbar	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Geraldine Yandell	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Philip Capes	Team Inspector (Former Head, HMC school)
Mrs Sharon Pratt	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school)
Mrs Jenny Clayphan	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years
Mrs Frances Willacy	Team Inspector for Early Years (Former Head of Junior School, IAPS school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Highclare School was founded in 1932. It is a day school for pupils from the age of 18 months to the age of 18. Governance is provided by a governing body of ten governors. The school aims to provide high-quality teaching which encourages independent learning and individual excellence within a secure and happy environment. It seeks to motivate pupils to achieve their full all-round potential and to develop self-respect, self-discipline, tolerance and respect for others and the environment. The school is non-denominational, but has a broadly Christian ethos.
- 1.2 Highclare was originally a girls' school, but full conversion to a co-educational school will be accomplished in 2015. Years 11 and 13 are currently the only year groups without boys. The school occupies three sites on the Birmingham and Lichfield Road in Sutton Coldfield. The main school site, located at The Abbey, a former Benedictine monastery, caters for 206 pupils from the ages of 11 to 18, of whom 29 are in the sixth form. Woodfield, the original site to the south of the town centre, admits children from the age of 18 months until the age of 11. It caters for 136 children in the EYFS and 123 in the junior section. A parallel junior school, St Paul's, to the north of the town centre, admits children from the age of 3 to 11. It has 56 children in the EYFS and 116 in the junior section. Day care is provided before and after school, and in the holidays. Each site is managed by its own head under the overall leadership of the headmaster, who joined the school in September 2014. Pupils 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 is wide but, overall, is above average up to Year 11, although there is some variance between different cohorts. The ability profile of the sixth form is in line with the national average for pupils remaining in sixth-form education. The school has identified 70 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Almost all of these receive additional support. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs. Sixteen pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), of whom almost all receive additional support in school.
- 1.4 A large proportion of children leave the school's EYFS provision before Reception in order to join local maintained schools. Similarly, many pupils move at the age of 11, mainly to local grammar schools, and others at 16 to other schools or colleges. At each stage, new pupils join and the school population thus experiences considerable pupil mobility. Most sixth-form pupils go to university after leaving school.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) 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 equivalence are shown in the following tables.

### ***Early Years Foundation Stage Settings***

School	NC name
Pre-school 1	Nursery
Pre-school 2	Nursery
Reception	Reception

**Junior Schools**

School	NC name
Junior 1	Year 1
Junior 2	Year 2
Junior 3	Year 4
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 The school is successful in meeting its aim to motivate pupils to achieve their all-round potential. The pupils achieve well academically and in other areas. The overall quality and standards of the early years provision are outstanding. Attainment in the junior schools is good and results at GCSE are above the national average. The pupils develop very good speaking and listening skills and apply their mathematical skills well. They use information and communication technology (ICT) competently and often show creative flair. Pupils in the sixth form develop good work habits. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve well because of the additional support they receive. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum with a good range of extra-curricular activities. The teaching is generally of good quality, but does not always fulfil the school's aim of fostering independence as it occasionally lacks challenge, especially for the most able pupils, an issue highlighted at the previous inspection. Nevertheless, pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning, are highly motivated to succeed and are well prepared for the next stage of their education at whatever stage they choose to leave the school.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. In line with the school's aims, pupils develop self-respect, self-discipline, tolerance and respect for others. They are extremely well behaved. Relationships between pupils and staff and among the pupils themselves are excellent, and pupils have an excellent understanding of other faiths and cultures. The pupils appreciate the excellent standard of care which the staff give them. Excellent attention is given to the pupils' welfare, health and safety throughout the school.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management, and links with parents are good. Governors take a lively interest in all aspects of school life and are well informed. The governing body and the school's leaders responded extremely thoroughly to issues raised in an unannounced inspection in 2013 and have dealt successfully with most of the issues raised in the previous inspection in 2010. As a result, the school fully complies with all legal requirements and has rigorous procedures for safeguarding pupils. Leaders have been highly effective in creating a supportive team of staff, and in providing for pupils' pastoral care. Work in the junior schools is being strengthened through stronger relationships which have been forged between subject co-ordinators from the two sites, but there is not always effective oversight to ensure consistent approaches across different subjects. While leaders have managed the many changes to full co-educational status well, there are weaknesses in the school's systems for development planning and managing the performance of staff. Communication with parents is good. Most parents are pleased with the school, particularly with the range of experiences offered, the high standards of behaviour and the care provided for their children. A small minority of parents feel their concerns have not been dealt with well in the past. Inspectors found that the school's current procedures for dealing with parents' concerns and complaints meet requirements and that the present leadership team is successfully moving the school forward.

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

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



2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

**(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Provide more effective systems for planning new developments, managing staff performance and ensuring consistency of approach across the different sites.
2. Ensure that the teaching always provides sufficient challenge for pupils, especially the most able, and helps all pupils to develop as independent learners.
3. In the EYFS, ensure consistency in setting 'next step' targets and sharing them with children and their parents.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 The school is largely successful in meeting its aims to foster independence and to motivate learners to achieve their full all-round potential. Pupils show a good desire to learn, and the best lessons provide them with real challenge. In a few lessons, however, pupils, including those who are particularly able, do not achieve at the very highest level because tasks are not challenging enough, do not allow enough scope for creativity or for pupils to develop as fully independent learners.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points and abilities. Children make rapid progress in the EYFS. In the junior schools, pupils develop very good speaking and listening skills. By the end of Year 6, pupils are highly articulate and confident to express and justify their opinions in a range of situations. They listen attentively to each other. A recent emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills is reflected in the high standards of imaginative writing seen in their books. Numeracy levels are high. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge well to solve problems and observe patterns. They use ICT competently and enjoy music making. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the many sporting opportunities on offer and demonstrate a good range of skills.
- 3.4 In the senior school, pupils who move from Woodfield and St Paul's continue to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills well. Those who join from other schools make rapid progress in this area as they quickly adapt to the good work ethic inculcated in the junior schools. Pupils apply their mathematical skills well, and are competent in the use of ICT. They participate with enthusiasm in a range of physical activities. When given the opportunity, they demonstrate creative flair and show themselves capable of logical and independent thought. Although some find the additional workload and the need for self-regulation hard to cope with initially, pupils in the sixth form quickly develop good work habits and apply themselves diligently to their studies.
- 3.5 Pupils achieve well in other areas. In both junior and senior sections, many pupils have the opportunity to represent the school in a variety of sports and are frequently successful. In the senior school, individual pupils have achieved local and regional success in a range of sports. Four boys from Year 6 were winners at a recent Maths Challenge which included participants from 35 other schools. In the senior school, it was announced during the inspection that three pupils had won first prizes in an ISA national art competition. Around 30 pupils achieved success at various levels in music exams. Many pupils from both junior and senior sections gain distinctions in exams of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Following the recent introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, six pupils have now gained the Silver Award. For the last few years, between 12 and 20 junior school pupils have gained places at local grammar schools. Almost all sixth-form pupils gain places at their first choice university.
- 3.6 In the junior schools, pupils with SEND, including those with a statement of special educational needs, make good progress in their learning because of the excellent guidance they are given by the specialist staff and the support they receive from the class teachers. Pupils with EAL are given sensitive support both by teachers and

other pupils and make rapid progress in acquiring a good working knowledge of English. Pupils in the senior school also receive similar help.

- 3.7 The ability of pupils in the junior schools varies widely, but is above the national average overall. Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. Standardised measures of progress in the junior schools indicate that, in many cohorts, pupils make progress that is good relative to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The inspection evidence, based on lesson observations, scrutiny of written work, interviews with pupils, and the number of pupils obtaining grammar school places, confirms this judgement.
- 3.8 For the senior school, the following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013, being the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Results at GCSE have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools. The level of attainment at GCSE, and standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that pupils make progress in the senior school that is at least good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Over this period, A-level results were similar to the national average for maintained schools. However, results improved year on year during this period and were higher again in 2014 when almost two thirds of pupils gained passes at grades A\* to B. The level of attainment at A-level, and standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that pupils make progress in the sixth form that is broadly appropriate in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Inspection evidence, as assessed in lesson observations, pupils' written work and interviews with a range of pupils, indicates that the progress of current pupils is good throughout the senior school.
- 3.9 In the junior schools, pupils are enthusiastic about all aspects of their school work. They demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and are highly motivated to succeed in whatever tasks they are set. Although lively, they usually listen carefully to instructions and are confident to try things out on their own. Their ability to support each other with tasks is a particular strength of their learning and contributes to the good levels of achievement. In the senior school, pupils also display excellent attitudes to work. The pupils are attentive in lessons, co-operate extremely well with their teachers and with each other, and show a real desire to do well. Older pupils show great appreciation of the level of individual support and guidance they receive from many of their teachers.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.11 The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. The quality of provision in the EYFS is excellent. In the junior schools, a strong emphasis on English and mathematics enables pupils to achieve good academic standards. The curriculum fulfils the aims of the school well by offering varied opportunities for learners. In Year 8, German is introduced, enabling pupils to study more than one language, and Spanish is taught as a GCSE option. In Year 8, combined science is replaced by three separate sciences taught by subject specialists. There is a good range of options for a school of this size at GCSE and A level. Sixth-form pupils take general studies and have the opportunity to extend their ICT qualification and to choose from a range of sports and physical education (PE) activities. Junior pupils take

advantage of the senior school's PE facilities, and pupils up to Year 8 travel off site to use the local swimming pool.

- 3.12 Curricular provision has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils in the junior schools have better provision for PE and music than before. Outside play areas have been developed at all sites, and senior school pupils benefit from a new all-weather playing surface and a second gymnasium. At the senior school, the curriculum for design and technology has been adapted to meet the change to co-education. New GCSE subjects, such as business and computing, have been introduced, and ICT is now an A-level option. The school's new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is making a good contribution to pupils' academic achievement. In the sixth form, the introduction of the Extended Project Qualification is helping pupils to improve their study skills. Most sixth-form pupils appreciate the school's initiative to supply them with tablet computers which they use effectively and with ease. Creative, expressive and practical subjects have a firm place in the curriculum. Resources, such as computers and the library, are used well, and pupil volunteers assist the school librarian. In Year 11, pupils receive helpful and comprehensive careers guidance, and great care is taken in assisting pupils in their choice of the most beneficial future path.
- 3.13 The school provides sympathetic support for pupils with SEND, all of whom have individual education plans. A number of pupils commented on how the school had helped them to overcome problems associated with dyslexia and to make good progress, and their parents also expressed their appreciation of the school's support in this area. Assistance for pupils with EAL is provided as necessary and helps them to develop quickly a good working knowledge of English.
- 3.14 The range of extra-curricular activities available is good for the size of the school and has increased since the previous inspection with, for example, the introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The taught curriculum is enhanced by clinics and syllabus-focused clubs in the senior school and supplemented by a variety of extra-curricular activities in both junior schools, although the range of activities at St Paul's is wider than at Woodfield. Junior pupils enjoy, for example, football, ballet, dance and times tables club, while at the senior school the pupils can develop their talents and abilities in a variety of activities, with music, sports and the debating club being particularly popular. Extra-curricular provision after school is dominated by sporting activities and fixtures in the senior school. In the junior schools, many younger pupils participate in a wide variety of activities when attending the after-school care provision.
- 3.15 Charity fundraising and social service volunteering, such as the choir singing at local residential homes and support for the local food bank, provide pupils with opportunities to develop their organisational skills. Local primary children attended the recent production of *Alice*. There is a good range of educational visits for junior and senior pupils, including overseas school trips. Pupils spoke fondly of times spent on activity holidays and when skiing.

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

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.17 Throughout the school, teaching is effective in promoting pupils' progress and supports the aims of the school to motivate pupils to achieve their potential. Lesson objectives are clear, and teachers encourage pupils, including those who receive

support for SEND or EAL, to make good progress. The effective use of teaching assistants enhances the quality of teaching in the junior school and in some lessons in the senior school. The staff know their pupils really well, and the excellent rapport that exists between staff and pupils is evident throughout the school. Behaviour in lessons is excellent. Many teachers encourage the pupils to work collaboratively. This fosters the mutual respect that they have for each other and leads to some excellent discussion work and outcomes, as was seen in PE lessons when the pupils were developing their football and netball skills.

- 3.18 In some subjects, planning is rigorous; however, this is not consistently the case in all subjects. In the best examples, targets and objectives, linked to the needs and differing stages of development of all pupils in a class, are integral elements of the planning. In the most inspirational lessons, often conducted at a brisk pace and with lovely touches of humour, teachers display excellent subject knowledge and an enthusiasm to share it with their pupils. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, the teacher encouraged pupils to develop their higher-order reading skills through effective questioning which led to a deeper understanding of the subject. The school has not yet completely fulfilled the recommendation from the previous inspection for the pupils to take responsibility for their own learning as, in some lessons, the teaching does not challenge the most able or give enough opportunity to allow the pupils to develop as independent learners.
- 3.19 The marking of pupils' work is effective and pupils feel that it helps them to make progress. At its most effective, the marking provides detailed and focused comments, which give pupils advice on how to improve and strategies for them to implement. These comments then lead to a written dialogue between the pupil and teacher, thus helping pupils improve their work in the light of the teacher's comments. Throughout the school, the use of stickers, stamps and rewards encourages the pupils to reach their targets and progress further. Since the previous inspection, the school has adopted a more rigorous programme of educational testing and uses this effectively to track pupils' progress and identify where further intervention or help is required in order to prevent pupils from falling behind.
- 3.20 Teachers have access to a good range of resources, which are used to enhance the learning experience. The sharing of the most effective practice in teaching strategies throughout the school is developing through key stage co-ordinator and heads of department meetings, thus addressing an issue for improvement identified in the previous inspection.
- 3.21 Appropriate additional support is given to pupils with SEND or EAL. The teaching provides for the pupils' individual needs by sensitively matching tasks or resources to support their learning in the classroom. For example, a Spanish version of *Of Mice and Men* was purchased to enable a pupil to study the text in her own language. Such support is achieved through very good communication between the teachers and the learning support department. The school ensures that the provision set out in the statements of special educational needs is fully implemented.
- 3.22 Most pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they are pleased with the support and encouragement they receive from their teachers and with the progress they make.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 The high standards identified at the previous inspection have been maintained and successfully reflect the schools' aims to help pupils develop self-respect and self-discipline, alongside tolerance and respect for others and the environment. Children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development in the EYFS. The care and support provided in the junior and senior schools help pupils to grow in awareness of themselves in personal and social contexts. For example, junior pupils wrote highly sensitive prose for a Remembrance display and poems showing mature understanding of the feelings evoked by an exploration of the concepts of faith and trust. Such responses illustrate the pupils' developing sensitivity and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. Pupils' confidence and emotional maturity continue to develop extremely well through the senior school.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils have a well-defined sense of right and wrong. Their behaviour in all areas of the school is courteous and helpful. Pupils abide by and refer to the school's code of conduct and enjoy discussing moral and ethical issues. Anti-bullying cyber mentors in the senior school describe proudly how they work to promote safe habits among their peers. The pupils throughout the school confidently take part in debate of ethical issues. Older pupils demonstrate insight into and empathy for others' feelings, for example, through their response to a disabled policeman describing the dangers to which those in the emergency services are exposed.
- 4.4 The pupils' social development is excellent. The pupils behave extremely well throughout the school. They are eager for positions of responsibility, such as form captain or librarian in the junior schools, and rise to the challenges well. They fulfil their roles proudly, aware that they are 'role models' for younger pupils. School councils operate on all three sites, and participants clearly enjoy and develop socially in their roles. Pupils demonstrate mature understanding of local government structures as a result of their PSHE lessons and visits, for example, to the mayor's office. Throughout the school, pupils readily engage in fundraising opportunities to support those less fortunate than themselves for whom they show great empathy. Older pupils volunteer to help at a local food bank, and sing in a Christmas choir at homes for the elderly and nursing homes.
- 4.5 Throughout the school, pupils develop an excellent appreciation of other faiths and cultures from within the school community. This comes through assemblies and special events such as a whole-school 'Festival of Cultures' which was widely celebrated and strongly supported by the Parent Teacher Association. Pupils are very interested and well informed about a wide variety of Western European cultural issues and appreciate the diversity of their community. Pupils value the beauty and history of their school. They enjoy the sharing of personal experiences by their peers, such as a recent presentation by a Muslim boy in Year 9. Pupils with EAL have been supported by other native speaking peers and staff. Pupils have a good awareness of a range of British values and traditions, some of which they have experienced, such as Irish dancing and Scottish piping. Older pupils have developed their understanding of law and democracy through visits to the Houses of Parliament.

- 4.6 Comments from responses to the pupils' questionnaire reflect their affection for the school and the appreciation they feel for the care the staff give and of the opportunities the school has afforded them. Pupils show a high degree of respect for those of other faiths and appreciate the relationships they have formed within this diverse cultural community. Their personal development is outstanding. Pupils leave the school extremely well equipped to become valuable citizens in the future.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 In all sections, the school fulfils its aim of providing a secure and happy environment, within which the school offers first-class pastoral care and provides excellent support for all pupils. Hardworking, committed and caring staff provide good support and guidance. Regular pastoral monitoring ensures that matters of concern are highlighted and responded to quickly. The vast majority of parents who responded to the parents' questionnaire feel that their children are well looked after at the school.
- 4.9 The very positive relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves throughout the school community ensure that pupils feel valued and respected. The school has been highly successful in ensuring the seamless integration of pupils who join the school at many different stages. The school councils, which meet regularly, seek the views of pupils. However, in their responses to the pupils' questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt that their opinions are not listened to. Nevertheless, other junior and senior pupils spoke positively about expressing their views at council meetings and to class teachers in particular. Inspectors found that, through its pastoral care structure, the school provides ample opportunity for pupils to express their views.
- 4.10 Pupils in all areas of the school are encouraged to be healthy. They learn about healthy eating in class, especially through science and home economics lessons, and all pupils have access to healthy and nutritious food. Great care is taken to accommodate special dietary needs. Through the curriculum, pupils gain an understanding of the importance of regular exercise, which they enjoy in PE, games and extra-curricular activities.
- 4.11 The school is highly effective in promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying. The pupils' behaviour is excellent. Clearly defined systems of rewards, from the junior schools upwards, reinforce expectations and raise pupils' motivation. Initiatives, such as the focus on anti-bullying which occurred during the week of the inspection, give pupils an excellent understanding of different types of bullying and how to deal with them. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that, should it occur, they are confident to turn to an adult and know that it will be dealt with effectively.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable plan in place which is updated as necessary to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.13 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.14 The school has not only dealt with various issues relating to safeguarding and pupils' welfare, health and safety identified during an unannounced inspection in April 2013,

but has adopted a much more rigorous and thorough approach to ensuring pupils' welfare and safety since then. Safeguarding measures are highly effective; procedures for child protection and promoting welfare reflect official guidance and ensure that pupils thrive in a safe and secure environment. All staff have undertaken safeguarding training. New staff follow an induction process which deals fully with safeguarding procedures. The checking of the suitability of teaching and non-teaching staff, and others who may come into contact with pupils, is thorough. Governors with designated responsibilities meet regularly with the designated officers to discuss safeguarding issues.

- 4.15 Relationships with external agencies are strong, and their advice is sought whenever appropriate. Comprehensive policies cover all aspects of health and safety, including measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. The school undertakes regular evacuation drills on all three sites, varying the time of day and recording outcomes. Alarm and prevention equipment is maintained well and tested regularly.
- 4.16 Staff have a high level of health and safety awareness, maintain high standards and are able to bring any issues to the attention of the appropriate committee of staff. Issues are carefully recorded and attended to promptly. Reports on health and safety matters are submitted to the governing body, which undertakes a regular review of first aid and medical matters. Specialist areas such as science, design and technology, art and sport demonstrate thorough measures to ensure the pupils' safety. Detailed risk assessments cover school life for pupils of all ages. Risk assessments for trips and visits are particularly comprehensive. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained, and correctly backed up. Absences are recorded carefully via an information management system and followed up efficiently.
- 4.17 The school makes excellent provision for pupils who are ill or injured. Medical records are appropriately stored, and well-maintained first-aid boxes are located around the sites. Many staff are trained in first aid. Appropriate arrangements ensure the welfare and safety of any pupils with SEND.



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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governors, many of whom have, or have had, children at the school, take a lively interest in all aspects of school life and provide effective oversight of all sections of the school, including the EYFS, and ensure that the school is fulfilling its stated aims. The governing body is well informed about the educational standards achieved in all sections of the school. It ensures that finances are carefully planned and are spent effectively in the best interests of the pupils. Accordingly, all areas of the school are well maintained, all three sections have a sufficient number of appropriately qualified staff and a good range of educational resources.
- 5.3 Monthly meetings of the governing body, detailed reports from the school's senior leaders and governors' involvement in the life of the school ensure that the governing body has an excellent insight into the working of the school. The allocation of specific responsibilities to individual governors enables the governing body to exercise its monitoring role efficiently and to provide support and challenge to the school's senior leaders. The governing body is aware, however, of the need for greater rigour in the school's self-evaluation processes. With the headteacher, the governing body is also looking at ways of making the school's development planning more effective.
- 5.4 The governing body responded quickly and effectively to recommendations from the unannounced inspection of April 2013 with regard to the school's safeguarding practices. It now discharges its responsibilities for child protection extremely well. It carries out an annual review of safeguarding procedures and ensures that all other statutory requirements are met.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents and others, is good.
- 5.6 The school's leaders ensure that all staff, including those in administrative and support roles, are effective in fulfilling the aims of the school to develop the values of self-respect, self-discipline, tolerance and respect for others and in maintaining a secure and happy environment. This achievement is reflected in the high quality of the pupils' personal development, and the highly successful way in which the change to full co-educational status has been managed. Throughout the school, leaders have established a highly collaborative working environment in which staff feel they are supported very well and which, in turn, encourages them to show a strong sense of commitment and loyalty to the school.
- 5.7 At all levels of management, staff understand their particular responsibilities and successfully oversee the implementation of all the policies and procedures necessary to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. The recruitment process follows tight guidelines, and all staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Following a careful induction process, new staff quickly become a part of the friendly, supportive and dedicated team.

- 5.8 The school has responded well to the recommendation in the previous inspection to provide time for subject leadership in the junior schools. Key Stage 1 co-ordinators from both junior sites now attend weekly meetings and subject co-ordinators from one junior school site have time set aside for them to meet their counterparts from the other site to work closely together to develop the curriculum and to share professional dialogue. While this approach has been found to be very helpful in sharing ideas, it lacks structured oversight to ensure a consistent approach across all subjects, particularly with regard to target setting and ensuring that work is planned to meet the needs of different ability groups. Staff in the junior schools appreciate the opportunity to observe other members of staff teaching. This helps subject co-ordinators to keep a check on the quality of teaching and is helping to raise the standard of teaching.
- 5.9 In the senior school, all departments and sixth-form leaders have an opportunity to self-evaluate and identify areas for development for the future. In the past, departmental evaluations have fed into the school development plan, but the overall development plan is too diffuse, lacks clarity and has not been updated recently. As a result, staff are not clear what the school's main targets for development are, when targets are to be achieved or who is responsible for monitoring whether developments have been carried out. Although there are many opportunities for regular and relevant in-service training for staff, the training plan does not take sufficient account of the outcomes of staff appraisal, as the system of appraisal has not been fully implemented or reviewed recently.
- 5.10 Middle managers have clearly understood responsibilities for both curriculum and pastoral matters, which they fulfil with skill, dedication and enthusiasm. New initiatives, such as developments in music across the two junior school sites, are planned with great attention to detail. Teamwork and mutual support are outstanding and demonstrate clearly the friendly family ethos within the whole school. Excellently presented displays throughout the school celebrate the pupils' work and stimulate learning.
- 5.11 Links with parents, carers and guardians are good. The strong partnership that existed at the time of the previous inspection has been strengthened further by the use of electronic media, including increased information on the website and the creation of a 'parent portal' within the VLE. More personal and child-centred reporting informs parents of their children's progress.
- 5.12 Communication with parents is good and improving. Reading diaries and parent comment books provide the opportunity for two-way written communication between home and school. Parents are encouraged to take a full part in the development of their children, and some help with extra-curricular activities, with careers advice, listening to readers and on trips out of school. Published menus are a great help when planning meals at home. Throughout the school, parents appreciate the open-door policy that allows consultation at any time. They enjoy receiving the weekly bulletin, the termly *Achiever* newsletter and annual *Grapevine* magazine describing the many activities which take place. Parents are always welcome at the school and the thriving Parent Teacher Association organises a variety of fund-raising and social events, including an annual school ball and bonfire night party.
- 5.13 A detailed website, school prospectus and information folder provide all current and prospective parents with comprehensive details about the school, including all required information. This is supplemented with 'taster' visits and a Year 7 welcome evening.

- 5.14 Responses to the parents' questionnaire showed that the large majority of parents are positive about the school and are particularly happy with the range of subjects and experiences their children are offered and the high standards of behaviour. Parents feel that their children are very well cared for. However, a small minority feel that the school has not been well managed and that concerns have not been handled satisfactorily in the past. Consequently, inspectors scrutinised very carefully the school's revised procedures for handling complaints. Although a very small number of concerns have not been resolved to parents' satisfaction, they found that most concerns of parents are handled carefully and sensitively and that the present leadership team is successfully moving the school forward. The close links with parents ensure that most difficulties are resolved informally and quickly. The school's complaints policy, which is in line with current guidance, is readily available should any parent wish to invoke the formal process.
- 5.15 Although a small group of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the information they receive about their children's progress, the inspection team found that the school provides detailed written reports which give a clear picture of a child's progress and also guidance about the next steps. There are also regular consultations between parents and staff at formal parents' evenings, and the open-door policy means that staff are always available for parents to discuss their children's progress.

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

## **6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

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

- 6.1 The quality of the provision is outstanding in meeting the needs of the children who attend.
- 6.2 Detailed programmes provide rich opportunities for all children to listen attentively, speak increasingly clearly and thoughtfully, and to learn both independently and with support. The children make rapid progress in all areas of learning and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of learning. Their physical skills develop well. Children in the Nursery play amicably side by side and respond happily to staff. Older children make close relationships with other children and with the adults who care for them. Staff are skilled, have high expectations and ensure that there is a careful balance between child-led activities and those directed by staff so that children feel both supported and confident to pursue new experiences. They work as close-knit teams in each room and across the setting.
- 6.3 Excellent teaching challenges, enthuses and engages children of all abilities appropriately and ensures that everyone, including children with SEND and those with EAL, is fully included in activities. For example, in a class where children are rising three, while some children listened to and identified three different sounds, others did the same with six. There are many opportunities for children to work and play outside, and resources both indoors and out are of good quality and quantity, and are used imaginatively. Many interesting trips are arranged during the year. The recommendation from the previous inspection to provide cover in the playgrounds has been fulfilled by providing canopies against the sun, although there is no protection against rain.
- 6.4 Parents are extremely well informed and given every opportunity to engage in their children's learning. They are highly appreciative of their close relationships with the staff. They particularly like the warm, welcoming atmosphere and the deep interest the key workers take in their children's happiness and learning.

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

- 6.5 The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being is outstanding.
- 6.6 All the key workers are skilled and experienced and focus totally on the children in their care. They create a warm, family atmosphere, within which children form strong bonds and secure emotional attachments with their carers. The staff provide excellent role models of kindness and have high expectations that children will behave well and form good relationships. Children are very happy in both settings and greatly enjoy the many opportunities for imaginative play. Great emphasis is placed on helping children to stay safe. For example, three-year-olds practised 'crossing the road' while playing outside, with some children holding stop/go signs as others rode along on wheeled toys. Staff are highly attentive in ensuring that children understand the principles of good hygiene and healthy eating. In the summer term, numerous opportunities are provided for children to visit their new

classrooms and get to know their new teachers so that children are confident to move to the next stage of their education.

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

- 6.7 The leadership and management of the early years provision are good.
- 6.8 The governing body is effective in supporting the early years provision, and the governor with specific responsibility for the early years visits the settings regularly. The management team is experienced and enthusiastic and works closely together to ensure that practice on both school sites is similar in quality.
- 6.9 All staff receive training in health and safety procedures and understand safeguarding and welfare requirements, so that children are safe and feel secure in a caring environment.
- 6.10 The educational programmes are thoroughly implemented, and detailed assessment is fed into planning. However, the sharing of 'next step' targets with children and parents is not consistent across the whole setting and the two sites. There is good liaison with external agencies as and when appropriate. Staff regularly evaluate the success of lessons and the progress of each child, while weekly staff meetings ensure that there is discussion of strengths and areas for improvement. However, systems for appraising the performance of staff, for providing professional development, including through regular observations of lessons, and for drawing up longer-term development plans are not fully established. The experienced staff ensure that the weaknesses in these systems do not have a detrimental effect on children's learning, but they do pose a barrier to further development of the EYFS provision. Inspectors noted the strength and loyalty of the teaching teams and their pride in the way adults all work together for the benefit of the children in their care.

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

- 6.11 The overall quality and standards of the early years provision are outstanding.
- 6.12 Children enter both schools with a very wide range of abilities and needs. They all make rapid progress so that, by the end of the Reception Year, most children meet the Early Learning Goals, while some exceed them in some areas. Throughout both settings, children are happy, extremely enthusiastic and keen to learn. They form trusting relationships with adults and with each other. Children with SEND are extremely well supported and those with EAL receive skilled individual help in order for them to become fluent. Younger children are eager to talk and to try new experiences, such as feeling ice and discussing how a car got into the ice block. Children in Reception proudly identified 'th', 'sh', 'ch' and 'ng' sounds at the beginning, middle and end of words. Younger children make simple patterns while, in Reception, children order numbers on a washing line to 20 and use a variety of measures to compare the size of a family of bears and their own heights.
- 6.13 Children's personal and emotional development is outstanding. Children's behaviour is exemplary throughout the settings. In the Nursery, children concentrate happily for increasing lengths of time as they meet new, intriguing experiences, while older children take turns and share maturely. Children in Reception are thoughtful of others and readily take initiatives.

- 6.14 Children's well-being is central to all that staff do in the early years settings. All staff have an excellent understanding of how to keep children safe, and safeguarding procedures are implemented rigorously.
- 6.15 The staff work together as an exceptionally strong team to ensure excellent provision for the children. Although the more formal processes for evaluating the performance of staff, and for planning longer-term developments are still in their infancy, the regular evaluation of lessons and the discussion of areas for improvement at weekly meetings ensure a constant focus on maintaining the high quality of early years provision in both schools.

### **Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

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

**Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.**