

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Ditcham Park School

Full Name of the School	Ditcham Park School
DCSF Number	850/6049
Early Years Number	N/A
Registered Charity Number	285244(R)
Address	Ditcham Park, Petersfield, Hampshire GU31 5RN.
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Headmistress	Mrs Kathryn Morton
Chair of Governors	Mr Bruce Strugnell
Age Range (of the whole school)	4 to 16
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	5th to 8th October 2009
Early Years Age Range	4 to 5
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	5th to 6th October 2009

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

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

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any

significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Ditcham Park School was founded in 1976 on its present site, close to the summit of the South Downs near Petersfield. It has a board of governors, and the present head was appointed in 1997. The school was last inspected in 2003. It currently has 362 pupils of whom 210 are in the senior school (aged 11 to 16) and 152 in the junior school (aged 4 to 11); the number of boys is slightly greater than that of girls. The average class size is fourteen in the junior school and twenty-one in the senior school.
- 1.2 Most pupils join the school at ages 4, 7 and 11, but pupils can enter at any age if places are available. Entry to the school is non-selective for the youngest pupils, with the literacy and numeracy skills of those aged seven and older assessed to determine whether they will benefit from the education offered. It is expected that junior school pupils will proceed into the senior school unless their progress is a cause for concern. Standardised tests show the pupils' average ability varies from form to form; it is always above the national average, and in the present Years 7, 10 and 11 is well above the national average. One in ten pupils has been assessed as having ability below the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in national examinations at age 16 will be above the national average for all maintained secondary schools.
- 1.3 Four-year-olds enter from independent nurseries and older pupils from both independent and maintained schools. Pupils come from a wide geographical area, helped by the school providing buses, and from a variety of social backgrounds. No pupils have English as their second language. Sixty-six pupils are receiving individual specialist help from learning support staff and a few of these have reports from educational psychologists; no pupil has a statement of special educational need.
- 1.4 Much of the school is centred on a Victorian house, with other buildings providing specialist facilities for practical subjects; these are surrounded by nine acres of playing fields as well as play areas, lawns and woodland. Since the previous inspection, the main development has been the building of a sports hall with changing facilities and a gallery for dance, drama and other activities; two rooms have been equipped as computer suites and an outdoor area provided for the education and play of the youngest pupils.
- 1.5 The school aims to provide a broad, balanced curriculum and a happy, stimulating environment in which all pupils are treated as individuals and have the opportunity to be successful. It promotes Christian principles and good behaviour, and encourages pupils to become self-disciplined. The school aims to communicate effectively with parents with whom it desires to cooperate closely.

- 1.6 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

School	Age of children
Reception	4 to 5

- 1.7 See Section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Junior School

School	NC name
Pre-prep	Year 1
Prep	Year 2
Transition	Year 3
Lower Juniors	Year 4
Middle Juniors	Year 5
Upper Juniors	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
Form 1	Year 7
Form 2	Year 8
Form 3	Year 9
Form 4	Year 10
Form 5	Year 11

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided is of a high quality and entirely fulfils the aims and philosophy of the school in providing a broad curriculum, allowing the all-round development of each pupil. Since the last inspection many improvements have been made, especially with regard to the allocation of time to some subjects, the range of junior school activities, and the continuity of provision between the junior and senior schools. The curriculum in the EYFS covers all six areas of learning and is outstanding.
- 2.2 The curriculum is broadly based and balanced, so that the education provided contributes positively to pupils' development in all areas of learning. All National Curriculum subjects are taught, together with French from Year 4 and German from Year 5. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study a core of subjects and are offered a wide range of optional subjects to study for GCSE examinations, including Latin and business studies; the blocking system for these options is adjusted each year to get the best possible match to pupils' preferences. In these years, all pupils now study for a double award in science or in the individual sciences of biology, chemistry and physics, thus providing better preparation for A-level studies in these subjects. While the junior school classes are mostly taught by form teachers, apart from music and physical education (PE), Year 6 pupils benefit from having senior school specialist teachers for French, German, music, science, art, PE and games.
- 2.3 In addition to the examined subjects, personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught, although this is limited to a maximum of 20 minutes each week for most senior school pupils; in Year 11, this session is devoted to citizenship, careers advice and matters relating to further education (CCFE). The curriculum is enriched for pupils with visits to appropriate venues and by use of the splendid school site which offers opportunities for educational breadth and enhancement. Pupils' talents are also developed by residential trips to the Isle of Wight and to activity centres, as well as the annual ski trip.
- 2.4 The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive for a school of this size, with most of them taking place during the school day to allow pupils to travel home on school buses. Music, art, drama and design and technology (DT) are all strongly encouraged, and the activities are well attended and appreciated by pupils. Many older pupils learn skills as they engage in activities and carry out service whilst working on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme; this participation provides excellent opportunities for pupils to learn to work in teams on expeditions, and to develop expertise and self-confidence. The range of sporting fixtures has recently widened to a more acceptable level. Pupils participate eagerly in school matches and a healthy level of competition with other schools takes place; a sensible interchange of reserves during a netball fixture ensured the participation of more pupils in the match.
- 2.5 Pupils are thoroughly prepared for each stage of school life and for life after they leave the school. In the junior school, the transition between the various stages is helped by the pupils continuing to work with staff they know and in familiar surroundings. Pupils' entry to the senior school is helped by a taster day towards the end of Year 6 when they meet more senior school staff and experience new subjects and facilities. Plenty of careers and further education advice is offered by form teachers, with a real interest taken in the future of Year 11 pupils.

- 2.6 Pupils in Year 11 are very thoroughly prepared for GCSE examinations. The curriculum is effectively planned and policy documents are adequately detailed to provide continuity of learning as pupils proceed up the school. Equality of access to the curriculum is provided for all pupils except for a clash between senior school PSHE or CCFE with music activities and learning support lessons. Pupils are taught in non-streamed classes from Reception to Year 9, with classes of older pupils organised according to ability for lessons in mathematics, English and French in a number of these years.
- 2.7 The provision for pupils requiring learning support is outstanding. The learning support coordinator screens all Year 7 pupils very effectively and any others whose progress is causing concern. When necessary, pupils receive extra specialist help at times that do not involve withdrawal from lessons in core subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties have individual education plans which set targets and help guide classroom teachers; the progress of these pupils is regularly reviewed. Gifted pupils are recognised, but support for them is not yet fully developed; exceptions to this are the provision of a different mathematics course for two Year 5 pupils and extra tuition by senior school teachers to Year 6 pupils who are gifted in literacy and numeracy. The needs of talented pupils are largely met through the provision of extra-curricular activities.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.9 Pupils are well educated in relation to their ages and abilities. They are strongly grounded in the knowledge and skills of their subjects. Throughout all years achievement is good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils respond well in lessons, and usually give of their best. The high standard of achievement noted in the previous inspection in most subjects now applies to all subjects and at all ages.
- 2.10 No significant differences in the relative attainment of boys and girls were noted in any subject or at any age. Pupils make good progress, both in lessons and over time. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported with work matched to their abilities so that they make very good progress. The GCSE results for the years 2006 to 2008 are well above the national average for all maintained secondary schools, with the pupils' average ability being above the national average in 2006 and 2007, and well above in 2008. In each of these years, detailed scrutiny of these results confirmed that pupils are achieving well relative to their abilities.
- 2.11 The progress made by pupils in the Reception class is excellent. The children's splendid speaking skills in this class develop into strong literacy skills as they grow older. Pupils are articulate and debate well. The quality and length of their writing increase during their time in the junior school although too many worksheets inhibit this development in a number of subjects. Year 3 pupils have produced some detailed and well-presented accounts of their visit to an Iron Age settlement. Senior school pupils develop their literacy skills well, with the exception of punctuation; Year 8 pupils understand oxymorons and those in Year 11 are able to analyse literary language. The linguistic skills of pupils are strong, building on the strengths noted in the last inspection; the most able linguists demonstrate a high degree of fluency and confidence, reflected in some excellent results at GCSE in foreign languages.
- 2.12 Pupils of all ages develop their mathematical skills well. By Year 6 they are able to work with decimals, the more able Year 9 pupils can calculate percentages in their heads and Year 11 top set pupils understand quadratic equations. These mathematical skills are sometimes applied effectively in other subjects; for example, senior school pupils use graphs and charts in science and geography. Pupils of all ages develop a sound scientific knowledge which

they are able to apply to new situations reasonably well. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively as a learning tool, especially by senior school pupils in some subjects. For example, a Year 11 group successfully manipulated photographic images during an art activity. However, a number of pupils of different ages confirmed that they make little use of ICT in school to enhance their learning or improve their work.

- 2.13 The level of achievement in art and DT is high, and work is attractively displayed throughout the school. Nearly half the pupils learn a musical instrument, and succeed in the relevant associated board music examinations. Many pupils take speech and drama examinations, and their results are excellent. Pupils enjoy participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, and gain silver and bronze awards. Pupils have achieved notable success in athletics and fencing. Many senior school pupils are involved in cycling, and they have enjoyed success in competitions up to and including national level. Pupils have achieved praiseworthy results in national mathematics competitions.
- 2.14 On the rare occasions pupils are asked to make notes, research topics or complete independent tasks, they produce work of a high standard. For example, Year 6 pupils have produced excellent project work on the Victorians and on France. The most able senior school pupils are not challenged in some lessons, when opportunities for independent thought are not provided.
- 2.15 Pupils enjoy and thrive on the many opportunities to work together and cooperatively in groups. In a Year 5 PE lesson, pupils led each other blindfolded over and round an obstacle course. Another group of pupils were particularly proud of the chance to demonstrate their cookery skills in producing a fund-raising dinner.
- 2.16 Pupils usually settle quickly in lessons, notably in the junior school, and usually apply themselves in a conscientious manner to the completion of their written work. However, some senior school pupils do not complete written work, nor do they carry out corrections suggested by teachers. Examples of well-presented written work are found in junior school English books, but standards are less high amongst some older pupils. Most pupils said that they enjoyed their lessons, and are keen to gain the highest grades for effort. A Year 9 mathematics lesson on converting fractions into percentages engaged the pupils very effectively with lively teacher exchanges encouraging pupils to give of their best. All the junior school pupils enjoy the 'welcome back' activity at the start of the year, which makes excellent use of outside teachers and craftspeople to provide workshop sessions.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.17 The pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good throughout the school, and reflects its aim of promoting good behaviour. This owes much to the priority the staff place on the quality of care and relationships. The school is successful in fostering an atmosphere of respect for others. Pupils are courteous and hold doors open for visitors. The high standards noted in the previous inspection continue to be maintained.
- 2.18 Pupils develop their spiritual well-being and a high level of self-esteem. They take part in a wide range of activities and develop sound values, principles and beliefs. In senior school assemblies, pupils consider moral and ethical issues, while junior school assemblies stimulate the pupils to think about more specific Christian dimensions on life. In a junior school assembly, led by Year 5 pupils, issues of tolerance of other people and the benefits of working together were explored; the pupils sang well a hymn relating the wonders of the world to God and a pupil read a concluding prayer. In an assembly for pupils in Reception to Year 2, children applauded one another's exploits enthusiastically and listened intently to a story about the importance of each one of them to a community, linking this to biblical

stories. All pupils attend services, taken by local clerics, to celebrate the main Christian festivals. Pupils' sense of the beauty of the world is enhanced in their art, music and drama lessons. The school's exquisite setting is reflected in some wonderful landscape painting by Year 11 GCSE art students, inspired by their study of Monet. The hatching of duck eggs is a moment of excitement and wonder for younger pupils each year.

- 2.19 Pupils live by a strong moral code and know that correct behaviour is highly valued. They have a respect for the law and for the school rules, which are clearly laid out in homework diaries. They understand the need for sanctions and the majority agree that they are fairly given by most teachers, demonstrating their well-developed understanding of right and wrong. Pupils express their views willingly and they show respect for property and their environment. The PSHE course covers the important areas of sex education, drug awareness, responsibility and respect for others, as well as other topics that encourage pupils to choose a healthy lifestyle. Year 3 pupils were observed studying fairness and those in Year 8 discussing the importance of rights and responsibilities.
- 2.20 Pupils show a high degree of social awareness. They relate positively to those around them, whether they are their teachers, their peers or visitors to the school. The junior and senior school pupils share facilities in the main building and mutual consideration is shown at cross-over lesson times. They work well as members of groups and teams. Pupils of all ages interact well. Year 11 pupils act as mentors for Year 7 pupils and the head boy and head girl are excellent role models for younger ones. The appointment of librarians, games captains and house captains in both senior and junior schools ensures that a fair proportion of pupils hold posts of responsibility. The senior school has a pupil forum, with representatives from each form; the head boy and head girl chair meetings of the forum twice a term; the deputy head responds to any suggestions for change. While this appears to be a useful system, senior school pupils have reservations about it, with half of Year 11 believing their views are disregarded. Pupils support local charities as well as being involved in national fund-raising on Red Nose Day and Children in Need.
- 2.21 Pupils' understanding of their own and others' cultures is well developed. In Year 3, Chinese folk stories are used in drama and pupils in Year 8 study Muslim families and the festival of Divali. A Year 9 art project, based on African symbols used by the Akin people for religious events or to communicate emotions, formed one of the many culturally enriching displays in the school corridors. The summer term arts evening provides a platform for the musical and dramatic performances, along with pottery and art exhibitions. Year 11 art pupils study the work of Monet as part of their landscape work and in conjunction with a recent visit to Kew gardens to study flowers, they also studied the work of O'Keeffe. Pupils also visit art galleries and museums.
- 2.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.23 The quality of teaching is good, enabling pupils to achieve well. The high standards found in the previous inspection have been further improved. A significant proportion of the lessons observed throughout the school were outstanding, especially in Reception and Years 1 to 4; only a few lessons were graded less than good. Some lessons are too dominated by teachers and over-prescriptive, not encouraging pupils to develop their thinking skills.
- 2.24 Teaching promotes effective learning and enables pupils of all abilities to achieve high standards. Teachers are adept at increasing pupils' understanding and developing their skills, and in most instances teaching facilitates progress commensurate with pupils' ability. Awareness of and attention to those with different needs is noteworthy in some teaching; for example, in giving Year 3 pupils different tasks according to their motor skills when studying the work of Matisse. Open questions are used expertly in some senior school lessons, such as when pupils were being encouraged to develop some excellent compositions of African rhythms.
- 2.25 Teaching fosters in pupils the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, and pupils usually find their work interesting. In the junior school independent learning is frequently to be found; far less evidence of this was seen in the senior school, where detailed private note-taking is also a rarity. On the other hand, all pupils demonstrate ability to think for themselves when given the opportunity. Notable examples included an exploration by Year 8 pupils of Mary Tudor's inherited image, which either confirmed in their minds her grim reputation or in more than a few instances led to a different conclusion.
- 2.26 The teaching involves a commendable amount of group and pair work, sponsoring co-operative learning and enriching relationships; pupils also work effectively on their own. The pace of lessons is vigorous and energizing, though this is sensitively adjusted for less able pupils. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons is very obvious on occasions, as when their activities were frequently varied when studying Latin cases, with role-play developing their understanding of word endings and which pupil should pretend to strike the other.
- 2.27 Teaching is meticulously planned, and well managed in terms of time and use of resources. Teaching styles are individual but effectively honed; interactive whiteboards are used imaginatively. The truly outstanding teaching was characterized by genuine interplay and by mobilizing pupils' initiative. For example, in a superbly crafted Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils used their eyes, ears and touch to create repeating patterns from twigs, stones and bark. A high proportion of the lessons observed were too closely led by teachers; while many of these were good, some only allowed pupils to answer recall questions or to remain mute, with consequent loss of interest.
- 2.28 Teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, including those with learning difficulties. It instils confidence, mutual respect and valuable flexibility. In a Year 3 lesson on the differences between fiction and non-fiction books, a range of teaching strategies was used with extra support for the less able pupils.
- 2.29 The teaching staff are suitably qualified; their subject knowledge and expertise are good, exceptionally so in some cases. Teaching is supported by a good variety of resources which teachers deploy with skill and some imagination, usually selecting a medium appropriate to the task. However, a noticeable number of junior school lessons, especially in history, geography and science, feature work-sheets that do not engage pupils fully and inhibit the progress of the more able. A number of senior school classrooms are cramped and make vigorous learning, teacher help and observation of individuals much more difficult to effect.

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- 2.30 Assessment procedures include twice-yearly examinations and internal tests, and an abundance of standardised testing, allowing comparison with national expectations and assessment of each pupil's progress. The results are closely monitored by senior management and used to identify pupils requiring learning support, and other pupils who need to be closely monitored. Assessment is generally used to inform planning of teaching.
- 2.31 The marking of pupils' work is regular and thorough, sometimes with encouraging comments, but it is inconsistent both in method and timing. The work of senior school pupils towards half-term assessments is graded; elsewhere, while some assignments are annotated with great assiduousness, others are appraised in much less meticulous fashion. Junior school teachers do not reveal to pupils the marks given for written work. The best marking is detailed and constructive, suggesting ways in which work can be improved.
- 2.32 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 The pastoral care of pupils is good, as is the school's concern for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils enable the school to fulfil its aim of knowing and valuing every pupil. The high standard of pastoral care noted in the previous inspection has been maintained to a large extent, but the management systems for the oversight of pastoral care are less successful in the senior school.
- 3.2 The school provides strong support and guidance for its pupils, especially in the junior school. The caring environment in the Reception class helps to ensure that these children have the best possible start to their education. At the heart of the pastoral care system throughout the school are the form teachers, who meet their pupils for ten minutes at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Most form teachers use these sessions profitably in a variety of ways and show concern for their pupils. Junior school form teachers are strongly supported by middle managers and any anxieties are raised in weekly staff meetings. Whilst issues relating to senior school pupils are mentioned in the staff room during morning break, staff meetings are rare and middle managers have not been appointed to oversee and help with these matters.
- 3.3 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is a strength of the school; great care was observed when pupils were being treated in the medical room by members of staff. Junior school pupils feel that they can go to their form teacher or the junior school head and her deputy with any worries. The pupils feel that any cases of unkindness are dealt with fairly and effectively. Pupils believe that the school helps new pupils to settle in, and Year 11 monitors sometimes act successfully as mentors to those in Year 7; however, many senior school pupils are unsure of who to go to with problems, and said they would turn to their parents or friends for advice rather than a member of staff.
- 3.4 Good discipline and behaviour are the norm and pupils are conscious of the school rules. The system of rewards and sanctions is appreciated by the pupils, with many more of the former being earned; house points and assemblies to celebrate outstanding work are much valued by the pupils. Pupils of all ages are delighted that for exceptional work they receive a certificate, with their name recorded in a special leather bound book. It was widely stated by pupils that very little bullying occurs in the school. It was, however, felt by a number of parents and by the pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 that the rare cases of bullying are not dealt with effectively and that procedures for pupils with such problems are unclear. Appropriate safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place with the headmistress as the designated child protection officer; all staff have received training on child protection issues.
- 3.5 The school provides a safe and healthy environment in which pupils thrive. A range of policies are implemented effectively by all staff. Measures have been taken to minimise the risk of fire and other hazards, and fire practices occur each term. Thorough risk assessments have been carried out for all areas of the school and for all activities that are conducted off-site.
- 3.6 The school has a comprehensive health and safety policy and meetings of the health and safety committee take place regularly. The estate manager is resident on site and conscious of any needs that arise. An external agency conducts an annual safety inspection and submits a report to the governors. Three secretaries are fully trained first aiders, as are other adults who work in key areas of the school. The medical room is appropriately furnished and resourced; the school is aware of the desirability of re-locating this room closer to the

secretaries' office. Any accidents are reported and recorded appropriately although no record is kept of the action taken. Meticulous records are kept of medicines dispensed. Medication brought to school from home is kept and administered by form teachers in the junior school, but a similar system does not exist for senior school pupils. Lunches are healthy and nutritious, and include salads and a vegetarian option. The food is of good quality and quantity, and is appreciated by the pupils. Pupils lead active lives and regular exercise is ensured by the games and activities programme.

- 3.7 The school's admission register is maintained satisfactorily. The attendance registers are completed satisfactorily and a secretary contacts parents at once regarding any unexplained absences. The school has a good disability policy and a plan indicating how accessibility can be improved over time.
- 3.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.9 Parents support the school well and are pleased with most aspects of it. The school aims to communicate effectively with parents and since the last inspection a number of improvements have been made to help this be achieved more fully. The school has developed its links with the local community, and these are now a strong feature of the school.
- 3.10 Half the parents of the pupils responded to a questionnaire before the inspection; a number of glowing comments were made about the school generally. In particular, more than nine out of ten parents made a positive response to the questions relating to the school's academic provision, the information they received about progress and the attitudes engendered in the pupils. A significant minority expressed reservations about the amount of homework, the extra-curricular activities, the handling of parental concerns in the senior school and the behaviour of Year 7 to 9 pupils. The inspectors do not agree with the comments regarding homework or the handling of concerns; few after-school activities are offered but an extensive range of activities are available to pupils during the course of the school day. Some senior school form teachers offer good pastoral care but their work does not receive sufficient support and coordination.
- 3.11 Parents receive written reports each December and June, and a summary report in March. The reports are mostly of high quality, with perceptive comments regarding individual strengths and weaknesses; they detail the topics studied by the class and, in the senior school, include informative statistics. Most reports are computer-generated and identical reports are sometimes produced for different pupils. For senior school pupils, assessments of their efforts and achievement in each subject are also sent to parents at each half term; this system is appreciated by parents as it provides a quick indication if there is a concern in a subject. Consultation meetings regarding the progress of all pupils are held annually, with an additional meeting early in the school year for parents of junior school pupils and all those new to the senior school. These meetings are also used profitably as opportunities for the headmistress to speak of matters such as the GCSE options for Year 10 pupils. An appointments system helps the discussions with junior school class teachers but it is much less effective, and often ignored by parents, with many senior school subject teachers needing to be consulted.

- 3.12 Informative handbooks are provided for parents of pupils new to the school. Thereafter, half-termly newsletters enable parents to be aware of events and achievements. Homework diaries, signed by form teachers and parents, are also sometimes used for communication purposes. An excellent website includes the major pastoral policies of the school, and also helps parents to be aware of developments and any changes to routine. Teachers of younger pupils are in daily contact with parents, and all staff are able to talk knowledgeably about pupils without notes.
- 3.13 Parents support the school and their children well, attending the sporting, musical and dramatic events. Parents make costumes for plays and help with make-up; some are involved in school trips, help with activities such as cycling, cooking, sewing, gardening and craft, and help with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme; others give talks to pupils about their professional lives. The parents' association, which has a committee including three members of staff, organise social events, including a Burns night celebration and Christmas and May fairs, and raise money to be spent on such things as a digital projector, an extra inter-active white board and chess sets. Parents act as class representatives in the junior school, organising gatherings for parents and discussing any issues with the junior school head.
- 3.14 Any parental concerns are responded to promptly by the headmistress and her staff. Parents appreciate their ready availability and their willingness to listen to concerns. Appropriate records are kept of matters of a serious nature. Parents have not felt the need to invoke the complaints procedure, which includes an appeal to an appropriate panel.
- 3.15 The school promotes strong links with the local community, and frequently makes its facilities available; the sports hall is used regularly by local cricket clubs, and the grounds are used for camping by scouts and guides, and by sports groups during the holidays. The school hosts events such as a cancer support evening, the area Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme presentations, fencing competitions and hill cycling climbs. Pupils from local primary schools attend drama, art and music workshops. The school's musicians give concerts in the local church and entertain senior citizens in retirement homes at Christmas, and harvest festival produce is taken to a local family centre. Pupils' residential trips in the United Kingdom and abroad further develop their experience of the wider community.
- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The school is governed well in most respects. The governing body helps to set appropriate aims and values for the school, and provides effective oversight and guidance. Since the previous inspection, governors have devoted time to scrutinising policy documents and have clarified procedures in finance, operations and management. Governors are kept informed about the school.
- 4.2 The governing body and its two sub-committees concerned with finance and buildings meet regularly; these meetings enable governors to provide critical support for the headmistress and the bursar when necessary, and to have an understanding of school issues. This understanding is limited to some extent by governors not receiving staff presentations on their special responsibilities and only requiring one report a year from the junior school head. Although a sub-committee to focus specifically on educational issues does not exist, such matters are discussed when they arise from the headmistress' detailed termly report and the governors do receive a report on the GCSE results from the deputy head. Governors have undergone appropriate training and take seriously their roles of maintaining the ethos, quality and development of the school, and of ensuring compliance with regulatory and legal requirements. The governor responsible for overseeing the safeguarding and child protection policies liaises with the headmistress over any concerns; another governor attends the school's health and safety committee meetings.
- 4.3 The governors are committed to the school, and the majority of them are parents of former or current pupils; the governing body has expertise in most relevant specialist areas, including finance, medicine, construction, marketing and education, but not in law. Governors play a leading role in building and planning issues, to secure the school's longer-term future and direction, whilst delegating the day-to-day running of the school fully to the head. The governors have met with the school's senior managers occasionally to discuss the school and its development, and the chairman is aware of the need to agree a strategic plan to cover the next ten years, and to decide between possible buildings projects.
- 4.4 The governors have a fair insight into the working of the school, visiting it each year to observe lessons and activities. The chairman is very well informed about the school, and maintains weekly contact with the headmistress and the bursar; he attends open mornings and presents awards to GCSE pupils after they have left the school. A number of governors come to concerts and drama productions, and to speech day, and more informal contact with staff has occurred recently.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The overall quality of the leadership is good and ensures that the school fulfils most of its aims well. The senior managers provide effective and supportive leadership; the staff share the headmistress' vision of a small, friendly school where each pupil is known individually and good academic results are achieved relative to their ability. The leadership and management of the EYFS is outstanding. Since the previous inspection, liaison between academic leaders in the senior and junior schools has improved, and the position of the deputy head of the school has been formalised. The school is aware that the senior school management team needs reorganising and extending.
- 4.6 The school is well organised and runs smoothly in most respects, with weekly meetings of the senior school and junior school senior management teams, both chaired by the headmistress; these meetings are supplemented by a monthly meeting of a whole-school management committee. These arrangements ensure effective coordination, with all issues of both short- and long-term significance being discussed. The headmistress and the junior school head have different styles of leadership but the transition of pupils from the junior school to the senior is well managed. The deputy head has a wide brief, acting as the director of studies and organising whole-school events. Difficult senior school pastoral issues are passed to the headmistress or her deputy, but the senior school does not have other staff whose major responsibility is to take initiatives in this area.
- 4.7 Matters of concern to all staff are discussed at a meeting held before the start of each term. The junior school staff meet each week to discuss academic and pastoral issues; the work and concerns of those who teach Reception and Years 1 and 2 are also discussed in a weekly meeting. By these means, all the junior school staff are kept very well informed about school matters. Formal meetings to consider senior school pupils only occur after standardised testing has taken place and immediately prior to the annual meetings with parents. The school has a comprehensive development plan for 2007 to 2011, covering each aspect of the school, and this is reviewed annually by governors and senior managers after a thorough audit of the previous year's achievements. The academic departments are well organised; each head of department has produced a development plan and meets regularly with the person responsible for coordinating their subject in the junior school. The teaching of colleagues is monitored by middle managers but the overseeing of the marking of written work is less rigorous.
- 4.8 The school has effective systems for aiding the professional development of staff, with the appraisal of all teachers occurring every two years. Senior managers are appraised by the headmistress, supported by a governor well versed in this field. The performance of non-academic staff is reviewed each year. In-service training is linked to school needs, and members of staff report back to colleagues about courses attended; most staff have attended a number of courses. Whole-staff training occurs before the start of each term. New members of staff are supported by their line manager, and their teaching is observed in their second term. The school does not have a newly qualified teacher this year, but when it does it participates in the national scheme, with appropriate mentoring and a reduced timetable of teaching. Many of the staff are experienced teachers, and their attitudes and responses to the pupils are excellent. All junior school staff are involved in the activities programme, as are the majority of the senior school staff, with games and music staff making especially strong contributions. The required staffing checks to ensure their suitability to work with children have been carried out rigorously and recorded appropriately on a central register, and all staff have contracts and job descriptions.

- 4.9 Resources throughout the school are of good quality and quantity. The school has excellent facilities for ICT, art and DT, and indoor sport; the science laboratories are spacious and well equipped, but the size of some classrooms used by the senior school limits the ability of teachers to circulate and oversee pupils' work. The school grounds are well maintained and provide an atmosphere of calm and ease, much valued by the pupils and by adults. The senior school library could be an attractive room but its current furniture and books do not inspire its use by pupils for learning or relaxation.
- 4.10 The administration and teaching in the school are well supported by an ICT manager and his assistant, and the teaching of science and DT is aided by laboratory technicians. The three classroom assistants make an important contribution to the progress of the younger pupils. The work of the non-teaching staff is very supportive and well directed. The school secretaries support the school very well and make a major contribution towards its smooth day-to-day running. Parents and visitors appreciate the friendly and very efficient response they receive.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school fulfils most of its aims well. The teaching is generally of a good quality and a significant proportion is outstanding. The pupils work hard to achieve good academic results in all areas of the curriculum relative to their abilities. They are articulate and helpful, and their personal development is good. The pupils enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and with one another, and the arrangements for their safeguarding are secure, but the oversight of pastoral care in the senior school is insufficient. The broad education offered by the school gives all pupils the opportunity to develop their talents. The senior managers provide effective and supportive leadership for the staff, and the school is governed well in most respects. The beauty of the setting is enhanced by the provision of high quality facilities for art, DT, science, ICT and indoor sport.
- 5.2 Many of the strengths found at the time of the previous inspection continue to be significant features of the school and a number of improvements have been made. Since the last inspection, the facilities have improved significantly, the quality of teaching and the pupils' achievements have been further enhanced, and the links with the local community are now strong. Of the major recommendations made in the previous report, the checking of staff backgrounds is now robust and attendance registers are completed satisfactorily. The junior school activities programme has been extended, as has the liaison between academic leaders in the two sections of the school; the use of ICT across the curriculum is increasing. The school's current leadership and management are fully aware of areas for further improvement and are well placed to take these forward.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The following areas are suggested for particular consideration in order for the school to improve further:
1. appoint middle managers to coordinate and oversee the pastoral care of senior school boys and girls;
 2. ensure all the senior school classrooms are of sufficient size to allow effective support for teaching and learning.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.
- 5.6 Any failures to meet EYFS requirements are detailed in Section 7.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 5th to 8th October 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 5th and 6th October 2009 by one inspector. The inspector observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff and governors. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspector examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr David Defoe	Reporting Inspector
Miss Alexis Brierley	Deputy Head, ISA school
Mr Graeme Garrett	Head, ISA school
Miss Alison Hall	Registrar, HMC school
Mr Richard Johnson	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Dr Richard Palmer	Head of Department, HMC school
Dr Janet Ramsden	Deputy Head, GSA school
Mrs Sybil Warner	Early Years Lead Inspector

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

- 7.1 This setting is highly effective in ‘knowing and valuing every child’. The good and often outstanding teaching challenges and motivates the children, reflecting the uniqueness of each child. The caring environment and the strong partnership with parents together with excellent links with pupils and staff in the junior and senior schools, helps to ensure that children have the best start to their education. They make excellent progress.
- 7.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Children’s well-being and safeguarding are enhanced by thorough risk assessment. Policies and documentation are comprehensive, although they are not always maintained to a sufficient standard to ensure that children’s needs are met. Strong aspirations for improvement include daily self-evaluation, discussion and recording. This has led to the development of the richly resourced outdoor classroom. In addition, a regular and comprehensive variety of assessments and practical recording systems provide an important monitor of children’s progress, leading to completion of children’s EYFS profiles. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the setting. Excellent links are maintained with cluster groups, local advisors and with parents and senior school pupils, some of whom provide invaluable classroom support.
- 7.3 Provision is outstanding. Experienced staff have warm, caring relationships with the children, whom they know well. Children’s health, safety and well-being are supported through the consistent and intelligent implementation of the setting’s procedures and practices. The classroom is highly stimulating and motivating. Excellent use is made of the outdoor classroom and school facilities such as the sports hall and music room. The exceptional planning and expert organisation of the educational programmes include varied and wide-ranging activities to meet the needs of all children exceedingly well. Teachers successfully exploit and develop children’s own ideas and initiatives with a skilful balance of imaginative and challenging activities. Staffing arrangements ensure good supervision. Comprehensive appointment checks make certain that all adults are suitable to work with children.
- 7.4 All children achieve well and for most, the outcomes are outstanding. They respond positively to teachers’ expectations. Their skills and attitudes are excellent. For example, they copy and paste using the computer, explore methods of printing with potatoes and question each other about the value of keeping food in the fridge. They listen carefully and respond clearly and fluently when speaking. Their writing is often independent and some write in well-constructed sentences. Children’s behaviour and personal development are outstanding. They bring books to share with others and the teacher, know how to stay safe on nature walks and make sensible choices for lunch. They are caring of each other, make decisions and are self-reliant and confident. In addition, they cooperate keenly, for example in singing action songs. Their enjoyment is infectious. The children derive much satisfaction and pleasure from their experiences and achievements.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.5 To improve still further the high quality of its provision the setting should:
1. ensure that all policies are regularly reviewed to meet all the welfare, learning and development requirements;
 2. ensure that managers and practitioners have sufficient non-contact time to carry out their roles efficiently.
- 7.6 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.