

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Mayfield Preparatory School

Full Name of the School	Mayfield Preparatory School
DCSF Number	335/6000
Early Years Number	EY 285706
Registered Charity Number	529001
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Age Range (of the whole school)	2 to 11
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	8th to 11th June 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 statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage were not inspected as part of this inspection.

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 Mayfield Preparatory School is a co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of two and eleven. The school aims to encourage the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and consideration for others; nurture spiritual awareness; foster courtesy and self-discipline through well-established routines and high expectations; provide the security of a consistent, caring environment where individuality is valued and respected; develop an awareness of the needs of others in the wider world; encourage and develop academic excellence.
- 1.2 Mayfield Preparatory School is part of the Queen Mary's Schools Foundation, which is a registered charity. The other two schools in the Foundation are the Grammar School for Boys and the High School for Girls. Both of these are now selective voluntary aided schools in the maintained sector. Until 1944 the school was the preparatory school for the High School for Girls. In that year it was set up as an independent school existing in its own right. The school is under the governance and management of a board of governors separate from the other schools in the Foundation. Trustees of the Foundation are members of the board of governors.
- 1.3 The school is situated in its own grounds in a residential area of Walsall to the north of Birmingham. It is housed in a substantial Regency town house surrounded by gardens and a playing field, next door to the Grammar School for Boys. Most of the classrooms for ages five to eleven are based in the listed town house with additional purpose-built accommodation providing specialist areas for science and art. The nursery and pre-nursery classes are housed in a new purpose-built facility. The older outbuildings on the site have been converted to give specialist areas for design technology and music. The school hall serves a variety of uses that require space for large numbers of pupils. On-site playing fields and hard surface play areas give pupils opportunities for outdoor recreation. The school has access to and use of the games pitches, swimming pool and sports hall in the Grammar School for Boys.
- 1.4 Since the last inspection, the school has developed a computer suite and provided a range of technology in all classrooms. During that time the ethnic mix of the school has changed with more pupils from ethnic minorities among the pupil body reflecting the diverse population of the local area. The current headteacher has been in post for less than a year.
- 1.5 Pupils are grouped in class groups according to age. These class groups provide the framework for pastoral care, guidance and tutor support. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) educates 15 girls and 27 boys. The school educates 150 pupils between the ages of five and eleven; 67 of these are girls with 83 boys. Forty-two pupils benefit from the Government-funded nursery scheme.
- 1.6 Entry to the school is based on assessments by the school and on an interview with the headteacher. Some pupils are admitted with mild specific learning needs that can be accommodated within the normal classroom setting. There are no pupils with a statement of educational need. One pupil requires some help with English. Seven pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and these are given special help by the school. According to nationally standardised data the ability range is wide, from those who are far above the average to those who are average with a very few below the average ability. Overall, pupils' ability is generally well above the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their ability their results in national tests will be well above the average for maintained primary schools.

- 1.7 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) and age equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage

School	Age of children
Nursery	3 – 4
Kindergarten	4 – 5

Preparatory School

School	NC name
Transition	Year 1
Form I	Year 2
Lower II	Year 3
Form II	Year 4
Upper II	Year 5
Lower III	Year 6

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a good range of educational opportunities suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. In so doing it meets its aims to develop self-confidence, self-esteem and consideration for others; to foster courtesy and self-discipline through well-established routines and high expectations and to encourage and develop academic excellence.
- 2.2 In the last inspection it was observed that the quality of the curriculum was good overall offering a generally broad and balanced education in line with the aims of the school. This continues to be the case.
- 2.3 The education as a whole is consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy. The underlying intention to develop the whole person influences every aspect of the school. The wide range of educational experiences promotes growth in learning and personal development, increases self-awareness and self-confidence and encourages the acceptance of responsibility for the well-being of others.
- 2.4 All pupils have access to this broad range of educational activities. Linguistic, mathematical, scientific and technological abilities are very well developed through the teaching of the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Specific ICT skills are promoted and many opportunities are given to pupils to make good use of them throughout the school. The fundamental skills are extended and refined through pupils' experiences in the wider range of subjects and activities they encounter. The acquisition of subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills across lessons and activities contributes significantly to their technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. Pupils are given ample opportunities to listen, to voice opinions and to consider the views of others.
- 2.5 The educational provision has been broadened in recent years giving pupils even further opportunities for development. The nursery and reception class education has been restructured to take into account the requirements of EYFS developments. In Years 1 and 2 the length of the school day has been shortened while the time allocated for some lessons throughout both key stages has increased, following the recommendation of the last inspection. Lesson time allocations per subject are appropriate. Increases in time given to the teaching of music as well as additional drama and sporting fixtures have broadened the range of activities on offer. Spanish is taught from Year 2 onwards. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from an excellent session each week on current affairs. Verbal reasoning lessons in Years 5 and 6 focus on developing mental and verbal ability. The results of frequent tests in these lessons give pupils a benchmark for measuring their development. From Kindergarten all pupils are taught ICT skills so that maximum use is made of the recently improved ICT provision with pupils being taught to use a wide range of software and equipment. Pupils' development is well supported by the extent and quality of extra-curricular activities that place pupils in situations where they develop self-confidence and support for others.
- 2.6 The curriculum prepares pupils well for adult life. Pupils develop understanding of key social and personal situations as part of the school's personal and social development (PSD) programme. This programme, together with the current affairs and verbal reasoning sessions in Years 5 and 6, introduces pupils to the challenging issues of the society in which they live. Additionally, they develop many other skills such as research, identifying pressures and prejudices that limit thought, and presenting and defending opinions. Pupils spoke highly of the contribution the current affairs programmes make to their thinking and to their attitudes.

The changes to the curriculum since the last inspection and the range and quality of the education pupils encounter demonstrate the commitment of the school to give pupils the widest possible range of educational experiences. Links with the community enrich their experience and broaden pupils' awareness and understanding of the wider society in which they live.

- 2.7 Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. When transferring from the EYFS to Year 1 they are introduced to the teachers who will work with them. Through visits these younger pupils become familiar with the new rooms and buildings in which they will work. Extensive sets of assessments accompany them giving their new teachers insights into the strengths and needs of each pupil. Parents are kept fully informed of the key steps in this transfer. Preparation for secondary school is generous and effective. Staff support, guide and assist parents and pupils and bring them into contact with staff from many of the senior schools to which the pupils will move. Over several years the deputy headteacher has recorded the marks of those who succeeded in gaining entry to these schools. This data is used as a benchmark against which current applicants to each secondary school can consider the options available to them. The quality of the programme supporting pupils in selecting the next step of their education gives pupils an excellent bridge to their future.
- 2.8 The curriculum is well-planned, set out in writing and shared with parents in publications and in numerous parents' sessions. Pupils of all abilities can participate equally in all parts of the education offered. A specialist supports pupils with LDD in EYFS and in Years 1 and 2. Those with LDD in Years 3 to 6 are supported by the headteacher. More able pupils are supported through extra work in lessons that extends their learning by moving them to a more challenging level of activities. Pupils with English as a second language are well supported by the school.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 Pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds are well educated. They are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects and activities provided, can apply these and develop the essential skills and attitudes for work and study.
- 2.11 The school is successful in meeting its aim to encourage and develop academic excellence. The good standard of attainment and the positive attitudes to learning identified in the last inspection have been maintained.
- 2.12 Pupils display critical and creative thinking and understanding to a good standard. They respond positively to the encouragement they are given to voice opinions and to find solutions to problems whether these are in lessons, activities, the school council or in daily routines. In some lessons, pupils, excited by the content of the lesson, were eager for homework so that they could continue working independently on topics the class group had been addressing. In lessons where pupils are required to carry out practical activities, they show an ability to get on with the task and think for themselves.
- 2.13 Good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills are evident in all subjects and at all age levels. Logical and independent thought are strongly promoted by the school and displayed by pupils as they grow older.

- 2.14 Standards in literacy are good, as is the development of the essential skills for work and study. Listening and speaking skills are well developed. Reading and writing to a good standard are promoted from the earliest of years. Pupils develop as articulate and engaging communicators. In interviews, they prove to be good listeners. In lessons they listen carefully to their teachers and to each other, taking the point of questions and addressing precisely the issues raised. They engage eagerly in debate with teachers, exploring ideas and offering suggestions and opinions.
- 2.15 Pupils make good use of their mathematical understanding to apply concepts, and to use their knowledge and mathematical skills across a range of subjects. Pupils' work and displays in classrooms showed a good grasp of mathematical understanding and application.
- 2.16 Pupils' use of ICT is good. The development of ICT skills and the application of pupils' understanding of a broad range of software make them competent in using the range of equipment available to further their learning. Pupils are at ease using interactive whiteboards in lessons, working on computers and other equipment and in researching the internet.
- 2.17 Pupils' ability in critical and creative thinking is evident in many aspects of their work. The science challenge for pupils in Year 6 is an excellent example of a science-based project that draws on other disciplines and requires pupils to find solutions to a range of complex issues if they are to meet the challenge given to them. Very good examples were seen of pupils applying their prior knowledge, understanding and skills to support their learning. In a lesson in Spanish, for instance, Year 3 pupils were required to recall and apply to different situations a range of challenging vocabulary.
- 2.18 There are no significant differences in relative attainment between different groups of pupils, subjects or curricular areas. In lessons and in activities, boys and girls of all ages and abilities reach good levels of attainment and make progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are more able generally make good progress and reach standards that are good for their abilities.
- 2.19 Results in national tests at age 7 over the last three years have been far above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Results in national tests at age 11 over the last three years have been far above the national average for all maintained primary schools in English and mathematics and above the national average for science. Pupils' attainment in national tests at age 7 is high in relation to their abilities. Pupils' attainment in national tests at age 11 is good in relation to their abilities in English and mathematics and satisfactory in relation to their abilities in science. On leaving the school, almost all the pupils are successful in gaining entry to the grammar and independent schools around the Midlands.
- 2.20 Pupils reach significant individual and group achievements in many other areas. The choirs regularly bring back trophies from music festivals in the West Midlands. Individual pupils achieve a range of good grades annually in music, ballet and speaking. They win a regular stream of awards in gymnastics and athletics. Individuals have gained regional honours in track and field events in independent school championships and have represented the Midlands in national competitions. Top awards have been achieved in the Walsall Photographer of the Year. Pupils from the school have played chess for the county. Two pupils currently represent South Staffordshire in the Under 11's at cricket with one pupil in the Under 9's squad. The good levels of achievement recorded across these different disciplines reflect the success of the school in promoting the development of all pupils across a range of activities. Through their participation in these, pupils develop leadership skills, work collaboratively, build self-discipline and learn to use their skills to the benefit of others.

- 2.21 Independent note taking and research are evident in those subjects where pupils are required to investigate and to collate information. Pupils' written work is well organised. They present their ideas in a clear and coherent manner. The use of planning and experimentation in art and in design technology (DT) is well developed, showing a good level of creative thinking.
- 2.22 Pupils' enjoyment of their work is a feature of many lessons helping to create a positive atmosphere that supports learning. They settle quickly to class work and are eager to co-operate with their teachers. Cooperative learning is standard practice in many lessons where the activities of the pupils contribute significantly to the success of the lessons. In lessons and activities, pupils are comfortable working alone, in small groups or in pairs in pursuit of the learning objectives set.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.23 The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding. The school clearly meets its aims to encourage the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and consideration for others; to nurture spiritual awareness and to develop an awareness of the needs of others in the wider world.
- 2.24 At the time of the last inspection the school provided very well for pupils' personal, social and cultural development and helped them to develop spiritual beliefs and a moral code. In the intervening years the school has enabled pupils to reach a high standard in the area of personal development making this aspect one of the obvious success areas of the school.
- 2.25 Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. They combine self-confidence and a strong sense of self-worth with consideration and care for others. They learn to reflect, to listen, to show respect and to be aware of the need to work harmoniously with those around them. They relate confidently to the adults they meet each day. Pupils' development is nurtured by a clear sense of family spirit throughout the school and by the strong support of pupils for each other. Staff make a vital contribution to this growth by setting standards and by promoting independence and self-reliance. Pupils gain insights into values and beliefs and into the way in which religious belief affects people's lives through the work of the PSD programme and through the many opportunities given them to explore beliefs and life styles across many subjects. Pupils themselves recognise the impact being at Mayfield has on their personal development. As one Year 6 pupil commented in an interview "I have started to look at the world differently since being at Mayfield".
- 2.26 Pupils' moral awareness is strong. The behaviour of older pupils is exemplary. They contribute to the smooth running of the school by acting as role models and giving practical support to younger pupils. In interview, pupils said they understood the school's code of conduct and felt it was fair. In the nursery section of the school, there is a system of 'golden rules'. Staff created some of these rules and some were composed by staff and pupils working together. From the earliest age, pupils are learning the importance of rules, therefore giving them the experience of having a useful framework for their behaviour. Misbehaviour is treated fairly and positively in the pupils' experience. Pupils' orderly movement around the school and the high standard of behaviour show how well they understand the need to respect rules and behave in a responsible manner. Moral awareness is developed through debates in lessons and activities as well as through contact with visiting speakers. The current affairs sessions in Years 5 and 6 are particularly effective in prompting pupils to consider the moral aspects of current issues in their society. The manner in which these sessions are conducted, the independence of thought encouraged and the responsibility assigned to pupils in gathering and presenting their finds make these sessions examples of

best practice. The generosity of pupils in supporting a broad range of charities is another practical demonstration of their high level of moral awareness.

- 2.27 Pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils take great pride in their school and in the contribution they make to its well-being. They respond very well to the many opportunities they have to take responsibility. Older pupils value their roles as prefects. Pupils respond positively to the encouragement they are given to contribute to the school community. The work of the school council is another example of pupils' developing awareness of their responsibility to shape the school community in which they live and work. They welcome opportunities to represent the school to the wider community through games, music and drama. Pupils show an understanding of social issues beyond the school. There is a keen awareness of environmental issues. Pupils are well informed about citizenship issues because of the coverage of these topics in the PSD programme and in a range of subjects. In addition, contact with outside speakers from a wide range of backgrounds, occupations and professions gives pupils a developing awareness of the wider society in which they live and of the public institutions and services available.
- 2.28 Cultural development is strong. In the teaching of many subjects and in the topics covered in the PSD programme, pupils are brought to recognition and acceptance of the differences between cultures and peoples in a way that fosters understanding and harmony. The comprehensive programme of educational visits, including trips to the theatre, places of worship, art galleries and historical sites, builds pupils' appreciation of and respect for their own and others traditions and cultures. The many contributions of the music, art and drama departments add depth to their cultural experiences. The mixed ethnic backgrounds of the pupils themselves and the very positive relationships they have with each other make a significant contribution to the high level of understanding and respect between different cultural traditions in the school.
- 2.29 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.30 The quality of teaching is good. Staff teach their pupils effectively so that the school achieves its aim to encourage and develop academic excellence. The standard of teaching observed in the last inspection has been maintained.
- 2.31 Teaching enables all pupils, both boys and girls, to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability, increase their understanding and develop their skills. In lessons teachers are attentive to giving individuals support so that all pupils including those with LDD make good progress according to their ability. The more able pupils respond very well to challenging teaching and they make rapid progress.
- 2.32 In the majority of lessons, teachers foster the application of intellectual, physical or creative effort required to engage pupils in their work. Pupils respond enthusiastically to a style of teaching that requires them to think independently, to argue cogently and to present their views coherently. In the best examples of teaching pupils are prompted to think and learn for themselves. In a Year 4 English lesson, pupils made good use of their prior understanding of similes, metaphors and personification to inform their preparations for writing a class on-line Tanka poem. The use of humour, a questioning style that encourages pupils to think for themselves and well-planned tasks allow pupils to achieve success and to enjoy the lessons. In a Year 5 science lesson on the properties of light, the teaching was characterised by a strong support for the different abilities in the group and a clear explanation of the

procedures to follow. As a result, pupils were able to work independently in conducting the practical activities and all pupils made good progress.

- 2.33 The exemplary behaviour of pupils in lessons is a consequence of good teaching and of the outstanding relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves. The good-natured interaction with individual pupils, the variety of activities and the brisk pace of the best lessons promote learning and builds pupils' confidence that they will succeed. A large number of pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire said they enjoyed their lessons and claimed that the humour their teachers brought to lessons helped learning. In a Year 3 English lesson on handwriting, the warm relationships between the class and the teacher, allied with praise and encouragement, motivated pupils to persevere in completing the task. With the high level of good behaviour produced by such good teaching, teachers promote learning and enable pupils to make good progress.
- 2.34 In the best lessons, careful planning in the use of resources, the selection of appropriate teaching techniques and the active involvement of pupils in the lessons are key elements in successfully prompting learning. In addition, precise and well-structured presentations by teachers, clear statement of tasks and learning outcomes, and well-managed timing of activities provide a rich learning experience for pupils. The organisation of and the activities in lessons hold pupils' attention and interest so that they want to be active contributors to the lessons. In an ICT lesson, Year 2 pupils focused intently on writing a commentary for a video they had filmed about Mayfield, and at the same time developed their ICT and writing skills. The expectation that pupils would take responsibility for their learning gave pupils the encouragement to develop independent learning skills that were used to very good effect. Teachers are skilful in the way they use questioning to build understanding, to prompt independent thinking and to encourage pupils to use prior learning. The effective manner in which teachers use pupils' responses to promote understanding and learning are features of the best lessons. Pupils' willingness to express openly their personal opinions and insights reflect the level of confidence they have in their teacher and in their peers.
- 2.35 Regular assessment of pupils' performance in lessons and in tests provides teachers with a comprehensive profile of their pupils. Information about individual pupils is monitored by senior staff and made available to classroom teachers. As a result, in the best lessons, styles of teaching, lesson content and specialised support are adapted to ensure progress by pupils. Evaluation of pupils' success in transferring to secondary school is thorough. The evidence from the scrutiny of past pupils' performances is used well to benchmark the development of current pupils. This benchmarking gives a solid basis on which to advise pupils and parents in their consideration of applications to grammar and independent schools in the Midlands.
- 2.36 Teachers display good levels of subject knowledge and expertise. This, together with their knowledge of their pupils, means that they provide effective support to individuals. As a result, activities are carefully sequenced to take into account the different levels of ability and allow teachers to adapt their teaching to the needs of individuals, enabling pupils to make progress. The extension work given to the more able pupils demands a level of response in keeping with their ability. Where a classroom assistant is available, all pupils, but especially the less able, are given extra support. For instance, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson the classroom assistant worked well with the less able pupils while the teacher gave help to other pupils in the class. This included support for the more able who were given challenging work that matched their ability. In the very good summary review at the end of the lesson the teacher involved all the pupils in evaluating how effective the lesson had been in achieving its objectives.
- 2.37 The wide variety of materials and equipment and the quality and quantity of resources provided support good teaching. Resources are well used so that teachers have a wide range

of options as to how they present their lessons and involve pupils. In a few classrooms there is limited space that constrains the teachers' use of some activities. This observation was also made in the last inspection. However, in spite of any limitations encountered, teachers make imaginative use of the space available so that the learning and progress of the pupils is not impeded.

- 2.38 The quality of marking is good so that pupils know how well they are doing. There are differences in the way teachers interpret the school marking policy. Some teachers write comments and suggestions on pupils' work as required while others offer advice orally, without written comments, when they return pupils' work. However, pupils confirmed they understand and benefit from both types of responses of teachers to their work.
- 2.39 Evaluation of performance against national norms has been established on a formal basis by the new headteacher with plans to carry out this review on the publication of national test results each year.
- 2.40 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 quality of pastoral care is outstanding. The staff care effectively for all pupils' well-being and development and are supported in this by an effective management structure. In so doing, the school achieves two of its aims of fostering courtesy and self-discipline through well-established routines and high expectations and of providing the security of a consistent, caring environment where individuality is valued and respected. The high standards of pastoral care and personal development identified in the last inspection have been maintained.
- 3.2 The school provides outstanding care for pupils throughout the school. At key points of transition, staff are generous in giving time to offer advice and guidance to pupils. The well-structured PSD programme along with other activities that support individuality and taking responsibility for the welfare of others contribute to the personal development of pupils. Channels of support are clearly defined, well understood and effective. The excellent pastoral care is a major contributor not only to the happy atmosphere of the school, but also to the standards achieved in all aspects of the school's work. Teachers and staff understand and are committed to the full development of all pupils in their care. Parents are happy with the quality of care and guidance given to their children. Pupils enjoy being at the school, and feel they are known to staff and are valued and supported. Senior pupils soon to move to secondary schools wrote in the pre-inspection questionnaire how much they will miss the school and the staff who have worked with them.
- 3.3 Staff are assisted by effective pastoral arrangements. The class teacher is the tutor for the class and is the main channel of pastoral care. Clear guidance on the tutor's role is contained in the staff handbook. The deputy headteacher has overall responsibility for pastoral care. A senior leader in each section of the school assists him in providing effective comprehensive support for staff and pupils. Pastoral issues and concerns about individual pupils are discussed at weekly staff meetings, enabling the sharing of information and ensuring a consistency of approach. All the required policies for the pastoral care of pupils are in place and give guidance to staff on how best to serve pupils' needs.
- 3.4 The outstanding quality of relationships between staff and pupils is a key element in creating and sustaining the family ethos of the school. The relaxed rapport between staff and pupils and the enjoyment pupils draw from membership of this community are expressions of positive and supportive relationships. Pupils are considerate, tolerant and act responsibly. They enjoy friendly relationships with each other. They respond positively to the high expectation that they should contribute to the well-being of all members of the school community. For instance, Year 6 prefects support younger pupils through the friendly and constructive supervision they exercise during breaks and at lunchtime. Through the activities of the school council, pupils help develop the positive atmosphere in the school. Currently the school council is reviewing the school rules as part of a redrafting process by staff and governors.
- 3.5 Pupils are mindful of their responsibility to behave considerately. They know and understand the anti-bullying stance of the school. They are familiar with the procedures to follow should bullying occur; a rare event in their view. They expressed confidence that the school would deal effectively with bullying should it happen. The school's stance on anti-bullying is reinforced in the PSD programme by exploration of relationships and of the

effects of bullying. Positive teaching in the pastoral programme and practical advice given to pupils highlight the dangers of unguarded use of the Internet.

- 3.6 Measures to safeguard and promote pupils' health and well-being are successful. Child protection arrangements are well documented, known by staff and properly monitored. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are good. Admissions and attendance registers are kept correctly. High levels of attendance allow pupils to benefit from the many experiences the school provides.
- 3.7 Suitably qualified first-aiders are at hand throughout the school. The names and locations of these first aiders are clearly posted around the school. Pupils are encouraged to take regular exercise. Pupils are not provided with cooked lunches but take packed lunches to school with them. Staff monitor the quality of these lunches to ensure healthy eating habits are promoted. The needs of pupils with physical disabilities have been well catered for in the new buildings and in the refurbished sections of the school. The school has taken all reasonable steps to ensure that all parts of the school are accessible to pupils whatever their needs.
- 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 The school has established an outstanding and effective partnership with parents and worthwhile links with the wider community, which benefit pupils. It is one of the ways the school meets its aims of encouraging the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and consideration for others, and developing an awareness of the needs of others in the wider world. The quality of these links surpasses that observed in the last inspection.
- 3.10 The responses to the parents' questionnaire, completed before the inspection, reflected high parental satisfaction with the education and the support given to their children and with the range of subjects on offer. Parents were strongly appreciative of the teaching that helped pupils make such good progress. There was an almost universal acceptance that the school promoted worthwhile attitudes and views and high standards of behaviour. The inspection team found ample evidence to support these observations by the parents.
- 3.11 A small number of parents disagreed that there is worthwhile help regarding special educational needs. The inspection team found no evidence to support this concern. A few parents were dissatisfied with information given by the school and with the opportunities to discuss this information. Inspectors observed that the school has done all that it could be reasonably expected to do in communicating with parents. The evidence shows that the school provides many opportunities and considerable time for consultation with parents. The information given is comprehensive and appropriate to the needs of individuals. Parents have ready access to staff each morning and evening and on regular formal occasions. The many invitations to parents to support and participate in school activities suggest that the school welcomes the active participation of parents in their children's education. The concern of a small minority of parents that the school does not provide a good range of extra-curricular activities was not supported by the evidence the inspection team witnessed which indicates there is a reasonable range of such activities. Nor was this parental concern supported by the comments of pupils who thought the school gave them a good choice of such activities.

- 3.12 Parents are given every opportunity to be involved in the life of the school and they are kept in touch with the work and progress of their children. Some parents respond generously to invitations to share their experience and expertise with pupils. Attendance at the many parents' evenings, performances, concerts and festivals as well as at sports events and games provides parents with opportunities to meet staff and to show their support for the work of the school.
- 3.13 Parents are provided with information about the school on a regular basis and through a variety of channels. These include newsletters, the school website, handbooks, routine letters on activities, trips and visits, and an annual magazine. Parents of prospective pupils are provided with ample useful information about the school. At the start of each year parents are invited to an induction evening where information about expectations, homework, equipment and programmes of study for the coming year is issued. In Years 5 and 6, pupils and parents are given extensive opportunities for consultation with staff on the choice of secondary schools. The programme of three parents' evenings for each year group gives parents the chance to meet teachers and discuss pupils' development and achievements. The timings of these meetings have recently been changed to make them more useful. Interim reports in Years 3 to 6 give helpful information on performance and effort. End of year reports give full information so that parents know how well their children are performing and developing. Homework diaries have been introduced from Years 3 to 6 giving parents a day-by-day point of contact with the school. The strong partnership between staff and parents is exemplified in the vibrant parent teachers association (PTA). The meetings are sometimes used for consulting parents on proposed developments. The PTA organises social functions and fund raising activities to the benefit of the pupils.
- 3.14 The school handles the concerns of parents well. Staff are easily available to take concerns and deal with them at an early stage. Parents take up offers to meet with staff and discuss in some detail the issues that trouble them about their children. The formal complaints procedure is in place and is properly observed.
- 3.15 The high quality of partnership achieved with parents is matched by the worthwhile links the school has developed with the local community. These links are promoted and actively pursued for the benefit of pupils and the general good of the school. Generous support for local, national and international charities brings pupils in contact with those in need in their immediate community as much as with those in the wider world. Leaders of the charities supported are invited to the school to talk to pupils about the work being assisted so that pupils have an immediate contact with those their fund-raising work is supporting. Contact with faith groups in the wider community through visits to places of worship and through invitations to religious leaders to attend the school and talk with pupils broadens their understanding and appreciation of the way faith and belief affect the way people live. Links with the local police, the fire service and businesses, as well as with members of the European Parliament give pupils an experience of the services and organisation needed for a smoothly functioning society. A good range of sporting, musical and educational links exists with sections of the community and with local schools and organisations across the Midlands.
- 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 governors help to set and secure appropriate aims and values for the school and provide effective oversight and guidance. The quality of governance is good.
- 4.2 The structure and management arrangements related to the governing body are well organised and operate effectively. The work of the committees is clearly defined enabling governors to exercise their responsibilities effectively. Comprehensive reports from the headteacher, the frequent visits to the school by the chair of governors and other governors with specific responsibilities give them the information they need to provide support and guidance to the school. There is a clear demarcation between the role of the governors in the management of the school and the role of the headteacher so that he is able to exercise his responsibilities properly. The generous response of governors to invitations to take part in school activities, such as attendance at the pupils' school council, is indicative of their willingness to play an active role in building on the many successes of the school.
- 4.3 Governors are well informed about the school and fully conversant with its operation and achievements. They are kept up to date on their responsibilities by the headteacher and by membership of and support from the Queen Mary's Foundation. They carry out their responsibilities appropriately and are an asset to the school. They play a key role in the preparation and review of all policies and monitor the implementation of their plans. A comprehensive development plan prioritises the key elements for future growth allowing the governors to play a strategic role in the development of the school. They are appropriately involved in all aspects of the education provided. Good investment in human and material resources is developing the professionalism of the staff and building the range of resources available for effective teaching. The art and science block offers excellent teaching spaces that are used to good effect by staff and pupils. The quality of the pre-nursery and EYFS classrooms and secure outside play areas makes a strong contribution to the environment governors have provided for teaching and learning and for the well-being of very young pupils.
- 4.4 The governing body is aware of its legal obligations and meets them in all respects, including child protection, appointment procedures, welfare and health and safety. Named governors are assigned responsibilities in key areas, such as child protection and health and safety and they carry these out in a purposeful manner. They are actively involved with staff leading those areas within the school.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The quality of leadership and management by the head, senior managers and others with delegated responsibilities is effective and is of a good quality. Leaders and managers are instrumental in leading the school to the achievement of its aims.
- 4.6 Those with management responsibilities provide clear educational direction and leadership. The effectiveness of this leadership and management is seen in the quality of education, the care of pupils and the achievement of the school's aims. The future direction and development of the school, as expressed in the school development plan, are based on a clear understanding of the school's key strengths and identified areas for development. In the relatively short time since his appointment, the headteacher has made it his priority to identify the strengths and areas for development of the school. The development plan that

has emerged from that analysis is a robust and comprehensive document that correctly identifies the way forward, which is an improvement on the state of planning seen in the last inspection. Focused planning with clear priorities, based on this rigorous analysis of performance, has evolved following discussion and consultation with staff and governors. Senior staff have now developed a programme for reviewing the impact of policies and procedures.

- 4.7 The unanimity of purpose in pursuing the aims of the school is a strong feature of the leadership throughout the school. Managers and leaders across the school work cooperatively to give consistent support to pupils. This overturns the criticism of the lack of effective links between sections of the school made in the last inspection report. Equally significant is the evident commitment to creating opportunities for developing the whole person and addressing the needs of individual pupils. Attention to the needs of individual pupils is a key driving force behind all the school does.
- 4.8 Pupils' performance is monitored effectively. Throughout the school a wide range of data is collected, pupils' performance is analysed, tests and formal assessments are considered. Both informal and formal assessments of pupils contribute to an overall understanding of pupils' performance that gives senior staff a sound foundation for developing teaching and learning. The detailed information about individual pupils' ability, performance and aptitudes collected by senior managers is used as a basis for advising and supporting pupils in planning their next step in education.
- 4.9 The quality of leadership and management at middle management level is of a good standard with comprehensive planning and support for teaching and learning. Guidance and support for teachers is readily available. There is some monitoring of teaching and learning mainly through tests and reviews of pupils' books. While this is an improvement from the situation identified in the last inspection there is scope for developing a wider range of monitoring techniques. The school correctly sees the growth of understanding and practice in this area as a key priority. Performance management review is not yet in place. The planned introduction of performance management review in the autumn term of 2009 will provide the basis for organising the continuing professional development of staff including the development of leadership and management techniques. This will allow greater accuracy in identifying and meeting the needs of the school and in supporting the individual's requirements for professional development. The structures and the processes described in the performance review documentation give the school a sound framework to deliver a system of quality so meeting the recommendation made in the last inspection report.
- 4.10 Pastoral and academic leadership are clear and successful; roles and responsibilities are well defined and support positive team working.
- 4.11 Managers are successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating high-quality staff. The school has a rigorous system for checking the suitability of staff, governors and anyone involved in the education of pupils. The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers. The school is effective in supporting teachers at the start of their career.
- 4.12 Finances are very well managed so that appropriate resources are provided. The addition and refurbishment of teaching accommodation and the good level of maintenance of the older buildings have provided pupils with an attractive and stimulating environment. Teaching resources are generous and suited to the needs of good teaching. The library is a valuable asset for private research and study as well as providing a quiet haven for personal reading.

- 4.13 The administration of the school is highly effective. The administrative, maintenance and cleaning staff contribute to achieving the aims of the school by the range and quality of their work. Their commitment to the school and its aims make a real contribution to the positive atmosphere of the school.
- 4.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.15 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 is successful in meeting its aims. The quality of education provided enables pupils of all abilities and interests to gain success. Pupils make rapid progress in all aspects of their learning and development. They generally achieve high levels of attainment in public examinations and are successful in moving on to the secondary schools of their choice. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils make a positive contribution to the family atmosphere of the school. The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. Staff are most generous in giving their time and expertise to enrich the learning and the development of pupils. The shared sense of purpose and the strong commitment of staff to achieving the aims of the school are key elements in its success. Outstanding links with parents and the wider community enrich pupils' education. The good leadership and management of the school are instrumental in guiding the school to meet its aims. Identified areas for development are built into the school development plan and are designed to improve further the good quality of teaching and learning already achieved. Governors work cooperatively with the leadership of the school and provide a strategic perspective that is taking the school forward.
- 5.2 The issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Teachers in their daily interaction with pupils use assessment records effectively. In most parts of the school the use of assessment records are used effectively for curriculum planning and for refining the support given to pupils. The adjustment of length of lessons and allocation of timings to subjects is now appropriate and extra-curricular activities give pupils opportunities for a wide range of experiences that are beneficial to them. Staff development is now well organised and is soon to be based on a rigorous assessment of need through the introduction of performance management review. The size of classrooms in the main building does not hinder the quality of teaching as teachers adapt imaginatively to the rooms in which they work. ICT facilities are well used by pupils and by staff. Management and leadership in all areas are now effective although there is still work to be done on extending the facility of managers in the use of monitoring. The school development plan is a useful document that is built on sound evidence gathering. It sets priorities and assigns responsibilities for delivery of the objectives.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. However, to continue to improve further the good quality of education it already provides it should take the following steps:
1. establish a consistent observance of the school marking policy;
 2. develop the understanding and practice of managers in the use of effective monitoring procedures;
 3. use the impending introduction of performance management review as an instrument in refining the effectiveness of all managers and leaders.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 8th to 11th June 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.

List of Inspectors

Mr Edward Dunphy	Reporting Inspector.
Mr Adrian Palmer	Headteacher, IAPS school.
Mrs Lynnette Morshead	Headteacher, IAPS school.
Mrs Joan Fearn	Head of School (Pre-prep) IAPS school.