

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Copthorne Preparatory School

Full Name of the School	<b>Copthorne Preparatory School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>936/6438</b>
Early Years Number	<b>EY288842</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>270757</b>
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Headmaster	<b>Mr Chris Jones</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr James Abdool</b>
Age Range (of the whole school)	<b>2½ to 13</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>
Head of Early Years Setting	<b>Mrs Susan Swadling</b>
Early Years Age Range	<b>2½ to 5</b>
Early Years Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	<b>9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>

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 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. The inspection was carried out by ISI, a body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting EYFS provision in schools belonging to the ISC Associations. Section 7 of this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Copthorne Preparatory School is a co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of two-and-a-half and thirteen years. It was founded in 1902 as a boarding school for boys, and now retains its boarding facilities for occasional use. The school is set in extensive grounds in a pleasant country village on the outskirts of Crawley. It enjoys spacious accommodation and facilities, indoors and outdoors, with ample space for playgrounds and playing fields. A school chapel adjoins the original Victorian building which houses classrooms, bedrooms and the dining room. A small theatre, a modern classroom block, sports hall and swimming pool are nearby in the grounds, in addition to the pre-preparatory department with its own play areas and equipment for the different age groups. The school has been an educational charitable trust since 1976; the directors of the trust are governors of the school.
- 1.2 The school aims to develop its pupils' confidence and raise their self-esteem through success across the full range of school activities, not only in the academic curriculum. It also aims to provide opportunities for its pupils to achieve success, to realise their potential and to bring out the best in every individual, wherever their talents may lie. It seeks to deliver an all-round, broad-based education that meets the needs of all pupils, helps them to make good progress and become happy, confident, responsible young people who will make a positive contribution to society.
- 1.3 Many changes have taken place since the last inspection in 2003, and since the appointment of the present headmaster in 2005. The demand for boarding has decreased and at present there are no full or weekly boarders, and only a few boarders who stay on a flexible basis. Periodically, special themed evenings are offered to different age groups, and overnight accommodation is also available for emergencies or if requested by parents, for example before or after a school trip. Day numbers have increased significantly, two new classrooms have been built for the pre-preparatory department, the Nursery has been enlarged, a new courtyard has been created and a new playground for the Nursery, Reception and older pre-preparatory pupils has been established. Most recently a new library has been opened. The school offers an extensive selection of extra-curricular activities in addition to its before- and after-school care.
- 1.4 The school has a non-selective, mixed ability intake. The number of pupils on roll is 291; 172 boys, 119 girls, with 55 full- or part-time children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school has two forms in each year except Year 5, which has three forms. The range of ability is wide within each year group. Standardised tests indicate that the overall ability profile of the school is above the national average and, in some year groups, the ability profile is well above the national average. The majority of pupils move up through the school from the Nursery or Reception to Year 8; additional pupils may enter at other points, particularly in Year 7. Seven pupils do not have English as their principal language and four of these receive support in one-to-one or small group tuition in English as an additional language (EAL). One pupil has a statement of special educational need (SEN). Forty-six pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD); all receive specialist learning support funded by the school.
- 1.5 While the majority of pupils are British, a few other cultures and faiths are represented, reflecting the ethnic backgrounds in the local population. The school is Christian by foundation and welcomes pupils from all faiths and Christian denominations.

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- 1.6 The majority of pupils live relatively near the school. They mostly come from families with business and professional backgrounds. The majority of Year 8 pupils proceed to independent day and boarding schools, many of which are selective. Virtually all leavers enter the senior school of their first choice, many having achieved scholarship and special awards.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.
- 1.8 See Section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The school provides an extensive range of educational opportunities. Pupils enjoy a positive and enriching educational experience which entirely fulfils the aims and philosophy set out in its mission statement. In all year groups, pupils confidently declare their enthusiasm for the range of subjects taught, and opportunities abound for them to fulfil their potential, wherever their talents may lie. Children in Nursery and Reception are given a secure foundation. The core values of kindness and respect for others that underpin attitudes throughout the school enhance the pupils' educational experience. The curriculum is broad and well balanced, and a comprehensive review that has taken place since the last inspection is leading to the creation of more effective links across the school and greater continuity in the planning of the curriculum. Modern foreign language provision has been extended.
- 2.2 The education provided leads to pupils' development in the full range of aptitudes. Pupils gain good literacy, speaking and listening, scientific and numeracy skills, and particular strengths lie with pupils' linguistic and mathematical development from the EYFS onwards. French and Spanish are both taught, and Latin can be studied as an after-school activity. Pupils enjoy and do well in the varied activities in their art and their design and technology (DT) lessons; a high proportion of pupils play musical instruments and the choir sings with skill and enthusiasm. Information and communication technology (ICT) lessons ensure that pupils acquire appropriate skills. Pupils' physical development is very well catered for; the excellent specialist facilities and a wide range of sports are offered to both boys and girls. Pupils are mostly taught by their class teachers through to Year 4, although they have specialist teaching in art, music, drama, French and physical education and games.
- 2.3 The recent well-considered development of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, with the introduction of thinking and study skills, ensures that this too reflects the aims and ethos of the school. A comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities, from jazz dance to kayaking, is offered. Effective links have been forged with the local and the wider communities. Amongst these, an important link has been established with the neighbouring junior school. Pupils sing carols at the local Cheshire Home and the annual carol service is held at St Swithun's Church in nearby East Grinstead. Pupils generously support a range of local and international charities.
- 2.4 Pupils are well prepared for transfer to the next stage of their education, as they progress from the EYFS through the pre-preparatory department to the preparatory school and onwards to their senior schools. They are encouraged from an early age in PSHE lessons to reflect on issues of change and new beginnings; boys and girls leaving from Year 8 are confident, articulate and well-adjusted individuals. Senior school visits and induction days are arranged, and pupils are prepared for senior school entrance examinations by a thorough system of examination practice and careful monitoring of their performance. Residential trips support older pupils' independence and sense of responsibility.
- 2.5 The curriculum is thoroughly planned, and clearly set out in writing. Overall, it is providing well for the needs of pupils of different abilities, and encouraging participation in a wide range of activities. Opportunities to develop research skills are not included in planning in all subjects.
- 2.6 The provision for pupils requiring learning support has been significantly improved since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively catered for. A well-developed system for identifying pupils who need additional help is in place and their progress is closely monitored. A good balance is struck between withdrawal lessons and in-

class specialist support. Individual education plans provide clear targets. In class lessons, teachers provide tasks to match pupils' individual needs in most subjects.

- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.8 Pupils learn and achieve most effectively. They are well educated and well grounded in their knowledge, skills and understanding of the subjects which they are taught and the activities in which they participate. They apply their knowledge with great enthusiasm and determination and successfully develop the skills and attitudes for work and study. The school is fully meeting its declared aims with regard to pupils' learning and achievement. Pupils are encouraged to do their very best within the context of their own ability; they develop confidence and raise their self-esteem through success across the extensive range of school activities that are provided as opportunities for learning and development.
- 2.9 The school has continued to build on the good levels of pupils' learning and achievement noted at the last inspection. It has created further opportunities which enable pupils to develop higher-order thinking skills such as critical evaluation and logical and independent thought. The emphasis being placed on developing and enriching the learning processes greatly strengthens this aspect of school life and is thoroughly understood by pupils.
- 2.10 Pupils demonstrate good critical and creative thinking and understanding. Pupils in Year 1 displayed their critical thinking skills when they participated in an 'archaeological dig' and had to identify certain historical artefacts. Good levels of knowledge and skill are acquired. High standards are achieved in Years 4, 6 and 8 in written work, much of which is lively and imaginative, showing very good use of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. Pupils read with a good level of understanding and knowledge; in a Year 5 lesson on *The Wreck of the Zanzibar*, they showed good recall of earlier parts of the book. Their reading diaries are carefully kept and monitored. Throughout the school pupils are very articulate, as shown in their eagerness to contribute in lessons and in all the pupil interviews, whether they were discussing their subjects or talking about their school in a general sense. They listen attentively and apply their knowledge enthusiastically, as in a Year 6 Spanish lesson on challenging grammatical work. Pupils demonstrate strong mathematical competence; their skills and concepts are very secure. Year 7 pupils can confidently and effectively manipulate data to find different types of averages, such as the mean and mode.
- 2.11 Independent and logical thought are actively encouraged in the school. Logical thought was effectively linked to the use of ICT in a Year 7 lesson in which a database was interrogated to provide information in a desired format. Such use of ICT is now integrated in many areas of the curriculum, although not yet fully in all subjects by all staff. The school has a strong commitment to the continual development of ICT provision and associated training for staff.
- 2.12 No significant differences were seen in relative attainment between different groups of pupils, subjects or curricular areas. Pupils with LDD, SEN or EAL meet with success as a result of the high quality learning support which was seen throughout the school. Similarly, the learning and achievement of highly able pupils are enhanced as a result of the Copthorne ability profiles which have been recently introduced. These provide the opportunity to recognise and celebrate pupils' achievement in many aspects, such as their proficiency in physical, creative, logical, social and verbal areas of learning.
- 2.13 Most pupils in the EYFS achieve the Early Learning Goals by the age of five. The school does not enter pupils for national tests at the ages of seven or eleven. Pupils in Year 8 consistently achieve success in the Common Entrance examination and reach the entry

requirements for their first choice of senior school. Over recent years, a significant number of scholarships have been awarded for entry to a good range of senior schools.

- 2.14 Pupils individually achieve high standards in music and public-speaking examinations; there are a number of county chess players, often competing with much older pupils, and individuals also achieve the standards necessary to play in national championships. Other successes include a nationally ranked swimmer, a championship-level kart driver and a pupil who was placed second in the national pony club mounted games. All such successes are acknowledged in school assemblies, which enhance pupils' personal development. Team achievements include the successful Copthorne show jumping team, the Under-9 chess team and the colts' first soccer team fresh from their victory at a local tournament.
- 2.15 Pupils take notes competently and record in a meaningful format the key facts learnt. The scrutiny of pupils' mathematics books showed how pupils effectively enter information in their revision books. They are encouraged, where possible, to organise their work independently. In a Year 7 religious education (RE) lesson, pupils effectively used mind-mapping skills to further their knowledge of Islam.
- 2.16 Pupils settle outstandingly well to individual study or practice and to work co-operatively with others and in teams. This was exemplified in a Year 5 science practical session on changes of state which led to extremely effective collaboration, enhancing the learning opportunities for all those involved.
- 2.17 Pupils apply themselves to academic demands extremely well; they show determination and perseverance, and thoroughly enjoy their work and activities. This is a strong feature of the school. During interviews with all age groups, pupils were eloquent in their descriptions of how much they enjoyed and valued their learning opportunities.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.18 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of the pupils in the school is outstandingly well developed. Central to the school's aims, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates every aspect of school life. The school very successfully fulfils its aims to develop confidence, provide opportunity and realise potential. Although mainly Christian in approach, contributions from pupils of all faiths are welcomed and lead to a strong sense of community. Since the previous inspection, a system of core values has been introduced and developed to guide behaviour and attitudes.
- 2.19 Pupils develop extremely well spiritually and understand the world around them and in which they are growing up. They are helped to acquire a sense of identity and self-worth, within a secure structure that gives them ample opportunities to explore values and beliefs. The assemblies and chapel services which take place throughout the week make an important contribution to the rich, stimulating experiences which pupils receive; pupils are helped to understand that they are all valued as individuals. Relevant displays are well thought out and informative; they illustrate the pupils' hard work in RE and PSHE. Pupils are growing in confidence and understanding of different faiths and beliefs. Parents contribute by visiting the school and sharing their knowledge, expertise, faith, beliefs, traditions and cultures. They help by describing the celebration of Diwali to the younger children, or by explaining the naming ceremony of a Hindu baby, or what it means to be a Sikh.
- 2.20 Pupils' involvement in Operation Christmas Child, filling a shoe box with little presents, and the giving of their harvest gifts helps to promote their understanding of helping others. The poignant Remembrance Day service held in the school chapel created an excellent opportunity for reflection and empathy; it also created an opportunity for the whole school

community to come together. The two minutes' silence for all the pupils and staff from Nursery to Year 8 followed by the Last Post, played by a pupil from the top of the chapel tower, was moving and memorable.

- 2.21 Pupils have a strong and well-developed moral awareness, distinguishing right from wrong from a very early age. The school's core values are prominently displayed around the school, especially in classrooms, the dining hall and chapel. The definite and positive codes of behaviour and the school rules which pupils find fair and helpful were highlighted in the pupils' interviews. The children show pride in their school, understand its rules and value its code of conduct. Personal, social and health education lessons offer a wealth of opportunities for developing personal values. In a Year 7 class, pupils were exploring how people can influence others when they see something that needs to be changed and they learn how things can be improved from personal to global levels. In Year 1, pupils learn how to deal with their feelings and know what to do when they start to feel angry.
- 2.22 Pupils' excellent level of social development is reflected in their demeanour around the school, throughout all age groups. They are encouraged to think and ask questions; their opinions are respected and therefore they develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. During interviews, pupils considered that behaviour in the school had improved in recent years; the prefects, buddy systems and playground monitors have all contributed to this. Pupils converse confidently with each other, and with adults. Excellent integration takes place within and across the age groups as seen during activities afternoon. Staff and pupils are extremely supportive of one another in all areas of school life.
- 2.23 From Years 3 to 8, pupils enjoy the opportunities to contribute to the development of their school through the school council, and in the pre-preparatory department pupils were delighted to be litter or energy monitors. Pupils speak proudly about their fund-raising events and a display board in the hall is a constant reminder of their generosity. Year 8 pupils visited the Houses of Parliament as part of their curriculum and they spoke confidently about institutions and services.
- 2.24 Pupils' effective cultural development is promoted through an interesting range of activities, visits and special studies in many areas of school life which results in a thorough knowledge and understanding of their own culture and that of others. In Nursery, topics include 'Around the World' and the children enjoy an international dressing-up box. In art, a study of African animals has extended pupils' understanding of the culture of that continent. Preparations are being made for an Arts Festival to celebrate music and creative arts from different countries and cultures; steel drums are an eagerly awaited highlight.
- 2.25 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

## **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.26 Pupils benefit from effective, enthusiastic teaching and efficient assessment procedures. A strong commitment to continued improvement and the development of good practice in teaching and assessment is evident. The quality of teaching, although good in a high proportion of lessons observed, varies between the stages of the school. Overall, the teaching successfully supports the aims of the school to develop confidence, provide opportunity and to realise potential. The majority of teachers provide a lively, supportive learning environment, and respond to the needs and potential of pupils, thus increasing their self-esteem and confidence by encouraging them always to give of their best. In the EYFS, adults plan imaginative and exciting challenges for children, and the new accommodation, outdoor areas and plentiful resources allow ample opportunities for play.
- 2.27 Many improvements have taken place since the last inspection with a greater focus overall on individual pupils' needs, a wider use of ICT, an emphasis on the development of appropriate teaching methods, improved systems of assessment, and the willingness of teachers to share good practice with colleagues and adapt their teaching to different learning styles. The learning support department has continued to develop, and it now includes an increased number of specialists. The number of teaching assistants has been increased and they are thoughtfully deployed.
- 2.28 Effective teaching in the school enables pupils to be interested in their work and apply themselves whenever intellectual, physical or creative demands are made; much importance is given to encouraging pupils to think and learn for themselves. A high proportion of pupils in their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that their teachers help them to learn, and that they are given help when they have problems with their work. Virtually all parents considered that teaching helps their children to make progress.
- 2.29 In most lessons, teachers ensure that pupils of all ages and abilities learn successfully and make good progress, including those with LDD, SEN and EAL. Management of pupils' behaviour is good, and the use of praise particularly inspires less able pupils to attain high standards. Pupils enjoy learning in the school; they commented happily and sincerely that this is due to the quality of teaching they receive. One Year 6 class asked if they could stay on for the next period as they were so engrossed in their study skills tasks. Examples of good behaviour were observed in class, on the games field and generally around the school. On many occasions, staff appeared to be enjoying the lesson as much as their pupils.
- 2.30 Teaching is very well planned and the most successful teachers skilfully employ effective methods and well-chosen activities; they manage their time carefully to ensure maximum concentration. All teachers are expected to share the learning focus of each lesson with their class and pupils said how helpful this practice was to them. Pupils with learning difficulties are sometimes withdrawn from lessons for extra help, or they receive in-class support. Consequently, in the majority of lessons, pupils of all abilities increase their understanding and skills and do so in an environment which they find enriching and enjoyable.
- 2.31 Where teaching is successful, the pace and organisation of activities enthuses pupils and enables them to make rapid progress, such as in a Year 7 English lesson in the theatre, in which pupils made critical studies of three poets and incorporated drama to further enhance their understanding. In a Year 5 music lesson, an outstanding range of teaching styles, including visual, auditory and kinaesthetic approaches, ensured excellent achievement by all pupils. Where teaching is less successful, learning takes place, but the pace and style are predictable rather than exciting, and the planning does not involve pupils sufficiently nor provide different tasks to match individual needs, nor make full use of the interactive whiteboards and available software to enhance teaching and learning. The volume of work

in pupils' workbooks is appropriate in most subjects, and good standards of presentation were observed throughout the school.

- 2.32 Teachers, on the whole, understand thoroughly the needs and aptitudes of their pupils and are skilled at providing appropriate challenge, taking into account their knowledge of their pupils' prior attainment. This understanding is a real strength of the school. Once again, in interviews pupils considered that teachers understood their academic strengths and weaknesses. Pupils in Year 8 stated that the teachers are always there and are willing to go that extra mile to help.
- 2.33 Teaching is very well supported, from Nursery onwards, by a range of different resources of which imaginative use is made. The use of digital projectors and interactive whiteboards in lessons stimulates the learning process in many, but not all, lessons. A Year 7 Spanish lesson made excellent use of a program which required the pupils to match English with Spanish phrases. The school has significantly improved the ICT resources available for the use of pupils, teachers and other staff, within a rolling programme for the development of hardware, software and staff training. However, it has identified that opportunities for ICT to support the curriculum and the work of the teachers are not yet used sufficiently well.
- 2.34 In the majority of subjects, effective systems for assessment and marking help pupils to make good progress. The most effective assessment informs pupils of how they might improve by identifying particular areas for development as well as giving praise and encouragement. On the whole, marking is regular and helpful. Pupils said that teachers also go over class work verbally to indicate mistakes and strategies for improvement.
- 2.35 A series of regular assessments are undertaken of both a formal and informal nature, and staff use them conscientiously to inform parents about their children's progress. Whilst performance in the upper school is evaluated in terms of the requirements of the Common Entrance and other entrance examinations, throughout the school a regular annual programme of standardised testing is undertaken. These results, together with end-of-topic tests and regular examinations, are collated and provide an invaluable source of data about the pupils. The school has recently undertaken a review of their assessment systems and the introduction of whole-school monitoring of individual pupils' progress is strengthening this area.
- 2.36 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, and the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Within this, the quality of the school's pastoral care and support systems is outstanding and altogether makes an extremely positive contribution to pupils' well-being and development. Measures to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety are given high priority by the school from the EYFS onwards and most are effective. This is in line with the school's mission statement. Pastoral care continues to be one of the school's strengths. Welfare, health and safety arrangements have improved since the previous inspection, including the updating of policies and procedures.
- 3.2 Staff provide excellent support and guidance for all their pupils. The recently created role of head of pastoral care has made a major contribution to the highly successful support systems in school. A rigorous programme to ensure positive behaviour and a positive learning environment is overseen by the head of pastoral care and other members of the pastoral team. Excellent use is made of each pupil's prep diary to record and celebrate successes, and it also serves as a reminder of core values, sanctions and good practice to prevent bullying. Posters around the school remind pupils to whom they can talk in time of need and the head of pastoral care has an open-door policy, as has the headmaster. All staff are ably assisted by the careful and effective pastoral arrangements. Well-considered strategies are in place to ensure that all pupils are happy. Thoughtful and sustained efforts by the leadership and management team have resulted in outstanding practice.
- 3.3 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, is exemplary. Extremely positive teacher and pupil relationships were observed during lessons and over lunch. Pupils are polite and friendly, and they know that caring systems are in place to help them overcome any problems they might have.
- 3.4 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour are continually under review; these include excellent procedures to guard against harassment and bullying. Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with constructively when it occurs. Pupils feel that they are well looked after by staff.
- 3.5 Measures to safeguard and promote pupils' health and well-being are successful. Child protection procedures are correct, and the school has a comprehensive and detailed child protection policy. All staff have received appropriate up-to-date training; the senior matron, headmaster and head of the pre-preparatory department have undertaken child protection officer training; and the headmaster and the head of the pre-preparatory department have undertaken safe recruitment training. Admission and daily attendance registers are maintained correctly and procedures for lateness and absence are detailed and effective. Appropriate planning is in place to conform with the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act and the need for accessibility.
- 3.6 Efficient, well-considered fire prevention measures have been prepared, and the school has a statement of compliance from the regional fire and rescue authority. The school holds regular fire drills and equipment tests are scheduled and recorded; fire and other risk assessments, for example those for trips involving pupils being away from school, are compiled and records kept. Hazardous substances, for instance in the science laboratories, are stored securely. Good safe practice is much in evidence, as in the science laboratory where the pupils automatically tie back their hair and put on laboratory coats and safety spectacles before a practical lesson; similarly on the sports fields where pupils practising for

rugby all wear mouth-guards. The movement of traffic, especially parental cars at the beginning and end of the day, across areas where pupils walk and play was raised at the time of the previous inspection; although efforts have been made to improve the situation, the school is aware that concerns have not been fully resolved with the recent significant growth in the number of day pupils.

- 3.7 Medical matters are highly effectively catered for by the senior matron, whose dedicated medical centre in the heart of the school is reported by many pupils as being a place in which pupils are made to feel welcome at any time, not just when they fall ill. A significant number of staff have been trained in emergency first aid; some have undertaken higher training to qualify as first aiders or as paediatric first aiders, the latter supporting teachers who work with the youngest pupils.
- 3.8 Meals are plentiful. Pupils speak highly of the home-made snacks available at intervals during the day. Lunches are appetising, healthy and nutritious, offering a fair element of choice, including items from the well-stocked salad bar. The school actively encourages healthy and responsible eating habits. These are promoted by many members of staff, through topics, science lessons and posters displayed in the dining room. In addition, pupils keep extremely fit; they benefit from the extensive physical education programme and the many opportunities for exercise provided in the large sports hall, in the playground and in the sizeable school grounds.
- 3.9 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**

- 3.10 The school has developed an outstanding partnership with parents and strong, worthwhile links with the local community. An unusually high proportion of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and the views expressed indicated an overwhelming level of support for the education and pastoral care provided for their children from the EYFS onwards. Parents were extremely positive about the teaching, the curriculum, the extra-curricular activities, and the professionalism of the management of the school. They particularly praised the help and guidance given to their children, and the attitudes and values which were promoted by the school in fulfilment of its core values and aims. Differing parental views were expressed about the amount and value of homework. Since the previous inspection, links with parents have been significantly improved, particularly with the development of the website, the use of email, and a text messaging service.
- 3.11 The school operates a genuine open-door policy and parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, and in the work and progress of their children. Parents work to support the school through the social and fête committees, and year representatives play an important part in welcoming new parents. Parents have been most helpful in the opening and operation of the new school library. They assist on school trips and with school plays. They state that they find the school accessible, receptive and highly professional in its dealings with parents, and that staff are very approachable.
- 3.12 Parents are provided with extremely helpful, comprehensive and relevant information about the school. The prospectus and the school website provide an attractive introduction to the school. The school handbooks for the preparatory, pre-preparatory and EYFS departments contain a wealth of useful information. Curriculum policies for all subjects are set out in these handbooks, and termly sheets are issued with further information on the curriculum. Curriculum evenings are arranged for parents, and this information is also disseminated via the parents' section of the school web-site. Homework or prep diaries provide a useful

means of contact, and the weekly newsletter, together with regular letters from the headmaster, keeps parents up to date with events and successes. Reports to parents are regular and informative. Targets are often set for pupils in their reports, to explain how they can raise their levels of attainment, but this is not uniform practice. Written reports are supplemented by an appropriate number of parent consultation evenings. Parents are encouraged to discuss their children's progress informally at any time during the year.

- 3.13 The school handles the occasional parental concern with due care. A formal complaints policy is in place; it has rarely been used and not at all in the last two years.
- 3.14 The school enjoys some excellent links with the community. An important link has been established with the neighbouring primary school; one class from this school spent a week at Cophthorne in October 2009, using the swimming pool, chapel, art room, sports hall and other school facilities. It is planned to make this an annual arrangement. Nearby sports groups also use the school's facilities, often free of charge. The choir sings at a local home for the disabled, and the vicar of Cophthorne village is a regular visitor to the school. The school summer fête attracts large numbers of village residents. Generous sums are raised for local and national charities each year. The overseas trips to Italy and France add an international dimension to the school's links with the wider community.
- 3.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.16 At the time of the inspection, the future of boarding at the school was in a state of uncertainty. During the inspection week no pupils remained resident overnight. Nonetheless, a good proportion of the senior pupils board on a handful of evenings during the course of each term, most commonly immediately before or after a school trip. In addition, the school organises special activity evenings, after which pupils may take up the opportunity to stay at school overnight. In this way boarding, infrequent though it is, has a part to play in supporting pupils' broader education and development by making possible out-of-school activities which start early or end late and which parents would otherwise find inconvenient. Parents expressed their appreciation of the boarding service which is offered. The pattern of boarding has changed significantly since the most recent statutory boarding inspection; its recommendations have been met where relevant.
- 3.17 The arrangements also provide a limited opportunity for pupils to experience boarding before moving on to senior school. Staff with boarding responsibilities are caring and supportive. Pupils who take up the occasional boarding opportunities all report how much they value the warmth of the kind and positive welcome they receive from the matron's department. Some pupils said that they would like to board much more often, but live so close to school as to make it unnecessary.
- 3.18 The quality of the accommodation, with its freshly painted dormitories, sufficient washrooms and comfortable common room, is adequate for the purposes and numbers of the pupils who use the facility. However, if the number of pupils wishing to board regularly were to increase, the school recognises that the quality of the accommodation is not of a sufficiently high standard for a comprehensive full or weekly boarding provision and upgrading and refurbishment would be necessary.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The school benefits from supportive governance of high quality. The governors are fully committed to the aims and core values of the school. Since the previous inspection, significant growth and development have taken place, particularly in the pre-preparatory department from the Nursery upwards, and the governors have made an important contribution to the school's success and the fulfilment of its aims.
- 4.2 Members of the governing body, several of whom are former pupils, are carefully selected from appropriate business and professional backgrounds. They are experienced and qualified in their respective fields and they take expert advice whenever necessary to ensure that statutory and legal commitments are met. Well-considered and effective arrangements are made for the appointment of new governors who receive appropriate induction together with relevant and regular training. Members of the board, who include past and present parents, accept the high level of commitment involved in their appointment. Through their close association with the school, and their professional structure and management arrangements, the governors have an extremely thorough overview of the school and its needs.
- 4.3 The governors are involved in both educational development and financial planning. They are fully aware of their responsibility to ensure effective educational provision and the need to invest in resources, both human and material. They realise the importance of the appointment and retention of staff of high calibre and the provision of a learning environment of high quality, and they support the headmaster and deputy head in their quest for excellence. Buildings such as the sports hall, the new classroom building, and more recently the new classrooms and playgrounds in the pre-preparatory department have represented a serious and worthwhile financial commitment.
- 4.4 The governors, through the regular meetings of its committees, have effective insight into the working of the school; they are kept well informed by the headmaster. They are very well aware of their duties to monitor standards of education and the implementation and effectiveness of policies, such as anti-bullying, child protection, welfare, health and safety and complaints. Their commitment to the continued educational development of the school is evident in their wise financial management which has provided continually improving facilities for teaching and learning, good staffing levels and generous resources. The headmaster, senior management and staff consider that they are well supported by the board of governors and they all work efficiently together for the benefit of their pupils.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.5 The leadership and management of the school are of high quality. The school is led with energy, determination and total commitment to the successful achievement of its aims. Significant development has taken place since the previous inspection from the Nursery onwards. The school is exceptionally well led by the expectation of the highest possible standards shown by the headmaster and those in management positions.
- 4.6 The headmaster is assisted by a senior management team which consists of the deputy head, the head of the pre-preparatory department and the bursar. They share the same commitment to the aims and core values of the school, and the close co-operation between them makes a highly positive contribution to the direction and quality of the education and the care of the pupils.

- 4.7 The headmaster and deputy head are perceptive and forward-looking in their analysis of the needs of the school as a whole. The school development plan, to which all departments contribute, gives a valuable framework for the drive for improvement. Excellent progress has been made in planning, prioritising and in the implementation of decisions. Policies and procedures are continually updated.
- 4.8 Child protection and safe recruitment policies and procedures are firmly established. Selection procedures for new staff, volunteers and governors are safe, effective and successful. The strengths of staff at all levels, teaching and non-teaching, are recognised and continual professional development is encouraged. Systems for appraisal, including that of the headmaster, are effectively established. Arrangements for the induction of new members of staff are comprehensive and efficient. The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) when appropriate; there are no NQTs in the school at present.
- 4.9 The overall management structure and processes for monitoring and evaluation are extremely well organised and efficient. The recent establishment of a formal middle management team has clearly been successful. Their responsibilities are undertaken with energy and determination. The co-operation, enthusiasm and commitment of staff at the different levels of management are leading to the effective planning and practice which exists in many subject areas. The use of well-qualified and knowledgeable staff, particularly with subject- or age-related specialisms such as in Nursery and Reception, greatly enhances the learning opportunities for the pupils. Within the school there is a drive to share expertise and good practice; this is in its early stages but is already enabling staff to gain a deeper all-round understanding. The well-designed systems used to monitor and evaluate teaching by the deputy head and heads of department effectively support the development of teaching within the preparatory department; the school is aware that the process is not yet fully implemented in the pre-preparatory department.
- 4.10 Administrative staff are capable and efficient and suitably experienced for their specific roles; they are very welcoming. Excellent and increasing use is made of ICT in every aspect of the administration and management of the school. Overall, finances, premises, and health and safety affairs are efficiently managed to provide plentiful resources and an educational environment of increasingly high quality for pupils and staff. The dedication of the pastoral, catering, maintenance, grounds and housekeeping staff also makes an important contribution to the care and well-being of the pupils and the family atmosphere within the school.
- 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 is meeting its aims and aspirations and the needs of its pupils very successfully. Pupils are given ample opportunities to achieve well in all areas of the curriculum and across the full range of school activities; they make good progress and become happy, confident, responsible young people. Children in the EYFS are given a good start and, as they proceed through the school, pupils enjoy a positive and enriching educational experience which goes far beyond the academic. For the most part, they learn and achieve effectively through the enthusiastic teaching and efficient assessment procedures. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstandingly well developed. The quality of pastoral care and the partnership with parents is excellent. The quality of governance and of leadership and management is high. Senior management is well aware that ICT resources are not yet used sufficiently effectively in all subjects and that not all age groups yet derive benefit from the programme of monitoring teaching and learning. The impact of the increasing numbers of day rather than boarding pupils is having effects upon the traffic flow and the provision for boarding.
- 5.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has improved in many important ways. Day numbers have increased significantly, new classrooms and playgrounds have been built for the pre-preparatory department, the Nursery has been enlarged, and a new courtyard has been created. Most recently a new library has been opened. Significant development has taken place in the quality of education through curriculum review, the emphasis on developing and enriching the learning process, wider use of ICT, the introduction of monitoring and evaluation of educational standards and teaching, the excellent learning support and the strength and commitment of its governance, leadership and management.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no serious weaknesses. In order to enhance further the good quality of the education which it presently provides, the school should take the following steps.
1. Increase the effective use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning for pupils across the school by encouraging all staff to use the available resources to good effect.
  2. Advance the programme of formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, including work scrutiny, in Years 1 and 2, and extend peer observations throughout the whole school.
  3. As a result of the increased numbers of day pupils, give serious consideration to a review of:
    - the future direction of boarding;
    - traffic flow in the school grounds.
- 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 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding accommodation and the medical room. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November 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**

Mrs Danice Iles	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Penny Forsyth	Former Headmistress, IAPS school
Mr Graham Gorton	Headmaster, ISA school
Mr Nicholas Park	Deputy Headmaster, IAPS school
Mrs Catherine Watts	Deputy Headmistress, IAPS school
Mrs Valerie Goode	Early Years Lead Inspector

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

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of 33 children on roll in the Nursery, which includes six under the age of three, and 22 in Reception. The setting is registered with Ofsted. Children are admitted at the age of two-and-a-half. Before- and after-school care is offered. Very few have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and very few are learning English as an additional language. The aims are to instil confidence, provide opportunity and realise potential.
- 7.2 This is an effective setting. Good provision ensures that the aims are achieved and gives children a firm foundation to their education. It recognises the uniqueness of individuals and supports every child so that each makes good progress. Safeguarding and welfare are given the highest priority. The impact of the very effective links with parents and other agencies results in good progress in learning and development. The parents' questionnaires and conversations with parents confirm that they are very supportive. Regular monitoring ensures that standards are maintained, enabling the setting to identify areas for improvement. Since the last inspection, communication with parents has been improved and a covered outside learning area has been provided.
- 7.3 Good leadership and management ensure that staff are focused on helping all children to realise their potential in a happy environment. Staff are secure in their knowledge of the requirements of the curriculum, resulting in clear priorities for improvement. The EYFS development plan identifies clear future targets but does not give costs or success criteria. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly. Safe recruitment ensures that adults are suitable and appropriately qualified. Effective and efficient use is made of the good quality resources.
- 7.4 Provision is good and supports learning and development well. Adults use their knowledge of children's interests to plan imaginative and exciting challenges both indoors and out. Regular observation and assessment ensure that additional learning and development needs are recorded in each child's individual development plan. Little evidence of individual targets was seen on lesson plans, although different activities were planned for different groups of children. A good balance is maintained between activities led by adults and those initiated by the children. In an independent learning session, Nursery children were engrossed in a counting activity as they looked at a book, and Reception children enjoyed serving customers in the garden centre.
- 7.5 The outcomes for children in the EYFS are good. They achieve well in relation to their starting points and most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the age of five. They make particularly good progress in literacy and numeracy, but little evidence was seen of ICT being used, though there is work on display and photographic evidence of children using programmable toys. Knowledge and understanding of the world is very good. Reception children demonstrated excellent knowledge of nocturnal animals as they made clay models of hedgehogs and Nursery children talked knowledgeably about why we wear poppies. Children's personal development is good. They are well behaved, respect one another and work together in harmony. They enjoy their learning, are well motivated and are beginning to acquire good work habits that will prepare them for future study. They understand why it is important to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle.

### **What the Setting Should Do to Improve**

- 7.6 To improve still further the good quality of the provision, the setting should:
1. ensure that the EYFS development plan shows costs and success criteria;
  2. allow children more opportunities to develop computer skills;
  3. ensure that each child's individual development plan targets are included in the lesson plans.
- 7.7 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Act 2006.

### **Complaints Since the Last Inspection**

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