



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST CHRISTOPHER'S SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Christopher's School

Full Name of School	St Christopher's School
DfE Number	202/6013
Registered Charity Number	312999
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Headmistress	Mrs Susan West
Chairman of Governors	Mr Graham Hinton
Age Range	4 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	237
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Numbers by Age	4-5 (EYFS): 24 5-11: 213
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Charlotte Ashworth
EYFS Gender	Girls
Inspection dates	19 March 2013 to 22 March 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the ISI schedule, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in June 2008.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Danice Iles

Mr Peter Rushforth

Mrs Vivien Sergeant

Mrs Louise Harwood

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Christopher's School is a day school for girls between the ages of four and eleven. The school is non-denominational and welcomes pupils from all faiths, and none. Established in 1883, the school changed from private ownership to a charitable educational trust in 1972. The trustees form the board of governors. The school was founded on the principle that the creative arts are equally important to a child's education as academic subjects; this philosophy continues to guide the work of the school.
- 1.2 Situated in a quiet residential area of Belsize Park in Hampstead, London, the school occupies a large Victorian house. The grounds provide space for play areas and an all-weather surfaced court for games. An extensive development programme has provided a modern extension with a lift, and additional classrooms adjacent to the house, including a library and an information and communication technology (ICT) room, and accommodation for the youngest children.
- 1.3 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises the Reception year. Its classroom has space for different play areas and direct access to a designated play area. The school has taken up an exemption from the EYFS learning and development requirements.
- 1.4 The school aims to achieve high academic standards by encouraging independent learning in a stimulating, child-centred environment where pupils are inspired, enthused and challenged. It seeks to ensure that creativity, in all its aspects, is integrated throughout the curriculum in an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, tolerance and friendship in which pupils develop into responsible, self-confident, aware young people, ready to embrace the challenges of secondary education.
- 1.5 There are 237 pupils on roll: 24 in Reception, 69 in Years 1 and 2, and 144 in Years 3 to 6. One pupil has English as an additional language (EAL) but does not require language support. None of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified three pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and a further 16 also receive learning support, mostly related to dyslexia.
- 1.6 The ability profile of the school is above the national average, with most pupils having an ability that is above or well above average. The range of ability is fairly wide in some year groups.
- 1.7 Pupils are mostly of white British or European heritage, and others represent a diversity of other nationalities and cultures. The majority of their families live within a radius of five miles from the school, and have business or professional backgrounds.
- 1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils are extremely well educated. A rich, child-centred environment has been created in which pupils from an early age develop a true joy in learning in both academic and creative subjects. The school amply fulfils its aim to achieve high academic standards by inspiring, enthusing and challenging its pupils and encouraging independent learning. Pupils are developing high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills through a richly creative and broad academic curriculum that includes history of art, chess and philosophy. All this, combined with a vibrant programme of extra-curricular activities and visits, very successfully stimulates independent and creative thought. Teaching of high quality makes an excellent contribution to pupils' achievement. From Reception through to Year 2, the teaching is particularly child-centred and flexible, focusing on individual encouragement and achievement. Teaching gradually becomes more formal, but the joy of discovery is maintained, and close attention to the individual continues as pupils are successfully prepared for entry to their senior schools. Generous resources include a well-equipped ICT room and new developments in technology. At present, some teaching does not use these opportunities to the full.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development across the school is excellent. Within an atmosphere of friendship, respect and trust, pupils become quietly confident, articulate and considerate young people. The philosophy, thinking skills, and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programmes, which begin in Reception, make a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. The quality of pastoral care is excellent, and creates an atmosphere of happiness and security in which each pupil is valued and nurtured. Arrangements for safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety are meticulous.
- 2.3 The governing body, which includes parents of current and former pupils, takes its responsibilities very seriously and provides excellent oversight, advice and guidance to the school. It successfully discharges its responsibilities for compliance with regulatory requirements, and its strategic planning expertly supports the school's development. The highly successful leadership and management strive, with vision and determination, to ensure that pupils enjoy the highest quality of academic and creative education. Staff throughout every department are highly committed to the achievement of their pupils. The strong support of parents is an additional key dimension in the school's success. Parents are effectively encouraged to be involved in their children's education.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that developments in new technology are used to further enhance the teaching of the creative curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is extremely successful in its aim of ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to realise their full potential and achieve the highest academic standards possible. Pupils are well prepared for each stage of their education and transfer smoothly to their next schools. They engage in and enjoy all aspects of their education and leave as confident learners with an enthusiastic outlook on life.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, children are constantly encouraged to embrace challenge and to look forward to new experiences; they are very well prepared for the move into Year 1. They become excellent communicators, to solve problems for themselves and to work well with others. All children have a developing sense of their own thinking styles, and can articulate their ideas and feelings clearly and confidently using a wide range of vocabulary. They show excellent co-ordination and control, using a range of equipment and tools appropriately and confidently, including the computer mouse to click and drag. Most children are able to produce clearly written, simple sentences, using their phonic skills to make plausible attempts to spell unfamiliar words. Numeracy skills are well developed, for example with all children successfully adding sets within ten.
- 3.4 Pupils in the main school achieve high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. They read confidently and expressively from an early age, and write with increasing fluency. Much of this writing is of a very high standard, showing clear evidence of critical thought and creativity. Pupils are extremely articulate and express themselves with confidence. Numeracy skills are of a high order and are applied well to investigation and mathematical challenge activities. Achievement is enhanced by independent learning within an open-ended, flexible curriculum. Pupils work creatively across the curriculum; they display imagination and achieve high standards in art, drama, dance and music. Chess teams are successful in a range of local and national competitions.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national average, but on the evidence available it is judged to be well above national age-related expectations. Pupils in the main school follow a demanding curriculum, with philosophy from an early age, and achieve highly in increasingly advanced work in mathematics, science and languages. The level of attainment seen in the results of tests, in pupils' work and in their performance in class indicates that they maintain a high rate of progress in relation to others of similar above average ability; their achievement improves rapidly during the time they are in the school. Pupils proceed from Year 6 to a varied range of senior schools — day and boarding, independent and maintained — many of which have highly competitive entrance examinations. Most pupils gain entry to their first choice of senior school, and scholarships are regularly achieved.
- 3.6 Children in the EYFS make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and abilities. Their learning is both teacher led and self-initiated. Great value is placed on involving children in their own learning, and where appropriate, teachers respond to the children's interests to plan activities and encourage them to assess and ultimately improve their own performance.

- 3.7 Pupils with SEND are identified early, and the expert extra support and suitably adapted work in lessons ensure that every pupil makes as good progress as possible. Pupils with additional needs have individual education plans (IEPs) and staff work closely with them to ensure progress and achievement.
- 3.8 The most able pupils are extended effectively in lessons through the high expectations of staff, who have a stimulating and creative approach to teaching and learning. Pupils proudly explained how they solved the challenges set for them by staff, and how they enjoy devising similar puzzles.
- 3.9 Pupils have an excellent work ethic and they are enthusiastic learners from an early age. They are highly motivated and co-operative, and keen to be involved in lessons and activities, and they display an excellent level of concentration throughout the day. The respect for one another amongst pupils, and between pupils and staff, is a strength of the school. Each has high expectations of the other. As a result, pupils' behaviour in class is generally excellent. Pupils work very well together, show strong enthusiasm and are keen to succeed. They have wide-ranging opportunities to develop independent thinking skills. These are particularly encouraged on weekends when they take home the class 'philosophy bear', and all the family enjoy sharing ideas about philosophical questions.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 The EYFS manages its own curriculum and successfully meets the challenge to be creative and innovative in how it is taught. Teachers' high standards of planning and delivery of the curriculum take account of the individual children so that they receive a rich and varied experience. Their educational programme results in motivational and successful learning for all involved, including the most able, and those with EAL or SEND.
- 3.12 At all levels of the school, curricular documentation overall is very thorough and this leads to an excellent consistency of approach. Cross-curricular opportunities are plentiful. Monitoring of the curriculum is extremely well managed. This helps to ensure very high standards of teaching and learning and appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils, which lead to their high achievement. In ICT lessons, pupils cover a range of basic skills, some of which support their work in other subjects.
- 3.13 From Year 1 onwards, the academic curriculum provides extremely well for the pupils' academic, creative and physical development; it includes chess from Year 2 and history of art from Year 5. It is significantly enhanced by a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities and school trips which add breadth, challenge and enjoyment to the pupils' education. Pupils' linguistic skills benefit from learning Spanish across the school, Latin from Year 5 and Mandarin from Year 1. French is a club activity from Reception.
- 3.14 The founding principle of the school, which stressed the importance of the creative arts, is very successfully fulfilled. Creativity abounds not only in art, drama and music, all of which have a significant place in the curriculum, but also in the co-operative and innovative approach of all staff to their subject areas and their teaching. The classrooms and corridors are adorned with attractive displays, and the outdoor areas, such as the Alice Garden, have been expertly designed to stimulate pupils' imagination as they play.

- 3.15 The school makes the most of a host of enrichment opportunities available in London to broaden pupils' horizons and further enhance their skills and understanding of the world. An emphasis on current events also makes a significant contribution to achievement.
- 3.16 Parents and members of the local community are regularly invited to share their special skills and expertise in assemblies and lessons. Each year, parents prepare and run the much anticipated Special Studies week, on themes such as finance, architecture, exploration and motion. Such occasions epitomise the breadth and depth within the innovative curriculum and the school's flexible approach.
- 3.17 Thinking techniques are taught to stimulate thought, develop understanding and ensure reflection. This enables teaching to be highly motivational and learning to be very successful for all abilities, including those pupils with specific learning needs. Pupils become increasingly independent, reflective learners and excellent communicators. Positive questioning and reflection are encouraged to develop pupils' ideas.
- 3.18 The school celebrates being a globally diverse community and an excellent PSHCE programme underpins the curriculum, which encourages pupils to gain understanding about themselves and others in the wider world.
- 3.19 The previous report recommended an improvement of provision for ICT and design and technology (DT). This has been implemented with generous numbers of computers in the new classrooms in addition to those in the ICT suite, and increased resources for DT through art and design, textiles and cookery. Both subjects now have a significant place in the curriculum and are taught from Year 1 onwards.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.20 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.21 In the EYFS, the ratio of teachers to pupils is high. All adults working with the children are highly skilled and sensitive to their needs and know them exceedingly well. This provides a very strong platform for developing children's confidence and independence. Children learn very successfully in a stimulating, well-resourced and welcoming environment, both indoors and outdoors, with imaginatively designed spaces providing a myriad of opportunities for creative exploration.
- 3.22 Staff are very well qualified throughout the school, and teaching is challenging yet supportive. It arouses interest and curiosity, and enables pupils to develop a very secure understanding in many subjects and to make rapid progress. Across the school, pupils are consistently encouraged and supported to make the most of their intellectual, physical and creative talents. Teaching is well planned, with good awareness of the differing needs of the pupils. Small class sizes enable teachers to give pupils a high level of personal attention, helping them to fulfil their potential and gain in confidence.
- 3.23 Where appropriate, teachers respond to the pupils' interests and encourage them to assess and improve their own performance. For example, during a Year 3 English lesson, pupils explained how their targets could enable them to progress further with their comprehension.
- 3.24 The marking of work is of a consistently high standard. Pupils are given a clear understanding of their strengths and respond very positively to the encouraging

- feedback they receive. They are given useful guidance about what they have done well and areas for development. Pupils are given additional help during break times.
- 3.25 Self-assessment and peer assessment are effectively used to increase pupils' understanding of their achievement and progress. Work is regularly formally assessed and individual pupils' results are stored centrally. These results are analysed and communicated to all teachers, helping them to identify and address weaknesses and strengths, and to plan for future progress.
- 3.26 Teaching promotes infectious enthusiasm and demonstrates clear commitment to the ethos of the school, fostering high levels of interest and enjoyment in lessons.
- 3.27 A wide range of teaching strategies is used in lessons, and pupils' learning is enhanced significantly by the excellent subject knowledge of subject specialists and of class teachers. A significant feature of the teaching is the way that pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, drawing on the philosophical and critical thinking culture that underpins all aspects of learning. The best lessons, of which many were observed, establish a brisk pace and active learning from the outset, with pupils being inspired and challenged to make the most of the time available to maximise their progress.
- 3.28 Relationships between teachers and pupils are outstanding, and high levels of mutual respect and excellent standards of behaviour characterise the teaching. Pupils speak highly of the help provided by their teachers.
- 3.29 Generally, teachers make excellent use of plentiful resources of high quality and of an educational environment of a high standard. This has enhanced the academic and creative achievement of the pupils and contributed significantly to their progress. Throughout the school, classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards, but these are not yet used to full advantage in all subjects. Pupils say that they enjoy programming in ICT using the credit-card sized specialist devices that the school has recently acquired.
- 3.30 Pupils with SEND are well supported in the classroom by both teachers and teaching assistants. Detailed IEPs, which are reviewed termly, are produced for each pupil and contain very useful information, including short-term targets and strategies to be employed to support progress. Extension activities ensure that pupils of higher ability are continually challenged and receive an eager response.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school is extremely successful in achieving its aim to encourage pupils to develop into responsible, self-confident, aware young people ready to embrace the challenges of secondary education. Pupils show confidence and awareness of their own value, because their opinions and thoughts are consistently appreciated. They demonstrate genuine respect for the differing views of others. This was obvious in their sharing of ideas in current affairs displays. The pupils' reflective and philosophical spirituality permeates everywhere; for example, in their meditative response to a religious education lesson on Buddhism.
- 4.3 The pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong developed through the school's rules, which have been discussed and agreed by each class, including Reception, and are reinforced in every aspect of school life. Standards of behaviour and co-operation are very high from the EYFS onwards. Pupils' interactions with one another, whether during group investigation or movement around school, are polite and respectful, and demonstrate tolerance and friendship. A few pupils were unhappy about the fairness of rewards and sanctions in their response to their pre-inspection questionnaire. In discussion with pupils, inspectors found no evidence to support these views. A strong atmosphere of collaboration encompasses a community built on shared moral and ethical values of respect for one another and their surroundings. Pupils have a high personal moral code. This was articulated openly in a PSHCE lesson discussing laws and rules, and in written work reflecting on moral dilemmas.
- 4.4 Social development in the EYFS is excellent, with all children happily sharing resources, taking turns and organising themselves effectively. Pupils contribute enthusiastically to the school community with suggestions for improvements, and arranging house events and activities for the whole school. From Year 1 onwards, they contribute to the organisation of fund-raising opportunities, and collect donations for disadvantaged children in the wider community. Older pupils are eager to take responsibility within their school, holding a wide variety of posts, including school council representatives. They publish their own newspaper, and help to run the library and to clear up after lunch sittings. The Year 6 homelessness project not only provides excellent links with a local charity, it also allows pupils to understand and empathise with the very different conditions experienced by many in their local environment, and to show leadership and responsibility in trying to make a small difference to help others.
- 4.5 Pupils develop a strong understanding and respect for those of different cultures and faiths. This is encouraged from Reception, where children of different nationalities share experiences of their cultural celebrations. It is also demonstrated in the thoughtful reflections of older pupils after a visit from Buddhist speakers, in responses to visits from parents discussing festivals such as Hanukkah and Thanksgiving, and through work in Mandarin lessons. Pupils celebrate many aspects of their own and other traditions in music, drama, art and history of art lessons, and their love of literature provides further opportunities to learn about cultures.

- 4.6 Year 6 pupils are very appreciative of the school's efforts to allow them to be themselves, and feel that they have been prepared well to move on to senior school, for the next step in their own personal journeys.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The staff provide extremely effective support and guidance in a child-centred environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual trust, tolerance and friendship. Staff appreciate the pupils' perspective and promote their voice within the school.
- 4.9 Children in the EYFS are supported by named adults, and respond well to the clear guidance on behaviour. A high priority is placed on their safety and well-being; each is gently encouraged to assume appropriate responsibility for her own health, comfort and safety.
- 4.10 The excellent collaborative relationships between staff and pupils are a continuous thread within every aspect of school life, and a strength of the school. Care for the pupils is central to the actions of staff. The good humour, warm rapport, and confident, relaxed qualities of relationships allow individuals to shine. Staff liaise closely and share relevant information promptly and effectively. Careful records are kept and regularly monitored. Pupils are encouraged to be caring; younger ones value the playground 'friendship bench' and say that they are never lonely.
- 4.11 The importance of being healthy is recognised by the pupils, and is reinforced through the curriculum in science and games. Menus are carefully planned and cater appropriately for different dietary requirements. Lunches are nutritious and freshly prepared. The outdoor space is used extremely effectively during games lessons and at break times. An accessibility plan is in place to continue to improve physical and educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.12 The promotion of good behaviour through respect is the key school rule and great care is taken to guard against harassment and bullying. Older pupils were clear that whilst they had never come across incidents of bullying, there may be occasional unkindness, and unacceptable behaviour would always be taken seriously.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The safeguarding arrangements, including safer recruitment procedures, show exacting attention to detail in both their recording and implementation. The school's concern for every pupil from Reception onwards comprehensively guides all actions, and effectively promotes rigorous welfare, health and safety arrangements. Governors are kept fully informed at every stage.
- 4.15 There are particularly thorough arrangements in place for staff training in safeguarding and child protection procedures, at a standard well beyond the requirements. Parents, pupils and staff have been involved in activities designed to promote and raise awareness related to internet safety when using computers.
- 4.16 Pupils who are unwell are carefully looked after in a comfortable room off the main office. All procedures are thoroughly adhered to. Careful and appropriate attention is given to any medical needs of pupils with SEND. There are suitable numbers of staff trained in first aid, and their certificates are appropriately updated.
- 4.17 Detailed policies are in place and all necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Fire safety arrangements, risk assessments, evaluations and an annual audit of health and safety arrangements are all of an excellent standard and records are meticulous.
- 4.18 The completion of admission and attendance registers is detailed and rigorous. Attendance is promptly recorded and monitored on a daily basis, with any concerns being immediately followed up. The registers are appropriately stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 From the EYFS onwards, the governors' involvement with the school is highly effective. They provide valuable oversight of the school community. They have a strong commitment to the fulfilment of the aims and the preservation of the ethos of the school. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities, and their procedures ensure that they are kept well informed of all aspects of the school. Careful financial planning enables them to make the level of investment in staff, accommodation and resources necessary to maintain provision of the high quality academic and creative education in which the school excels.
- 5.3 The professional and knowledgeable approach of the governing body, which includes several parents of current and former pupils, provides an excellent insight into the working of the school. A well-established pattern of receiving reports on all aspects enables the board to monitor outcomes and standards. Governors provide extensive support for initiatives to improve the education of the pupils and their environment, as evident in the modern extension, classrooms and garden areas, all of which are additions since the previous inspection. Their well-considered strategic planning and its ongoing evaluation effectively provide encouragement and stimulus for growth and improvement. The structure of committees brings governors into closer contact with the staff, who appreciate the approachability of the governing body and its support and encouragement.
- 5.4 Governors bring a wealth of relevant experience to the board as they are judiciously appointed from a range of professional backgrounds. New governors are effectively inducted and this, combined with ongoing appropriate training and the contribution of professional advisors, ensures active governance of a high standard and high expectations.
- 5.5 The governing body ensures that the school meets all statutory requirements, including governors' annual review and evaluation of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.7 The school's aims of achieving high academic standards by encouraging independent learning in a stimulating and child-centred environment are fully met. The leadership and management of the school are highly effective at all levels. They very successfully fulfil their responsibilities, particularly those for the implementation of policies and the safeguarding of pupils.
- 5.8 The vision and determination of the dynamic leadership and the committed and supportive management and administration provide clear educational direction, as illustrated by the high quality of the pupils' education, their enthusiasm for learning, their intellectual curiosity and the excellent standard of their personal development.

- 5.9 The value of self-evaluation and peer assessment is recognised throughout, from pupils through to the leadership and management. Arrangements for observing, evaluating and thereby improving teaching and ensuring high standards of achievement are securely in place. Measures are established for the supervision of EYFS staff and the appraisal of all staff, including the headmistress. Every encouragement is given to newly qualified teachers and towards in-service training and continuing professional development for all staff. There is a strong culture of improvement. Subject development plans link into the school plan, from which targets are identified and timescales set for their achievement. All members of the EYFS team contribute to their sharply focused short-term development planning, which results in swiftly achieved improvements to practice and performance.
- 5.10 There have been many improvements since the previous inspection in areas such as staff development, communication processes, and resources, including ICT, across the school, and the fuller use of an information management system. Subject leadership is extremely effective and enthusiastic, sharing ideas and best practice across the curriculum. Subject leaders appreciate the opportunities they have for professional debate. They understand the value of the lesson observations and book scrutiny which they undertake as part of their role of managing their subjects, and they respond with confidence to the way in which they are empowered by the leadership and management and the governors.
- 5.11 Overall, senior management is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating staff of high quality, and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all pupils, in safeguarding, and in welfare, health and safety. Selection procedures for staff are robust, as are the highly efficient appointment procedures for new governors and staff.
- 5.12 The school has an excellent and constructive relationship with parents at all stages. Parents of children in the EYFS welcome the individualised care and express strong appreciation for the way in which their children have grown in confidence due to the continuous support provided by their key people. The setting is highly successful in engaging parents in their children's learning. Staff and parents co-operate closely to support children needing particular help with their learning and development, where necessary with the involvement of outside agencies.
- 5.13 Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in all aspects of their children's education, exemplified by the annual Special Studies week when they prepare, organise and teach themed lessons for three days throughout the school. Opportunities to communicate with teachers are numerous. Weekly 'drop-in' clinics, email contact and homework diaries all demonstrate commitment to establishing a productive dialogue between home and school. Parents meet formally with teachers in the spring term and receive written reports at the end of the autumn and summer terms. Following a recommendation from the previous inspection, reports have been personalised and parents now receive more detailed information on progress.
- 5.14 The school provides all the required information to parents of current and prospective pupils. An energetic parents' association gives excellent and much appreciated support to the school. Three form plays, all of which included music and dance, and a fund-raising Mad Hatter's Tea Party took place during the inspection week and all were enthusiastically supported by parents.
- 5.15 The response of parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire was extremely favourable. A very large majority were happy with the school, its leadership, staff,

and supportive, welcoming atmosphere. The only area of concern raised by a significant number of parents referred to a lack of sporting opportunities. Inspectors found, however, that it is also clearly understood that the relevant skills for a variety of games are well taught, and the concern relates to lack of a suitable games field on site; netball provision is continually improving at present, with pupils training enthusiastically and enjoying increased success in matches. The school is aware of the parents' concerns and is actively considering possible solutions to improve the all-weather surface and thereby extend its use during winter months.

- 5.16 The majority of parents are satisfied that communication with the school is constructive and supportive. A few parents considered that their particular concerns had not been handled well, and a few were not satisfied with information provided about their children's progress. Inspectors found that concerns are addressed swiftly and effectively, in accordance with the clear and effective complaints procedure. Parents are sent the results of annual standardised tests of attainment which indicate progress over time, and the members of the senior leadership and management team are happy to give explanations, and meet parents at any point.
- 5.17 Overall, parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the progress their children make, and pupils are equally happy with the school, their teachers and the range of activities.

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