

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Castle Court School

Full Name of the School	<b>Castle Court School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>835/6023</b>
Early Years Number	<b>EY399186</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>325028</b>
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Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Michael Cuthbertson</b>
Age Range (of the whole school)	<b>2 to 13</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009</b>
Head of Early Years Setting	<b>Mrs M Hellewell</b>
Early Years Age Range	<b>2 to 5</b>
Early Years Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	<b>28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 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 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 Castle Court School is set in a rural location near the village of Corfe Mullen, south west of Wimborne in Dorset. It is a registered charity with a governing body and is a limited company. The school was founded in 1948, originally in Parkstone, and moved to its current location in 1968.
- 1.2 The school aspires to provide a broad education of the highest quality with a passion for excellence, whilst striving to ensure that pupils feel valued, happy and fulfilled. It was founded to provide a first class Christian education and this ideal continues to underpin its aims as it seeks to encourage Christian values in a vibrant manner and engage children of all faiths and backgrounds. The school aims to enable its pupils to be considerate and to grow in confidence as they interact with the modern world and to feel part of a warm and welcoming community in which all care for one another.
- 1.3 The school is co-educational and admits day pupils aged from two to thirteen years. It is organised in three sections: Reception and Nursery, with children aged two to four, pre-preparatory department, for those aged five to six, and the preparatory department, for seven to thirteen year olds. For pupils who enter the school prior to Year 3, there is no selective test on entry. Since the last inspection in 2004 there has been a recent restructuring to bring Years 3 and 4 more closely in line with Years 5 to 8, and the school has lowered the age of entry to the Nursery to 2 years.
- 1.4 At the time of inspection there were 258 pupils on roll, of whom 32 were under fives in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). About three-fifths of the pupils were boys. The school is broadly non-selective and admits pupils from a wide range of abilities. Overall, the ability profile of the school is above the national average and, if pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in national tests will be above the average for all maintained schools. A number of pupils transfer from Years 6 and 7 to maintained selective grammar schools. The majority continue after Year 8 to a wide range of independent senior schools.
- 1.5 The school has identified 35 pupils as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) of whom 24 receive specialist learning support. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. A small number of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. For two pupils English is a second or additional language. However, the school has assessed that their level of English is such that extra support is not required.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. National Curriculum nomenclature is used by the school in all year groups except EYFS. The school's nomenclature in EYFS is shown in the following table.

#### *Early Years Foundation Stage*

School Name	Age of children
Badgers	2 to 4
Reception	4 to 5

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

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

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The educational experience provided has strengthened since the last inspection; it is good overall and excellent in EYFS. It is in line with the school's aims of aspiring to provide a broad education of the highest quality, based on Christian values and striving to ensure that pupils feel valued, happy and fulfilled.
- 2.2 The school provides a comprehensive, well-balanced curriculum, suited to the interests and aptitudes of its pupils and facilitated by an extensive range of equipment and resources, including an outdoor swimming pool, extensive games fields, a sizeable school hall and good facilities for information and communication technology (ICT), music, art, design and technology (DT) and pottery. Dining space in the original building is restricted, but the meals are of good quality, nutritious and enjoyed by the pupils. The school is fortunate in its idyllic setting and offers well-kept grounds and a spacious location. Keenly upheld and promoted Christian values are embodied as a thread which permeates the whole character of the school. In an assembly for Years 3 and 4, for example, a talk based on the parable of the talents provided a challenge to the pupils to examine the use of their own talents and skills.
- 2.3 The curriculum contributes effectively to pupils' linguistic, mathematical, scientific and technological development. Pupils study a modern foreign language from Reception onwards and Latin is introduced in Year 5. Core subjects of English, mathematics and science are studied throughout the school. Humanities and arts subjects ensure that the curriculum is well balanced across the school, providing social, aesthetic and creative development. ICT equipment has been recently upgraded and the number of computers around the school has increased. This has included the installation of interactive white boards in every classroom. A wide range of software is available to use, for example, as pupil learning aids, for quick-test exercises and mental arithmetic practice. Creative subjects feature strongly across all year groups, with an emphasis on practical 'hands-on' experience. Speaking, numeracy and literacy are an integral and significant feature of the curriculum. The timetable framework has been recently revised in line with a restructuring of the school, which has resulted in a positive impact on the learning experience, enabling pupils to be articulate in interviews with inspectors, confident in conversation, and very positive about their education as a whole. The broad range of extra-curricular activities, which enrich the curriculum, has increased to offer social, aesthetic and creative, as well as sporting pursuits. Pupils are enthusiastic to stay after the end of the school day to attend activities and regard them as an integral part of their education. A significant number of the pupils learn a musical instrument and pupils of all years are able to be involved in drama and musical productions. A very successful school musical production was presented in the previous spring term and the senior play, staged by members of Years 7 and 8 in the summer term, included cross-curricular input from the weekly dance activity. Each year group from Year 3 to 8 takes part in a camping or residential activity trip, organised by the school or, as appropriate, led by approved professional organisations. These include sailing on Poole Harbour, a four-day camp for Year 7 and a residential activity course in Georgeham in North Devon.
- 2.4 A well-planned personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE) programme is now part of the curriculum alongside the integration of its teaching across departments. In line with the school's Christian ethos, this is complemented by prayers at the beginning of the school day and, in some of the younger years, a prayer at the end of the day, five services each term in addition to regular assemblies, and whole-school assemblies at least once a term. Sex education is taught in mainly mixed classes and related firmly to biblical teaching, as outlined in the specific policy. The wide variety of trips outside school throughout the

academic year further enhances the overall provision of PSCHE. These are very valuable both to the development of individual character and for team building within the year group. The variety and breadth of extra-curricular activities also strongly supports and complements the PSCHE programme.

- 2.5 Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Year 8 pupils receive advice about moving on to their next school from school staff, church youth leaders and a senior school chaplain. The headmaster gives a talk to parents on possible future schools and seminars are held on writing a curriculum vitae and interview techniques. Inspectors observed well-informed discussion by pupils in Year 6 covering future plans, career aspirations and verbal reasoning tests.
- 2.6 The curriculum, which is set out systematically on the school's intranet, is kept under review by heads of department and subject co-ordinators. Clear planning in the subject handbooks and documentation ensure that the curriculum as a whole contributes effectively to the physical, intellectual and personal attainment of pupils at each stage. The curriculum is accessible to pupils of all abilities and, in some subjects, pupils are placed in sets according to ability. However, the classroom provision for most and least able pupils is inconsistent in some lessons and the written guidance for teaching the most able pupils lacks detail. The equal opportunities policy gives useful guidance in line with the school's mission statement encouraging equality of access between the sexes and different groups of pupils. The policy also makes good provision to guard against discrimination against pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities.
- 2.7 The provision for pupils requiring learning support is good and dedicated rooms are provided for learning support lessons. Those pupils needing extra support are listed and teachers are briefed on any such pupils in their classes. The school's 'Action' and 'Action Plus' plans identify the nature of support to be given and inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work highlighted varied teaching to accommodate individual support needs. Learning support staff act in an advisory role to parents of younger children and plan and provide lessons to pupils requiring extra help throughout the school. Provision is enhanced by good record-keeping and regular communication with subject staff with regard to individual pupils.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.9 The quality of pupils' learning and achievement is good throughout the school. They achieve well both academically and in the broader fields of education such as art, sport, music and drama. The school meets its aim to enable pupils to pursue excellence. The school has maintained the good standard of work and the high quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour noted in the 2004 inspection.
- 2.10 Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills from an early age. They are articulate, conversing as confidently with adults as with each other; in class they listen well. Year 4 pupils who did not have a part in a play reading made no complaint but were happy to listen and enjoy as their friends performed. The majority read fluently, often with lively expression. The younger, slower readers can sound out their words, sometimes helped by their neighbour.

- 2.11 Pupils in Year 8 demonstrated their ability for both creative and critical thinking in a lesson where they had to study and comment on a poem about the closure of the coalfields in the 1930s and were able to suggest comparisons between the Jarrow marchers and people affected by recession today. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of number in mathematics lessons and use their numeracy skills well in subjects such as geography and science. Pupils acquire good knowledge and skills in a range of subjects; in French lessons, for instance, they are comfortable with the teacher's use of the target language to give instructions. Pupils use ICT effectively throughout the school, both in the use of published programmes and in the research, drafting and presentation of their work.
- 2.12 Across the range of subjects or curricular areas pupils attain equally well. Results in national tests at age 11 over the last three years have been at least well above the national average for maintained primary schools and, in some cases, far above the national average. Pupils make good progress and there are no significant differences in the performance of particular groups.
- 2.13 A significant number of pupils win scholarships to a range of independent schools in sport, drama and music as well as for academic work. Pupils are also very successful in other senior school entrance examinations; some leave at the end of Year 6 or Year 7 to take up places at selective state grammar schools. The success rate in practical examinations of the many pupils who play musical instruments is high, with a significant proportion progressing to the higher grades. Pupils do equally well in drama examinations. The displays of art and pottery around the school are of a very high standard. In sport, pupils also have considerable success, both individually and in teams at regional and national levels. Pupils have been selected for representative sides nationally or regionally in cricket, hockey, rugby, rounders and netball. Others have had success in sports ranging from athletics and badminton to sailing, swimming and squash. Team achievements include successes in biathlon and pentathlon, golf, beach volleyball and equestrian events. Pupils also take part in local quiz tournaments.
- 2.14 Pupils are keen to learn. They concentrate well in class, listen to their teachers and work hard. Most either have targets set for them or set them themselves; these are written at the front of their diaries. From a young age they learn to work independently; Year 2 pupils were observed writing their news unaided. In English they are encouraged to use word books to look up spellings for themselves. Year 3 pupils were able to use a thesaurus to find alternative adjectives for their poems on colour, resulting in such lines as 'yellow is the colour of a unicorn's horn, radiant in the sun'. Older pupils are able to take efficient notes, as seen in a Year 6 religious studies (RS) lesson.
- 2.15 Pupils work very well together. In a Year 8 French lesson, they worked efficiently in pairs on practical tasks and listening exercises. In other classes, in a Year 6 English lesson, for example, pairings are pre-planned so that less able pupils receive support. Such pairings and other group work encourage purposeful discussion which, in turn, assists understanding. Music ensembles are an important part of the school's provision, enabling instrumentalists to perform in a group, which the pupils enjoy; a very competent brass group accompanied morning prayers during the inspection. Pupils work well with their teachers, listening to suggestions or criticism and also expressing their own thoughts and ideas, knowing that they will be listened to and considered.
- 2.16 In class, pupils are quick to settle and apply themselves, persevere and enjoy work. In a Year 3 art lesson, pupils worked almost in silence because they were so absorbed in their designs. They persevere even when they find something difficult and most are prepared to repeat something until they get it right.

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

- 2.17 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent overall, including in the EYFS, and has strengthened since the last inspection. The school fully achieves its aims to provide a clear moral framework and an ethos in which all are known and valued.
- 2.18 Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent and strongly developed through school assemblies, RS lessons and the sex education programme, which have a Christian focus and content, in line with the school's stated aims. The direction given by the headmaster's spiritual leadership and well co-ordinated assemblies ensure that pupils' spiritual awareness develops from a firm foundation. Assemblies for all year groups are excellent and involve pupils through musical contributions and in leading prayers, developing their self-esteem and self-awareness. Pupils have experience of larger more formal acts of worship, including a carol service held each year at Wimborne Minster, attended by Years 5 to 8 with their parents. Pupils are aware of their own and other religious beliefs through the RS syllabus. Three voluntary Christian groups for different age bands in the school meet weekly, with some meetings open to parents. Pupils have strong self-confidence and the development of self-identity is strongly evident. In a DT lesson, for example, pupils were able to attempt a task without fear of failure and, in a Latin lesson, thought-provoking discussion was stimulated by links made between the Trojan War and the First World War in a task with the theme of 'Hero or Half-Wit'. Pupils' awareness of spiritual issues is enhanced by the recently revised PSICHE programme, which is now a discrete subject on the curriculum. Environmental awareness was observed in an interview with pupils from Year 1, and pre-preparatory department pupils gain an understanding of the awe and wonder of the site through taking part in a 'senses' walk in the school grounds.
- 2.19 Pupils' moral awareness is also very strong. Its development is reinforced through the comprehensive programme for PSICHE. Pupils develop a thorough sense of right and wrong, supported by staff who set a clear example of responsible living. This was exemplified by discussion in interviews with pupils and their courteous and polite behaviour throughout the school. Pupils' discussions in PSICHE cover a wide range of moral topics, including relationships, environmental issues and the 'Charter of Respect'. Through the programme, pupils also become involved in discussions of issues surrounding bullying. Support for the school rules is widespread amongst pupils, staff and parents. Moral and social issues feature strongly on classroom notice boards, raising the pupils' awareness and ensuring their involvement in debate. Their understanding is further developed by visiting speakers, including a talk from Dorset police on internet safety.
- 2.20 Pupils' social development is excellent and they learn to value their role in the school community. Their leadership skills develop well in the school. Prefects in Year 8 perform duties around the school at break and meal times and meet with the headmaster once a week for a feedback discussion. With representation from all year groups, the school council is an important feature of the school, enabling the pupils' voice to be heard and, when appropriate, acted upon. Debates from the school council are published on the digital display screen outside the school hall, promoting discussion among the pupils. Charity projects enable pupils to engage in service in the community; a recent initiative, working with a homeless hostel in Poole, was featured in an assembly. A significant amount of money has been raised for charities over the past year, including a local children's hospice and an organisation providing holidays for under-privileged children. Musicians from the school have visited and performed at a local retirement home. Pupils support each other sensitively; more able pupils help the less able to read their work aloud and pupils applaud the least able children in their group for their achievements. Pupils develop a good awareness of social and citizenship issues. A listening exercise in a French lesson covered topics such as helping

others and regard for the environment. Talks from the police and plans for a mock election ensure that pupils develop a good awareness of public institutions and services. Discussion about the structure of the European Union is stimulated through the Year 8 geography syllabus.

- 2.21 Pupils' cultural development is good. Their interest in literature is stimulated through visits from authors and script writers and their awareness of their own culture develops well through theatre and museum visits. The visit of an African choir had a significant impact on many of the pupils, with choir members staying with host families from the school. In several subjects pupils' work draws on art and history from other cultures. Chinese New Year was celebrated by the Badgers and Reception classes and examples of Aboriginal art were on display in the art room. Respect for and awareness of other religions develop in EYFS and pre-preparatory department classes, with an explanation of Eid and Diwali festivals. Pupils have a positive view of different world religions, stimulated by study through the RS programme. They also gained a great deal from visitors from the Life Education Centre, who spent a week at the school.
- 2.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.23 Throughout the school, teaching is good, with a significant proportion being outstanding, notably in the EYFS. Staff are knowledgeable about their subjects, have high expectations and, overall, teaching supports the school's aims to strive for excellence. The quality of teaching found at the time of the previous inspection has therefore been maintained and in some cases improved upon.
- 2.24 When teaching is at its best, expectations are high and pupils of all abilities are able to progress rapidly, as seen in a Year 4 mathematics lesson on number bonds. Teaching creates a variety of opportunities which enable pupils to become interested and involved in their work and to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills; in a Year 7 DT lesson pupils experimented with ways to create isometric links and, during a Year 8 science lesson, a small group of pupils was encouraged and supported when experimenting with a variety of metals and oxides.
- 2.25 Mutual respect is the basis for the strong relationships that exist between the staff and pupils. This encourages good behaviour within the classroom. In the best practice, lessons are enjoyed by the pupils as they are stimulated and challenged; in a Year 8 music lesson pupils were evidently motivated by improvising in groups and, during a Year 1 mathematics lesson, clearly differentiated work ensured that pupils enjoyed the tasks and applied themselves well, making considerable progress in relation to their abilities.
- 2.26 Lessons are well planned and, in the best examples, teaching employs a variety of methods to stimulate learning. Pupils are expected to think and learn for themselves, as in a Year 8 Latin lesson when they were encouraged to think and reason and by so doing find answers to their own questions. Challenging questioning in a Year 8 English lesson enabled understanding of a difficult poem. Good planning for different abilities was evident in French lessons, with several skills being covered at different levels. Lessons are generally well paced, and good use is made of class time. In subjects such as art, science, music, and physical education, pupils benefit from paired and group work; the sharing of apparatus and working together is successfully encouraged amongst even the youngest pupils in the pre-preparatory department.

- 2.27 Staff know their pupils well and provide sensitive guidance, especially to those requiring additional support. They are familiar with those pupils' needs and address them in an appropriate way. Pupils have individual education programmes where necessary, and teaching responds effectively to these. Pupils are set by ability for certain subjects and lessons are planned accordingly. Teaching generally shows a clear understanding of pupils' attainment and aptitude. In several lessons, for example, pupils' previous learning was the starting point for new work.
- 2.28 Teachers' own subject knowledge and obvious enthusiasm enable them to set work which generally motivates and challenges the pupils. This was evident during an ensemble lesson when a group of guitarists rehearsed a Beatles hit, playing parts arranged specifically to match their abilities. Subject knowledge is used well to enrich the curriculum, as in a Year 8 history lesson, when a discussion about power in medieval times moved forward to the changing shift of power today, and during Year 4 and Year 7 DT lessons, when teaching, which drew on detailed subject knowledge, enabled pupils to explore a variety of design options. On the occasions when teaching does not reach such high standards, it is usually as a result of a lack of variety in teaching styles employed or an over-long introduction. At times the work is insufficiently challenging and not clearly matched to the full range of abilities of the pupils.
- 2.29 Teaching makes effective use of the school's excellent resources. These are selected carefully so that they can help pupils' learning and understanding. However, in some instances too much reliance is placed by staff on duplicated worksheets, which are not fully appropriate to pupils' differing abilities and needs. Resources both inside and outside the class provide a broad range of stimuli to support teaching. Specialist rooms enable teaching to make good use of an extensive range of subject-specific resources and general classrooms have a range of appropriate books. Interactive whiteboards are sometimes used only hesitantly, partly due to the teething trouble of a recent software upgrade. Staff and pupils' use of the genuinely interactive elements of the boards to enhance teaching and learning is not extensive. However, excellent use of the boards was observed in a Year 7 DT lesson, a Year 3 mathematics lesson and a Year 8 English lesson. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and interesting displays in both the classrooms and communal areas support and promote learning strongly.
- 2.30 The school's assessment procedures have improved significantly since the last inspection. Building on the excellent practice identified in the early years, good systems and strategies assess and record pupils' attainment and progress right across the school. A range of standardised tests is used well to assess attainment against national criteria. Information on progress is also provided by tests in November and examinations in June in Years 5 to 8, whilst work is regularly monitored in class and on half-term assessment sheets.
- 2.31 Results of standardised tests are efficiently monitored to identify emerging trends. Teaching is beginning to draw positively on assessment data to inform planning and to meet individual needs. A school marking policy has been recently introduced but is yet to be applied consistently. A proportion of the marking is cursory, consisting of a tick only. Similarly, some comments provide due praise but no advice for improvement. The school is aware of this, and is taking steps to address the issue. Effective use is made of a data tracking system, not only to record standardised test results but also to identify pupils at either end of the ability spectrum and provide a basis for target setting. At present this system is used most successfully for those pupils on the school's 'Action' or 'Action Plus' programmes.

2.32 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care, and the welfare, and health and safety of the pupils throughout the school, including in the EYFS, is outstanding; all the necessary policies and documentation are in place, together with very effective monitoring arrangements. The school meets its aims in so far as pupils appear happy and feel valued, within a warm and welcoming community. Since the last inspection the school has acted on the recommendation to update its child protection policy to include timescales for reporting disclosures, and has also taken action to ensure that its admission register is compliant with current regulations.
- 3.2 Staff provide very effective support and guidance for all pupils, and a happy and helpful atmosphere is evident throughout the school. Morning registrations were observed in a range of year groups, in which form teachers ensured that all pupils were aware of their individual arrangements for the day. The pupil diary is also effective in this regard. Attendance registers are duly completed. During lunch, for all age groups, staff sit at the heads of tables and offer any necessary assistance with serving and clearing, whilst also encouraging the pupils to take responsibility for themselves and their peers.
- 3.3 Comprehensive pastoral arrangements support the work of the staff, under the direction of the head of pastoral care, who oversees the system and monitors a database of pastoral information. Arrangements are strongly underpinned by effective communication between the head of pastoral care, the deputy head, the girls' coordinator and the matron, who have clearly defined roles. The pastoral web ensures that issues are picked up and dealt with promptly, and do not go unchecked. Pupils are aware of and confident in these arrangements and know where they can seek help and guidance.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is a strength of the school; examples of the excellent rapport were observed in various aspects of school life, including academic lessons, registrations, at lunch, and on the games field. They also involved pupils across the whole age range. Teachers and pupils were seen to interact with each other in a friendly and constructive way during break times. The quality of relationships between pupils is excellent; numerous examples of collaborative learning were observed in lessons. The general atmosphere whilst pupils are moving around the school is calm and ordered, and they are cooperative and helpful towards each other whilst in situations such as serving and eating lunch.
- 3.5 The school is very effective in promoting good discipline and behaviour and has a clear and effective anti-bullying policy. Infrequent incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with appropriately by the deputy head and head of pastoral care. The school is fully aware of the need to safeguard and promote pupils' health and well-being, and its measures are very successful. Pupils are able to use an email address, which is well publicised around the school, if they have any concerns. The star reward and plus systems promote good behaviour, and are effective means of positive reinforcement. Pupils understand them and are strongly motivated by them. The school also promotes good behaviour and consideration for others through assemblies and prayers, and within its PSICHE programme.
- 3.6 The school has appropriate safeguarding and child protection measures, including a thorough and up-to-date policy document. This contains clear procedures for staff to follow. The school has improved its appointment procedures for staff since the last inspection. A regular regime of staff training in relation to child protection ensures that staff remain up-to-date and

the matron (one of the two child protection officers) has undertaken several additional training courses.

- 3.7 The school takes all necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. All staff undertake training in this area every three years. The school has a clearly marked and central fire assembly point, and also holds regular fire drills. Fire evacuation notices are posted in all teaching rooms. The school was fully compliant at the last fire authority inspection and has not been visited recently.
- 3.8 The bursar has an excellent grasp of health and safety issues, and the measures for their management and monitoring are well established and efficient. The school has due regard for health and safety regulations, and health and safety is a standard agenda item at both the finance and general purposes committee and the main governors' meetings. A governor, who is specifically nominated to oversee this area, meets regularly with the bursar to monitor arrangements. All staff, teaching and non teaching, receive any necessary training. Recent training topics range from the correct use of a circular saw to a hygiene course for all staff involved in supervising camping trips. The school makes very effective use of an outside advisor on an annual basis, who audits the school to ensure compliance with current health and safety legislation.
- 3.9 Pupils are strongly encouraged to be healthy. They develop healthy eating habits at lunch times, where, from the Nursery upwards, pupils enjoy a varied menu of hot food, and are encouraged by their teachers to try to eat properly. Pupils are allowed to ask for small portions and are encouraged to try everything. Fruit is always available as a choice for dessert. Healthy eating and healthy lifestyles are curricular topics in PSHE and science, and these are successful in promoting the pupils' awareness of health-related issues. The physical education and sport curricula promote healthy lifestyles and, through the games programme, all pupils regularly take part in various forms of physical activity.
- 3.10 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**

- 3.11 The quality of links with parents and the community is excellent. The school has an excellent partnership with parents and is forging stronger links within the local community. It is looking to expand its links within the wider community. The school enjoys a high degree of parental satisfaction and support in line with its aim to establish a strong community ethos. Significant progress has been made in this area since the last inspection.
- 3.12 Parents are very happy with the education and support provided for their children. Those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated strong support for the school. They particularly appreciate the attitudes and values which the school promotes, the breadth of the curriculum, the range of extra-curricular activities available for their children and the quality of care their children receive.
- 3.13 Parents are provided with many worthwhile opportunities to become involved in the work and progress of their children and the activities of the school. They support the school by helping with school trips and with social and fundraising activities. The 'Parents' and Friends' Committee', a recently formed and proactive group, works with the school to foster a spirit of community by arranging a variety of social events. Surplus funds from these events are allocated to enriching resources, as identified by the pupils, the outdoor chess set being one such resource. The spectacular grounds and spacious facilities are used regularly by various parent groups for activities ranging from martial arts and information technology

to pilates and bicycle polo. Parents are welcomed to concerts, plays, celebrations and matches, the latter being well known for the post-match tea. The school successfully subscribes to an 'open door' policy and provides an atmosphere in which parents are made to feel welcome; dropping-off time in the pre-preparatory department, for example, provides a useful opportunity for parents and staff to meet briefly.

- 3.14 Throughout the school, excellent systems facilitate communication with parents. A wide range of information is provided, which keeps them well informed. They receive clear guidance as to how they might best support their children's learning at home and have staff email addresses, so that communication can be direct and immediate. This is appreciated by parents. An informative prospectus and an accessible website, with an up-to-date and interesting parent portal, including the weekly newsletter, ensure that parents are fully informed of the school's activities. Parents receive formal feedback on their children's work and progress each term. Reports are sent out to parents of all pupils at the end of the academic year and to parents of pupils in Years 5 to 8 twice a year. Reports are generally rather brief. Whilst some are informative and constructive, giving supportive advice on areas for improvement or setting targets, others over-emphasise the content of the work covered and do not always specify with sufficient clarity the standards achieved. Reports do not always make it sufficiently clear where further work is needed or provide advice on how progress can be achieved.
- 3.15 The school is increasing the range and variety of its links with the local and wider community. Its facilities are used to host the 'sibling days' of a local children's hospice. The school raises significant sums for various charities, both locally and nationally. Children from local primary schools were recently invited to participate in one of the school's summer courses and to share the experience of a travelling planetarium, which had been installed for the duration of the course. The school now plans to extend its programme of summer courses and promote wider participation in the near future.
- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The governance of the school is excellent and has strengthened considerably since the last inspection. A very well-defined and effective structure of six sub-committees includes those with responsibility for education, development, marketing and finance and general purposes. Sub-committees meet regularly and report to the full board, ensuring that the governing body, which benefits from a significant breadth of appropriate experience, gains a thorough oversight of the school.
- 4.2 The governing body has a clear understanding of its responsibilities and, through regular liaison with the headmaster and senior management team, is closely involved in the school's strategic development and financial planning, ensuring prudent investment in staff, premises and resources, which results in a high quality of educational provision. Forward planning documents are regularly updated to reflect changing economic and educational circumstances.
- 4.3 A programme for the regular review of policies, together with a wide range of other strategies, including presentations from senior staff and subject co-ordinators, both formal and informal discussions with staff, reports from the headmaster and bursar and statistical analysis of examination data, ensure that the governors have a very clear insight into the working of the school. They provide staff with professional and pastoral support and advice, enabling well-considered growth and improvement.
- 4.4 The governors are well aware of their responsibilities for health and safety, welfare and child protection. Efficient monitoring systems, including regular reports to meetings, an external audit and an annual risk management survey, result in successful school procedures which safeguard both staff and pupils. Individual governors with relevant expertise take specific responsibility for the monitoring of health and safety measures and child protection procedures, ensuring their effectiveness.

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

- 4.5 The quality of leadership and management of the school is good. It enables the school to fulfil its aims of providing education of high quality and ensuring that its pupils feel valued, happy and fulfilled. The previous inspection report in 2004 noted the high standard of the headmaster's leadership; this has been maintained and remains a strength of the school. Several issues were raised at the last inspection and these have been addressed by the school. The report noted that the roles and responsibilities of heads of department and subject co-ordinators should be clarified and this has been done. An explicit curriculum policy has been created, incorporating clear guidance on teaching quality, which has been agreed and is understood by all staff. A monitoring and evaluation cycle for subject leaders has been set up, which includes classroom observation. Through regular meetings of groups such as the curriculum committees and the monitoring, evaluation and review programme (MER) by subject co-ordinators and heads of department, best practice is identified and disseminated, providing for any weaknesses to be remedied. Structured training is now provided through in-service courses, either externally or from visiting experts.
- 4.6 The outstanding leadership of the EYFS department by the head of Early Years is mirrored in strong leadership and management of the main school by the senior staff, who provide a clear sense of direction. The recently revised management structure, involving heads of department and subject co-ordinators, provides effective lines of management for all areas of

the school, ensuring that the work of the school is regularly and efficiently monitored at all levels. This is reflected in the quality of education, the care of the pupils and the fulfilment of the school's aims.

- 4.7 The school's needs are effectively analysed through the senior and junior management teams, who receive the views and concerns of staff through the school's MER programme or from the annual academic reviews. Priorities are decided by the headmaster and reported to the board of governors. The development plan, the responsibility of the headmaster, includes details of budgeting requirements. Channels of communication to the headmaster are clearly devised, enabling any member of staff whether teaching, administrative, maintenance or domestic, to have a route through which views and opinions can be voiced.
- 4.8 Since the last inspection, the role of both heads of department and subject co-ordinators has been clarified and both play an important part in maintaining high standards of teaching and learning in their departments or subjects. At all levels the school's managers are effective in drawing up and implementing appropriate procedures and policies. Well-defined systems enable their effectiveness to be reviewed. Strategies include observation of lessons, checking of books and regular discussions with staff. Clear, detailed documentation has been produced to ensure that everyone's part in the process is understood.
- 4.9 The headmaster is successful in appointing high quality staff who appreciate the school's induction programme. The recently introduced MER programme, undertaken by subject co-ordinators and heads of department, is a very useful tool in supporting, developing and motivating staff. The school follows the statutory framework for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQT) although, at present, no NQTs are employed at the school. Appropriate checks are made to ensure the suitability of all staff to work with children and these are appropriately recorded in the centralised register of appointments.
- 4.10 Financial resources are well managed and procedures for budgeting operate effectively. As a result, the school is able to provide and maintain excellent facilities for its pupils, including specialist teaching rooms for subjects such as art and science and a good stock of high quality resources, which underpin the life and work of the school, ensuring that the needs of the pupils are met.
- 4.11 The administration of the school strongly supports teaching and learning and the assistance of the office staff is greatly valued. Cleaning and maintenance staff are diligent in keeping such a large site in an excellent condition; no litter was seen anywhere during the inspection, a tribute both to the pupils and to the care taken of the buildings and the beautiful grounds.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.13 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's strong governance, leadership and management ensure that it meets its aims, providing a broad education in an ambience founded on Christian values, in which pupils feel valued, happy and fulfilled. Pupils' learning and achievements are good; they are articulate and develop good speaking and listening skills. They achieve very well in national tests and senior school entrance examinations and register significant success in groups, in teams and as individuals in a wide range of sporting, musical, artistic and dramatic pursuits. Their behaviour is consistently good and they concentrate and apply themselves well. As they move up the school, they learn to organise their work well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is excellent overall. They are self-confident, cooperate well and generally enjoy their work and activities. The quality of teaching is good. Staff are knowledgeable and have high expectations. Many lessons are well paced with appropriate activities which stimulate the pupils and provide support and challenge. This is not yet consistent and some teaching does not fully meet the needs of the most and least able pupils. Teaching benefits from thorough and informative assessment and makes good use of excellent facilities and resources, though the extended use of the interactive whiteboards is still to be developed. Some marking is good but the overall quality is inconsistent. Similarly, reports do not provide much information on how pupils can improve. The school has very strong links with its parents, who are very supportive. Its links with the local and wider community are evolving. Pastoral care is excellent, with secure arrangements for safeguarding, and the relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves are very strong within a warm and welcoming environment.
- 5.2 As a result of the school's commitment to self-review and improvement, the quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection and in some aspects improved. The recommendation at the last inspection that good practice is shared has now been addressed. The roles and responsibilities of heads of department and subject co-ordinators have been clarified. The school has introduced an effective system for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. An explicit curriculum policy has been created and assessment procedures have also improved significantly. Access to structured training has also improved. The school has addressed the pastoral recommendations made at the last inspection. Its child protection measures are robust and secure and readily available to staff and parents. The school has made significant progress in its relationships with parents, who are now much more involved in the life of the school and better informed.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

## **Next Steps**

- 5.4 In order to further develop the high quality of its education, the school should:
1. increase the variety of teaching methods so that lessons are less teacher-led and provide fully for the pupils' individual needs and differing learning styles;
  2. share best practice throughout the school so that the planning, resourcing and teaching of lessons consistently provides for the range of abilities within each class;
  3. ensure that marking and reports are more informative, enabling pupils and parents to know clearly how improvement can be made; and
  4. make provision for further training in the use of interactive whiteboards so that both staff and pupils can fully exploit their capabilities.
- 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 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the medical facilities. 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 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009 by two inspectors. The inspectors 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 inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### **List of Inspectors**

Mr Christopher Sanderson	Reporting Inspector
Miss Mary Burridge	Former Head, Junior GSA school
Mr Stephen Lea	Director of Music & Head of House, GSA School
Mr Richard Morgan	Deputy Head, IAPS School
Mrs Susan West	Head, IAPS School
Mrs Kathy McLauchlan	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Diane Gardiner	Early Years Team Inspector

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

- 7.1 The setting, with 32 children aged two to five, is located within the pre-preparatory department in a purpose-built building surrounded by extensive woods and gardens.
- 7.2 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding and meets the needs of the children extremely well, providing a warm, friendly, caring atmosphere. It aims to provide a breadth of experience of the highest quality, and succeeds. The curriculum is dynamic and children's ideas, individual needs and interests are developed and extended through a variety of sensory and investigative experiences. Nursery children work autonomously and move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas. They use the computer and non-fiction material competently. Secure systems are in place to ensure that children's welfare is promoted at all times when using the indoor and outdoor spaces. Since the last inspection the provision and use of Nursery outdoor facilities has significantly improved. An outdoor swimming pool, an adventure and woodland trail and zoned play areas enhance the outdoor curriculum. Staff are highly qualified; team dynamics are good and all work and plan together, ensuring a rich and diverse curriculum supported by extensive training, community forums, the Dorset Early Years Partnership and meetings with other local settings. All children in the setting enjoy their learning, achieve high standards, feel safe, are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles, make a positive contribution and thus develop their life skills for the future.
- 7.3 The quality of leadership and management is outstanding, and is based on constant self-evaluation and a clear vision; it provides an ambitious strategy and action plan that underpin all areas of the setting. The highly motivated staff work together seamlessly to implement detailed policies effectively and securely. Staff ratios are excellent and all staff are suitably qualified, with extensive training which has enabled them to manage risk and build effective partnerships with parents and the wider community. Responses to the parent questionnaires show just how highly the parents regard the school in every respect. They appreciate the genuine warmth, high standards of education and care and believe the school is providing the best possible start for their children. A Nursery parent valued the way the staff made them feel special when celebrating Eid and that the 'vital parts of their religion had been included at school and documented with photos'. Parent partnership and communication is outstanding. Workshops, a parent web portal, emails, notices, communication diaries and planning sheets encourage parents to involve themselves fully in their child's learning.
- 7.4 The quality of provision is outstanding. The school provides a vibrant learning environment in which every child can thrive. The quality of learning and teaching is outstanding, supported by detailed planning and reflection. Child-initiated interests are added retrospectively, in the form of thinking maps and jottings on the plan. The high-quality resources and creative use of space enable the staff to plan purposeful and challenging learning and play experiences effectively both inside and out. However, the Reception children do not have equality of opportunity for free flow activity; plans are in hand to develop the Reception outdoor classroom. A mix of assessments and observations is used and staff discuss progress and attainment formally, in communication meetings, and, informally through daily discussion, photographs and jottings. The team has developed well-documented profiles which reflect significant milestones and key moments and help inform pupils' end-of-phase profile assessments. The ICT provision is excellent and supports cross-curricular learning. A weekly lesson enables all to learn new computing skills. Children who need support have specific individual education plans and a dedicated special educational needs coordinator oversees assessments and reporting.

- 7.5 Outcomes for children are outstanding. Achievement is closely monitored from entry into Nursery where a baseline of attainment is produced. Most children are working within the age-related expectation. By the time they leave the setting, their scores reflect outstanding progress and much added value, as many children are working at National Curriculum Levels. Children are independent and understand the need for good hygiene and healthy living. They prepare healthy snacks and discuss healthy lifestyles. All know water is good for the brain and that you need to keep fit. Behaviour and manners are exemplary; children are kind and caring and support each other. Praise and encouragement, clear boundaries and expectations, and a positive reward system reinforce the children's confidence and self-esteem and reflect the policies underpinning safeguarding, welfare and the management of their behaviour, which are all securely assured.

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

- 7.6 To further improve the high quality of provision, the setting should extend existing high standards by:
1. developing the free flow element of indoor/outdoor provision for Reception children;
  2. monitoring the way children use and apply 'taught skills' in their child-initiated learning;
  3. documenting their extensive staff training in personal continuing professional development folders to celebrate, evidence and share their excellent skills.
- 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.