INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

MILTON KEYNES PREPARATORY SCHOOL

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Milton Keynes Preparatory School

Full Name of School	**Milton Keynes Preparatory School**
DfE Number	**826/6004**
EYFS Number	**EY284818**
Address	**Milton Keynes Preparatory School** **Tattenhoe Lane** **Milton Keynes** **Buckinghamshire** **MK3 7EG**
Telephone Number	**01908 642111**
Fax Number	**01908 366365**
Email Address	**info@mkps.co.uk**
Head	**Mrs Hilary Pauley**
Chair of Governors	**Mr Peter Squire**
Age Range	**0 to 11**
Total Number of Pupils	**431**
Gender of Pupils	**Mixed (208 boys; 223 girls)**
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): **69** 5-11: **254** 3-5 (EYFS): **108**
Number of Day Pupils	Total: **431**
Head of EYFS Setting	**Mrs Paula Hitz**
EYFS Gender	**Mixed**
Inspection Dates	**18 Nov 2014 to 21 Nov 2014**

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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 2011.

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, as amended. 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', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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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 the chair of governors and the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils and the environmental study centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Richard Johnson	Reporting Inspector
Mr Nigel Helliwell	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Sue Saunders	Team Inspector (Head of Pre-Prep, IAPS school)
Mrs Pamela Simmonds	Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Mrs Susan Rix	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

1.1 Milton Keynes Preparatory School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from two months to eleven years. Founded in 1975, it is part of a group of three local schools. The headmistress is also the proprietor; she is supported by an advisory governing board.

1.2 The school is located in central Milton Keynes. There are purpose-built classrooms, and specialist facilities for science, information and communication technology (ICT), sport and music. The Nursery unit for the youngest children is located within the main school buildings. Recent developments have included a large artificial playing surface. There is an environmental study and sports centre located nearby, which is used by pupils from all the schools within the group.

1.3 The school aims are to create a happy environment in which children are able to develop to their full academic potential within a broad curriculum, whilst gaining the confidence and personal skills that will prepare them for the next stage of their education. Emphasis is given to developing courtesy, good manners and a respect for others in the community.

1.4 There are 431 pupils, aged from two months to eleven years: 223 girls and 208 boys. In the EYFS there are 177 children, most of whom attend full-time; 89 receive nursery funding. Twenty-seven pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 14 of whom receive extra learning support. There are no pupils with a statement of educational needs. There are 80 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL): 18 pupils require and receive support for this aspect of their learning.

1.5 The results of standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the national average, with a fifth of pupils well above. The school draws pupils from a local catchment area, and reflects the cultural and ethnic diversity of the local population. Most parents come from professional backgrounds.

1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Class 1	Nursery (ages 0-1)
Class 2	Nursery (ages 1-2)
Class 3	Nursery (ages 2-3)
Class 4	Nursery (ages 3-4)
Class 5	Reception

Pre-preparatory/Preparatory Departments

School	NC name
Class 6	Year 1
Class 7	Year 2
Class 8	Year 3
Class 9	Year 4
Class 10	Year 5

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Class 11	Year 6

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2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

2.1 Milton Keynes Preparatory School is highly successful in meeting its aims. In the EYFS, excellent leadership and management ensure that provision for meeting the needs of the children, the attention given to their well-being and the overall quality of the setting are all outstanding. The priority given to achieving a high standard of care, and effective teamwork between all staff, results in children of all ages and abilities within the setting making strong progress towards their Early Learning Goals.

2.2 Throughout the school, achievement is excellent, both in academic subjects and in extra-curricular activities. Many pupils transfer to highly selective senior schools. Outcomes for those with SEND, EAL and the more able are equally strong. The wide range of sporting success is a notable feature of the school. Pupils benefit from an innovative curriculum, in which high priority is given to developing their environmental awareness and social skills. Standards of teaching are high, and many examples of effective strategies to ensure that the needs of all pupils were met were observed during the inspection.

2.3 The personal development of the pupils and the pastoral care they receive are significant strengths of the school. It provides a caring environment, which highlights respect for others within a multicultural environment. The outstanding support and guidance provided by the staff is firmly rooted in a clear enthusiasm to ensure the best for every pupil, in line with the school's aims. The safeguarding, welfare and safety needs of pupils are conscientiously addressed.

2.4 The proprietor carries out the role of governance very effectively, and is well supported in this by the advisory board of governors. The leadership and management of the school are very successful in creating and developing an innovative and dynamic learning environment, and set high standards across all areas of school life. Relationships with parents and guardians are generally positive. Aspects of the way in which pupils' academic progress is reported, and the manner in which the school manages and records complaints and concerns, are not sufficiently robust. The recommendations of the last inspection have been fully met.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that the provision of information concerning pupils' progress and attainment to parents and guardians is of a consistently high standard and clarity, including in the EYFS.

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2. Strengthen the procedures to manage and record complaints from parents and guardians.

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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' learning and achievements is excellent.

3.2 Pupils are very well educated in accordance with the school's aim to achieve academic excellence within a broad curriculum. Literacy and numeracy skills are very well developed and these are applied successfully in many areas of academic study. First World War poems showed outstanding creative writing techniques and pupils' mental arithmetic skills were strong when calculating the calories burned in a physical education (PE) lesson. Pupils are highly articulate and converse eloquently on a range of topics. Their reading skills are excellent and they listen extremely well to each other. Artistic skills are exceptionally well developed, as the high standard of artwork produced in lessons and on display in the classrooms clearly shows. The pupils' creativity is also demonstrated in music and drama lessons, and pupils achieve good grades in music examinations. Pupils have a strong scientific knowledge and demonstrate very capable ICT skills in lessons across the curriculum. In the design and technology lessons observed pupils showed excellent practical abilities. Across the curriculum, they show high-quality reasoning skills and respond well when challenged to think critically.

3.3 The pupils' physical skills are exceptionally well developed which enables high achievement in lessons and considerable success in regional and national inter-school competitions. In recent years, school teams have reached national finals in netball, football, rounders and girls' hockey. Many pupils have achieved recognition at county and regional levels and two pupils gained first place in national badminton championships.

3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to national age-related expectations but is judged to be excellent. This is supported by evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with staff. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make excellent progress throughout the school in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils leaving the school at the age of 11 are very successful in gaining entry to selective independent senior schools and grammar schools.

3.5 Throughout the school, pupils with SEND or EAL make outstanding progress because they are extremely well supported in class and benefit from well-planned programmes of additional support. An example was seen in a Year 1 creative writing lesson where the task was very well differentiated and those pupils with SEND made rapid progress. More able pupils and those with particular talents make excellent progress in the classroom and develop their skills further in the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. Year 4 pupils made rapid progress in a mathematics lesson because they were set different work which was challenging and highly appropriate to their abilities. The school is very effective in dealing with the individual learning needs of the pupils and this contributes significantly to their excellent achievements.

3.6 Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and support their achievements very strongly. The behaviour in lessons is excellent and the positive relationships between the pupils and teachers and amongst the pupils themselves facilitate high-quality learning. The pupils apply themselves diligently, showing great perseverance. They work very well collaboratively in groups or teams, providing

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encouragement and support for each other. They are highly motivated, take pride in their work and clearly enjoy school life.

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

3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

3.8 The curriculum covers all requisite areas of learning and provides an excellent breadth of provision which has been carefully designed to support the school's aims and ethos. The curriculum is innovative in its balance of subjects, and this enables pupils to develop a wide range of skills and interests. It prepares them all for the next stage of their education, and nurtures an enjoyment in learning and a strong sense of community.

3.9 In addition to all National Curriculum subjects, excellent provision is made to promote pupils' personal development. Weekly visits to the school environmental centre provide an exciting and purposeful environment for all pupils to explore and research the natural world. Life-skills lessons and team-building lessons in Year 6 enhance the school's strong focus on the pupils' personal development, promoting their confidence and leadership skills and their understanding of life in the wider community. French is taught from Year 4 and sporting provision is supported by high-quality facilities, including a fitness suite. Pupils benefit from sports coaching and specialist teaching in many subjects. This promotes excellent levels of achievement, particularly in art and PE, where pupils' attainment is exceptional.

3.10 The curriculum is suitable for all ages and abilities. High priority is given to matching the content of lessons to individual needs, and activities are thoroughly planned to meet this end. Lessons provide challenge to extend the more able and talented pupils, and from Year 3 onwards pupils are grouped by ability to provide further personalised support. This provides an effective level of challenge for all groups, and contributes to the pupils' excellent progress.

3.11 Pupils with SEND and EAL are extremely well supported. The clarity of the identification process for these groups is matched by high-quality monitoring and provision, which includes the use of a 'Talking Partners' programme to help develop language skills.

3.12 Pupils' educational experiences are expanded and enriched by the large variety of organised visits, as well as by visitors to the school. Year 4 expanded their knowledge of texture and surfaces during the visit of a ceramic artist, whilst a recent residential sports trip to Rotterdam enabled pupils to play hockey against the local club and to attend international fixtures.

3.13 Pupils' experiences are enriched by an excellent extra-curricular programme, in which sport plays a prominent part. Activities cater for a wide range of interests and include yoga, basketball, pop choir, enterprise club, and a debating society discussing such issues as 'Will computers replace teachers?'. Links with the community add significantly to the pupils' personal development. The choir visits the local home for the elderly each year and the school council delivers food to the local food bank. Pupils support a wide range of charities. They have raised funds for a children's oncology ward and forwarded a shipment of aid gift boxes overseas as a result of the Philippines typhoon disaster.

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3.(c) The contribution of teaching

3.14 The quality of teaching is excellent.

3.15 Teaching throughout the school is highly effective in promoting pupils' excellent progress and achievement. This supports the aim of the school to ensure pupils reach their full academic potential. A significant proportion of teaching observed was excellent. The recommendation from the last inspection to share the most effective practice in teaching through further development of the monitoring programme has been fully implemented via lesson observations, discussion at meetings and scrutiny of pupils' work.

3.16 Teaching is well planned and takes into account individual needs, thus enabling all pupils to make excellent progress and achieve well. Marking of work is thorough and provides positive reinforcement as well as constructive comments suggesting ways to improve, although this is not consistent across all subjects. Regular assessment using a traffic light system is used effectively to inform planning. Standardised data is used by the English and mathematics departments to track the progress of individual pupils, so that targets for improvement can be identified. Paired assessment and self-assessment were seen being used very effectively in some lessons, for example during a games lesson to help pupils improve their football skills. Teachers also give valuable oral feedback to pupils in lessons.

3.17 Teachers exhibit very strong subject knowledge and often include a variety of carefully timed activities in their lessons to engage pupils' interest and to ensure good pace and progress. In many of the best lessons the teacher's enthusiasm for their subject is evident and inspires the pupils to learn. Classrooms are well resourced and equipped with interactive whiteboards which are used effectively by teachers. Resources are well used in lessons to enhance pupils' learning; during a history lesson, pupils were observed showing great interest in a carpet sweeper manufactured in 1925. ICT is frequently used effectively to support learning, both to present work and to aid understanding. Video recording was also used to enhance learning in an English lesson and pupils benefit from using keyboards in music.

3.18 As pupils move up the school they learn to work independently to solve problems and research topics for project work. Excellent examples of investigative work were seen during the inspection; for example a soil investigation in an environmental studies lesson and projects on topics such as the Victorians and Tudors for which pupils had researched information using the internet. Pupils with SEND are very well supported in small groups outside normal lesson times and detailed individual plans are drawn up and shared with teaching staff. Work is often differentiated very effectively in lessons so that all pupils are able to succeed in tasks set. Extra challenge is provided for the most able during enrichment lessons taken by specialist teachers. For example, a group of Year 4 pupils were seen successfully using mental strategies for long multiplication.

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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 pupils' personal qualities are well developed in accord with the school's aims of teaching respect for oneself and others, alongside promoting the values of discipline and courtesy.

4.3 The pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent. They are self-aware and able to communicate in a range of situations with maturity and confidence. Pupils reflect on the non-material aspects of life as a result of discussions in religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE), as well as taking a role in assemblies. They develop their knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths through work in RE, including the consideration of philosophical topics such as 'Life's big questions'. Pupils respond sensitively to external stimuli, such as during the Year 6 visit to the Tower of London to see the memorial display of poppies, and their visit to the National Gallery, where pupils showed personal appreciation of works of art.

4.4 Pupil's moral awareness is excellent. Their behaviour around the school and during lessons is exemplary, and they take ownership of their own class rules, which they create collectively at the beginning of each year. Pupils have a mature sense of right and wrong, which is nurtured by the family atmosphere within the school and promoted in all lessons. Year 6, for example, debated the rights and wrongs of women and young children working in the Victorian factories of the nineteenth century in a history lesson.

4.5 The social development of pupils is excellent. Pupils respond well to the responsibilities of individual school roles, such as heads of school, monitors and house captains. School councillors recently promoted fund raising which enabled the purchase of a dental descaler for rescued hedgehogs and badgers for a local charity. Older pupils from the sports leadership group enjoy helping their younger counterparts in school sports clubs, and Year 6 support the Reception children as part of weekly team-building lessons.

4.6 Pupils are aware of those less fortunate than themselves and support a range of charities, such as Children in Need and the Marie Curie Cancer Appeal. Pupils are empathetic, and discuss topics such as poverty during their RE lessons. Older pupils have a developing political and economic awareness and last year enjoyed a visit from the local Member of Parliament, who talked about current issues.

4.7 The cultural development of pupils is excellent. The school community is diverse in ethnicity, culture and religion; this is a strength of the school. Pupils have a highly developed awareness of their own and other cultures and have harmonious relations with those from backgrounds different from their own. They take part enthusiastically in dance, music and craft activities during a bi-annual international day, which has the added advantage of a high level of input from parents. The pupils enjoy learning about a range of religious celebrations and festivals, such as Diwali, and experiencing art and music from other cultures.

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4.8 By the time they leave the school, the pupils' personal development is excellent. They are reflective and self-aware, with a clear sense of their own strengths and weaknesses.

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

4.9 The contribution of the arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.

4.10 Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding. All the pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that the teachers showed concern for them as a person. In interviews, one pupil said that if a problem arose 'there is always someone there for you.' Relationships between pupils are also very positive. They show mutual respect and kindness; for example, they regularly hold doors open for each other and adults.

4.11 The pupils are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle through a very well-planned PE and games programme, including a course on health-related fitness. Pupils are taught how to grow vegetables and fruit on the school's farm, promoting the value of a healthy diet, and said that they really enjoyed the school lunches.

4.12 The school is successful in promoting excellent behaviour and enabling the pupils to develop a strong sense of self-discipline. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire a very small minority of pupils said that staff do not deal effectively with any bullying that occurs. Inspection evidence from interviews with staff and pupils and a scrutiny of the school behaviour records does not support this view.

4.13 A small minority of pupils also said that the teachers are not fair in the way that rewards are given and that the school does not ask their opinions and respond to them. Evidence from the inspection indicates that teachers use the rewards system very effectively to promote high standards of learning and behaviour and that the school does engage successfully with pupils to seek their views. An 'ideas noticeboard' is used well by the pupils to put forward their suggestions. These ideas are then discussed at school council meetings; in recent years several have resulted in valuable improvements being made to the school.

4.14 The school has a suitable plan to increase educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

4.15 The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.

4.16 The school provides a caring environment where pupils feel valued and safe. Safeguarding arrangements have careful regard to official guidance. Detailed policies and appropriate recording systems are in place and staff show a strong awareness of effective practice in the safeguarding of pupils. Child protection training for all staff is updated at the correct intervals, and five senior leaders are trained as designated child protection officers. Staff recruitment checks are carried out efficiently and the central register of staff appointments is correctly maintained. Those involved in appointing new staff receive relevant training.

4.17 Health and safety procedures are excellent overall. The appropriate steps to reduce the risks from fire and other hazards are implemented well; fire practices and alarm tests are held regularly and safety equipment is appropriately maintained. Staff are aware of fire exits and routes and these are clearly displayed throughout the school. Detailed policies, and accurate and well-maintained risk assessments, cover the full

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range of activities that take place both on and away from the school site. Potential hazards are clearly identified and promptly addressed.

4.18 First-aid training for staff is given a high priority and forty-four staff are qualified in paediatric first aid, in addition to a full-time matron. Appropriate documentation allows for the safe administration of medication as required. First-aid boxes throughout the school are checked and restocked on a regular basis and staff are issued with a list of pupils with specific medical conditions. When pupils become ill at school they are cared for in a suitable area until they can be collected.

4.19 Admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained and stored appropriately.

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5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.

5.2 The proprietor has excellent oversight of the school through her role as the headmistress. A clear vision for the future is shared with the school's management team, reflecting the school's ethos and a total commitment to achieving the best outcomes for its pupils. A detailed and comprehensive development programme and careful investment ensures that the school is provided with excellent resources and a strong and committed staff. This supports the pupils' excellent academic achievement and personal development within an environment where pupils are able to fulfil their potential.

5.3 In carrying out this role, the proprietor is supported by an advisory board of governors. They bring a good range of skills relevant to their role, including a detailed knowledge of the requirements of the EYFS. Many are current or former parents. They receive regular reports from staff, enabling them to give strong support to the school, and provide good levels of advice and challenge to the proprietor, including regarding educational standards.

5.4 Governors visit frequently and meet the staff both formally and informally, seeing the working of the school at first hand. They formally review the school's policies and procedures for child protection and maintain regular contact with the school's child protection officer, supporting the proprietor in ensuring that relevant checks are made when appointing staff.

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

5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.

5.6 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims. All staff, including the highly committed administrative and pastoral staff, nurture a positive approach to learning in a supportive, friendly community. Many pupils, parents and staff refer to 'a family feel'.

5.7 Strong leadership at all levels of the school is reflected in the excellent achievement and teaching, as well as the outstanding levels of personal development and pastoral care of all pupils. Senior leaders are highly reflective in their practice, providing a caring and stimulating environment. Staff have an intimate knowledge of the needs of individual pupils; all senior leaders are highly visible and provide excellent role models.

5.8 The school is staffed by suitably experienced teachers who are well trained in meeting the needs of all children, including in relation to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Policies are reviewed regularly and carefully implemented. There are many examples of good practice in place, such as the medical procedures and risk assessments for all activities both on and off site.

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5.9 The recommendation of the previous inspection to develop the sharing of effective practice has been fully met. Staff regularly observe each other teach, with a focus on particular aspects of teaching, and there are effective monitoring procedures to ensure that these standards are maintained.

5.10 The school development plan is highly detailed, reflects the school's vision for the future, and is based upon a comprehensive self-evaluation. The collaborative nature of the development process means that leaders at all levels can contribute, and all share a clear vision as to how the school will build upon its current success. A number of specific priorities have been set, which include further strengthening of monitoring procedures; the introduction of progress books for the younger pupils and the provision of further enrichment opportunities within the curriculum. Senior leaders make many informal visits to classes and promote innovative teaching approaches, together with a review of assessment records to ensure that individuals are making sufficiently good progress.

5.11 The curriculum is regularly reviewed, and this has seen the introduction of an enhanced personal development programme and teamwork skills lessons. Small group work, which is offered to pupils of all abilities, provides increased opportunities for pupils to achieve the best outcomes. A number of specific initiatives have taken place with the result, for example, that improvements have been made in encouraging pupils to become independent learners and thinkers.

5.12 A formal system of appraisal fosters the development of all staff. This has clear individual targets that ensure the continuing development of relevant skills, linked to opportunities to attend courses to further professional development. Staff who are new to the school feel that their induction and the ongoing support they receive helps them to assimilate school routines quickly so that they can carry out their roles effectively. There are weekly staff meetings, ensuring that staff are kept well informed of academic and pastoral issues. Excellent levels of communication between staff in all departments of the school were very evident during interviews. Staff duties, including all aspects relating to the safeguarding of pupils, are discharged diligently.

5.13 The nearby environmental study centre is an excellent addition to the school, allowing development beyond the constraints of the main site. This allows pupils to develop a greatly increased awareness of the natural world within an attractive and stimulating setting, as well as providing opportunities to use the fitness centre and undertake craft work. Pupils speak very highly of this facility. Optimum use is made of the main school campus, which now includes the provision of a new artificial playing surface.

5.14 Parents are pleased with many aspects of the education and support provided for their children. All those parents who replied to the questionnaire said that their children were well looked after. Parents are kept informed about school events via newsletters and the school website. Email is also used to communicate whenever there is a special outing or event. Information is clearly displayed on a screen near the entrance, as well as on notice boards.

5.15 The school maintains a constructive relationship with parents, who are able to meet teachers to ask questions about progress or raise concerns. They receive written reports at least twice a year. They are also invited to formal consultation evenings to discuss their child's progress. A small minority of parents who responded in the questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the information provided about their

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child's progress. Inspectors concur with this view; reports of pupils' progress do not consistently provide clear evidence of attainment and areas for improvement across all age groups.

5.16 Small minorities of parents also highlighted that they were not satisfied with the way in which the school responds to their concerns, and felt there is a lack of opportunities to be involved in school life. The school has a suitable complaints policy in place to deal with concerns, but inspectors found that the management and recording of complaints are not always consistent. However, they found that there are appropriate opportunities to be involved in activities such as an international day, religious celebrations and assemblies as well many opportunities to attend events in school.

5.17 Members of the parents' association organise a range of special events such as a Halloween party for the pupils, cake and book stalls, Christmas and summer fairs and uniform sales. They support the school in fundraising for its chosen charities.

5.18 The required information is made available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on the school website. When pupils join the school, parents are sent detailed information about school life and the curriculum. The effectiveness of this is monitored by a questionnaire. From time to time questionnaires are also sent to parents of a particular age group in the school to gauge opinion on various aspects of school life.

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

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6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

6.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the children who attend.

6.2 Profile results and assessments show that children achieve extremely well according to their starting points. The educational programmes fully cover the prime and specific areas of learning, using an imaginative themed approach. Staff have a thorough understanding of the early years curriculum and plan balanced and stimulating activities. Planning is adapted to the children's interests so that they are highly involved in their learning. The programmes are enhanced by specialist teaching in music, PE, swimming and ICT. The children are given many opportunities to develop their understanding of their environment by highly engaging visits, such as those to the school's own environmental study centre, and local parks. Visitors are also regularly invited into the school.

6.3 Children with SEND and EAL are identified at an early stage. Careful initial assessments and well-targeted interventions ensure that their needs are met and excellent progress made. Children with EAL are supported through a highly effective 'Talking Partners' programme to develop language skills. A range of highly effective teaching strategies enthuse, engage and motivate the children. For example, the children in the Nursery enjoy building sandcastles, developing their coordination skills as they dig and lift sand. In Reception, children are enthralled as they re-enact the story of Red-Riding Hood using props.

6.4 Key workers and other staff encourage parents to be highly involved in their children's learning and achievements. Developmental and progress records are shared at regular meetings. Parents receive much information from the school. In responses to the questionnaire the parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the care and the education provided. The majority of parents were happy with the information they received from the school, but some feel that they would appreciate clearer reports on their children's progress. The school is taking action to address it.

6.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

6.5 The contribution of the early years provision to the children's well-being is outstanding.

6.6 Caring and committed staff help all children, including those in need of additional support, to form strong and trusting relationships with their key workers and other adults. The children grow in confidence and thrive in the warm and purposeful atmosphere of the setting. Care practices are exemplary and staff know the children extremely well, so that the youngest children settle quickly into their routines. Children are encouraged to treat one another with kindness and respect by modelling appropriate behaviour. Independence and responsibility are effectively encouraged: for example, the children are proud to be chosen as 'helpers of the day'. The older children work cooperatively; in a practical ICT lesson they worked in

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pairs to direct a programmable toy. Children are keen to investigate and are excited by challenges.

6.7 From an early age the children are taught to manage their own personal hygiene. Adults promote a positive attitude towards healthy eating, with the provision of nutritious snacks and lunches. Children are given many opportunities to be physically active.

6.8 Children are prepared for their transitions well. When the youngest children enter the Nursery, staff ensure the settling in process is happy and positive, so that any parental anxieties are quickly addressed. As the children progress through the EYFS and into Year 1 they visit their future teachers. Parents are provided with clear information about the EYFS. Effective links with other settings ensure that detailed information is exchanged where appropriate.

6.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

6.9 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision is outstanding.

6.10 The proprietor has an excellent knowledge of the setting in her role as head and is effectively supported by the governors. They visit regularly, knowledgeable in their roles and are committed to maintaining the highest standards of care, including the safeguarding requirements. Educational policies and programmes are regularly reviewed. Careful adherence to health and safety requirements and comprehensive risk assessments ensure that the children are cared for in a safe and stimulating environment. Daily checks are carried out and external visits are carefully planned, risk assessed and evaluated. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and all staff receive regular training. There are highly effective induction procedures for new staff.

6.11 Senior leadership is extremely effective in ensuring that practice is of a consistently high standard, through regular monitoring of planning and assessments, observations of teaching and tracking children's progress. There is a clear drive for continuous improvement. All staff are involved in self-evaluation, which informs a comprehensive development plan and establishes challenging targets for improvement.

6.12 Effective teamwork at all levels is an outstanding feature which enables continual improvement. This was clearly demonstrated in a weekly planning session. The highly skilled support staff plan stimulating and imaginative activities. A formal appraisal system identifies individual needs for professional development and relevant training is made available. The monitoring arrangements have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

6.13 Effective partnerships with parents and with external agencies, such as speech therapists, enable children with SEND and those with EAL to receive appropriate support so that their needs are extremely well met.

6.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

6.14 The overall quality and standards of the early years provision are outstanding.

6.15 As a result, all children, including those with SEND, EAL and the more able, make at least good and often excellent progress. They reach the expected levels of

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development by the end of the EYFS and the majority exceed age-related expectations.

6.16 Reception children express themselves confidently and have made an excellent start to reading and writing. They use mathematical language and show a strong grasp of early number skills. Those under three demonstrate good manual dexterity when cutting and sticking or manipulating small toys; they join in songs with enthusiasm and are beginning to understand tempo as they move to music. The youngest children happily make choices from a well-organised range of equipment and activities. They are confident and use early language effectively when interacting with each other. The children's personal and emotional development is excellent. They work constructively together, share and take turns, investigate confidently and play imaginatively. They behave extremely well, enjoy school and feel safe secure and happy.

6.17 All requirements for safeguarding and welfare have been met. Leadership and management are highly effective in evaluating practice and fully committed to ongoing improvement. At the previous inspection the school was advised to develop the cycle of assessment and planning within the EYFS. Assessment is now firmly linked to planning the next steps in the children's learning and development.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

6.18 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.

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