



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

DORSET HOUSE SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Dorset House School

Full Name of School	Dorset House School
DfE Number	938/6015
EYFS Number	EY346852
Registered Charity Number	307035
Address	Dorset House School The Manor Church Lane Bury Pulborough West Sussex RH20 1PB
Telephone Number	01798 831456
Fax Number	01798 831141
Email Address	hdavies@dorsethouseschool.com
Headmaster	Mr Richard Brown
Chairman of Governors	Captain W Hockin
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	142
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (90 boys; 52 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 18 5-11: 103 11-13: 21
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 97
Number of Boarders	Total: 45 Flexi: 45
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	13 Nov 2012 to 16 Nov 2012

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 April, 2010.

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

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

Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

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.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the

beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

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Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Dorset House School is an independent preparatory school for boys and girls from three to thirteen years of age. The school is able to trace its foundation to Hertfordshire in 1784. Under various names it spent time at a number of sites. The formation, by parents, friends and past pupils, of a charitable trust with a governing board in 1964 resulted in the purchase of Bury Manor in the small the village of Bury, near Arundel in Sussex. The historic manor house, with its adjacent medieval Great Barn, is situated beside the 12th century village church and forms the school's core. It is surrounded by a variety of modern buildings and facilities. The EYFS is accommodated within the pre-prep school building. Since the last inspection boys' and girls' washroom facilities have been refurbished, a girls' boarding area has been created and a new artificial sports surface has been installed.
- 1.2 The school aims to inspire its boys and girls with a challenging approach to academic learning where every child's social and academic progress is supported, developing a valued partnership between home and school. It sets out to do so through providing a stimulating, balanced and varied learning experience, based on Christian principles, which thereby aims to foster the school's 'can do' approach to life. In the process it additionally aims to engender self-awareness in the pupils, encouraging them to value their own and other cultures and to grow emotionally and spiritually.
- 1.3 The school has on roll 142 pupils comprising 90 boys and 52 girls. It is organised into: a pre-preparatory department (pre-prep) including the EYFS, with 10 full-time and 8 part-time children, and Years 1 and 2, with 31 pupils; Years 3 and 4, with 39 pupils; and a preparatory department for Years 5 to 8 with 54 pupils. From Year 4 pupils may elect to board either weekly, from Monday to Thursday night inclusive, or on a 'flexi' basis with 45 pupils being able to be accommodated.
- 1.4 Entry is broadly non-selective. The overall ability profile is above the national average with most pupils having an ability that is at least above average. Pupils generally come from English-speaking backgrounds, usually from professional and business families located within 20 miles of the school, with very few from a minority ethnic background. Thirty-six pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive support in school. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. No pupils have been identified as needing support for learning English as an additional language. The majority of pupils transfer to independent schools at the age of thirteen.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements is excellent, meeting the school's aim to inspire children through a challenging approach to academic learning. Discussions with pupils, observation of their learning and scrutiny of their written work indicates that they make good and often rapid progress achieving particularly high academic standards in older classes. The excellent curriculum and the programme of extra-curricular activities carefully supports the needs of those of different abilities and ages. Pupils with SEND make excellent progress in relation to their starting points because they receive excellent additional support. Pupils are extremely polite, caring and exceptionally well behaved. They are enthusiastic and positive, eagerly participating both as individuals and collaboratively. The quality of teaching is good and strongly supported by the formative and individual assessment which is embedded across the school.
- 2.2 The personal development of the pupils throughout the school is excellent. Pupils show great tolerance and respect for each other, and responsibility towards other people. Throughout their time in the school pupils develop their self-esteem and confidence, recognising their own strengths and weaknesses. The pastoral support for pupils is excellent. Central to this are the highly effective relationships between staff and pupils. The school pays close attention to the welfare, health and safety of pupils. All staff, including those with particular responsibilities, receive training in child protection at the required intervals, so that they have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding issues and fully understand procedures to be followed should a concern arise. The quality of boarding is excellent. Boarders are confident, reliable and courteous, demonstrating a high level of personal responsibility. Boarders enjoy particularly strong relationships with the boarding staff for whom they have a high regard. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of boarding is good overall, with many areas of excellence, particularly the enthusiasm and dedication which is evident from the staff.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent. All aspects of education and care provided by the school are discussed as part of the highly efficient committee system. Strong leadership enables highly committed staff to provide a positive approach to learning in a supportive, friendly community which responds highly effectively to the needs of all pupils. Roles and responsibilities are not yet sufficiently clarified and as a result a coherent system for the monitoring and recording of teaching and learning, including in the EYFS and particularly with regard to outdoor provision, is not yet fully established. Since the last inspection the curriculum has been revised and assessment processes strengthened. Links with parents are excellent. In their responses to the questionnaires, pupils and parents expressed strong support for the school. Inspection evidence supports these views.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of middle managers.
 2. Establish a coherent system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning throughout the school including the EYFS.
 3. Revise the curriculum for the EYFS in line with the new framework and plan for greater provision for outdoor learning on the school premises.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils' overall achievement is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is highly successful in meeting its aim to inspire children through a challenging approach to academic learning. Pupils consistently gain their first choice place in competitive entry to senior independent schools, and each year a considerable number are awarded academic, music and sporting scholarships.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in curriculum subjects and extra-curricular activities. Pupils throughout the school demonstrate highly developed literacy skills. They speak confidently with self-assurance in a range of situations including classroom discussions, assemblies and performances. They are highly effective listeners, responding thoughtfully to one another and to their teachers. Pupils read fluently both for pleasure and for information. All year groups take a pride in their work, and there are excellent standards of handwriting and presentation. Pupils are enthusiastic with regard to learning French, demonstrating high levels of oral and grammatical competence. They apply their mathematical knowledge effectively when investigating a range of problems and are highly motivated, independent and logical thinkers. Information and communication technology is used effectively as a tool for learning across the curriculum; for example, pupils drew sophisticated graphs depicting river flow measurement. Pupils demonstrated excellent scientific investigative skills confidently using scientific vocabulary to hypothesise, explain and predict. Pupils show high levels of creativity as they create rubber band powered cars in design and technology (DT) and use a variety of materials from string to lino prints to create pictures in art. Pupils participate enthusiastically in their many games and activities and achieve highly in individual and team sports. Pupils participate eagerly in the many opportunities provided to perform, including drama productions, regular class assemblies and a variety of musical performances. They achieve highly in individual instrumental and drama examinations and are supported to develop their talents at local, county and national levels. These have a highly positive impact on the pupils' personal development.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national average, but on the evidence available from discussions with pupils, observation of their learning and scrutiny of their written work it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment indicates that pupils, including the most able, make good and often rapid progress. Particularly high levels of attainment were seen in older classes. Pupils with SEND make excellent progress in relation to their starting points because they receive excellent additional support. This is evident in the improvement in their reading, spelling and numeracy skills, as well as their high levels of self-esteem.
- 3.5 Pupils are extremely polite and caring and are exceptionally well behaved. They are enthusiastic and positive, eagerly participating both as individuals and collaboratively in the wide range of indoor and outdoor learning opportunities and extra-curricular activities provided by the school, including football, ballet, orchestra and rugby.

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

- 3.6 The quality of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

- 3.7 The curriculum is suitable for all ages and abilities and is consistent with the school's aims. The breadth of the curriculum throughout the school contributes towards the pupils' development of knowledge, skills and understanding. The academic curriculum is well supported by a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities. Teaching broadly follows the National Curriculum from Years 1 to 6. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are prepared for Common Entrance and Scholarship examinations. The additional provision of French throughout the school, and the introduction of Latin in Year 5 enhances the pupils' linguistic skills. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed the curriculum to optimise the provision for all subjects, and DT is now taught throughout the school. Pupils' creativity and technical skills are carefully fostered through imaginatively planned art and DT lessons. An extensive range of educational visits and visiting speakers enhances learning in many subjects throughout the school. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is comprehensive and encompasses topics that further the pupils' personal development. The provision for physical education and games is a strength. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in a number of subjects from Nursery upwards and from Year 5 onwards, the curriculum is largely taught by specialist staff. Curricular documentation is thorough; individual departments have very well organised schemes of work which support teaching in line with the comprehensive curriculum policy.
- 3.8 The provision for those pupils with SEND who require curricular support is excellent. Clear targets are set in individual education plans, which allow these pupils' needs to be met highly effectively in individual and group lessons and with appropriate support in mainstream lessons. A register is kept of those who are gifted and talented and their learning is extended through attendance at extra-curricular activities and in lessons where opportunities are provided for problem solving and reasoning. Although a number of examples of good teaching were observed, particularly in older classes, provision is not yet consistent across all subjects and all year groups. Pupils preparing for external examinations are carefully supported by the extra sessions provided in several subjects.
- 3.9 The academic curriculum is supported by an extensive extra-curricular programme. Pupils can choose from a range of creative and general interest activities. These vary from chess, pottery, drama, creating a kit car and a leadership programme to a variety of sports and musical activities. Pupils attend the activities available with enthusiasm. A variety of educational visits usefully extends these activities. The school maintains excellent links with the local community, inviting other schools and groups to use facilities, and the pupils perform and learn within the local surrounding area.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.11 Throughout the school, the expertise, care and enthusiasm of staff underpin the school's aim of ensuring that every child's social and academic progress is supported. The school's policy to retain a small school roll enables staff to create a personal and supportive framework that fosters excellent behaviour, positive relationships and learning both inside the classroom and in the school's magnificent natural outdoor areas. In-depth knowledge of individual pupils ensures that special needs are quickly identified and effective support put in place, including provision for any pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

- 3.12 Subject planning at all levels is thorough and, as recommended by the last inspection, is now shared across the school. The excellent subject knowledge of teachers and a wide range of resources positively impact on the learning of all pupils. For example, the use of video clips and photographs of the Holy Land alongside the depth of the teacher's knowledge enabled excellent progress for pupils of all abilities. In a small number of lessons, learning opportunities were restricted by over-directed teaching which limited challenge and opportunities for pupils to work independently. The progress and achievement of pupils were raised where they were given opportunities to engage in both independent and collaborative work as, for example, when they independently set up scientific experiments, worked collaboratively and evaluated their results. Where teaching was excellent, time was well managed and staff employed an exciting variety of teaching techniques which met the needs of all pupils. The rapid pace of a geometry lesson kept all pupils highly focused, challenged more able pupils through high level questioning and provided less able pupils with resources which enabled them to access the learning.
- 3.13 Since the last inspection a coherent marking policy has been implemented throughout the school. Developmental comments, combined with pupils' self-assessment and target setting, have had a very positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. During interviews, pupils valued the support they received from teachers, clearly understood their own strengths and were aware of how they could improve. Formative and individual assessments are well embedded, an improvement since the last inspection. The school is currently developing its tracking system and the analysis of key data to inform lesson planning and reporting to parents.

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 Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent and is very well developed through the curriculum, assemblies, services and extensive charity work within a Christian environment. Pupils are highly aware of the beauty of their school environment and the very positive effect that this has on their learning. Pupils' understanding of the beliefs of others is well developed as they learn about major religions both in lessons and assemblies. Younger pupils displayed an excellent understanding of the festival of Diwali as they enacted the story of Rama and Sita. Throughout their time in the school pupils develop their self-esteem and confidence, recognising their own strengths and weaknesses. For example, older pupils reflected very well on their recent experience of examinations and devised targets to prepare better next time. The school is highly successful in meeting its aim of enabling pupils to value their own and other cultures and to grow emotionally and spiritually.

4.3 The pupils' moral awareness is outstanding. Pupils understand the high standards of behaviour expected of them and appreciate the importance of the highly visible code of conduct. Around school, pupils are well aware that their actions have consequences and may affect the rights and needs of others and during lessons pupils are highly supportive of each other. Pupils explore moral themes competently through the comprehensive PSHE programme, which includes such topics as social justice, rights and responsibilities and how to be a good friend. Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong, and have much respect for their environment and other people's feelings.

4.4 The pupils' social development is of a very high standard. Pupils show great tolerance and respect for each other, as well as responsibility towards other people. Pupils' leadership skills are very well developed and are carefully supported through a range of in-house and residential activity courses. Pupils take responsibility seriously, from being monitors in the pre prep or in later years being school councillor, prefect, house captain or head of choir. School prefects exert their authority sensibly and productively, as seen when serving lunch to the pupils. Pupils identify with and strongly support many charity fund-raising events, both locally and nationally.

4.5 Pupils' cultural awareness is excellent and enhanced by their knowledge and enthusiastic engagement with art, music and literature. Their curricular studies strongly aid their understanding of racial and cultural issues. Pupils value the two-week residential visits by groups of Chinese children and teachers, which serve to further enhance the pupils' understanding of different cultures. Pupils' appreciation of their own western European culture and heritage is strong, developed through their frequent visits to museums, galleries and theatre, and reflected in their individual achievements.

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

4.6 The pastoral support for pupils is excellent.

4.7 Central to this are the highly effective relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well and work very hard to give them the highest

standards of support, both pastoral and academic, fulfilling the school aims. Pupils feel strongly that they can trust the teachers and value the further support provided by an independent listener. Centralised record keeping of pastoral care has been introduced recently but is at a very early stage of development.

- 4.8 An atmosphere of mutual respect prevails throughout the school. The responses to the pupils' questionnaires and interviews with pupils during the inspection indicate strongly that they feel they make good progress in their work, are encouraged to take responsibility and, overwhelmingly, the pupils state that they enjoy being at school. The pupils feel that the opinions of the school council are truly valued and that they will make a difference; the recent installation of a new artificial sports surface and the introduction of banoffi pie to the lunch menu are two recent initiatives which have emanated from the council.
- 4.9 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing healthy eating habits and taking regular exercise. Effective programmes of work in science and PSHE promote the importance of a balanced diet and sport for all is very well developed throughout the school. A small minority of pupils and parents commented adversely on the quality of food. However, inspectors felt that the choice provided was sufficient and this was supported by pupils during interviews.
- 4.10 Pupils' behaviour is excellent and is well promoted throughout the school through the very good use of praise as well as by awards such as golden time, stickers and house points. A clear code of conduct and anti-bullying guidelines are displayed around the school, as well as guidance for pupils on what to do if they feel worried or sad. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, value the care that the school provides and report that on the rare occasions when bullying occurs or relationships break down, they are thoroughly resolved by staff. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.11 The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.12 The school pays close attention to the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of pupils. All staff, including those with particular responsibilities, receive training in child protection at the required intervals, so that they have a thorough knowledge of issues and fully understand procedures to be followed should a concern arise.
- 4.13 Up-to-date policies and procedures have regard to official guidance and are carefully implemented. All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards, procedures are practised regularly and efficient records kept. Procedures and policies for health and safety are comprehensive and efficient. Excellent general risk assessments around the extensive school grounds ensure that safety is a priority and those for outside visits and school activities are completed carefully. Pupils who become ill during the day are well cared for in the medical room and any accidents are recorded carefully. Admission and attendance records are carefully maintained and correctly stored and pupils' attendance is monitored carefully.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.14 The quality of boarding is excellent.

- 4.15 Boarders have an excellent standard of personal development. They are confident, reliable and courteous, demonstrating a high level of personal responsibility. They are at their ease in the boarding community and much enjoy the time they spend together, especially on a Thursday, which is the most popular evening for occasional boarders and now the last day of the week on which it is possible to board. Since the previous inspection, provision for girls to board has been successfully introduced and, given the popularity of this initiative, the school is now looking to provide more space for girls' washrooms and dormitories. Boarders have high standards of behaviour and are polite, friendly and tolerant of each other. They contribute happily to the smooth running of their house, willingly assuming responsibilities and taking pride in their contribution.
- 4.16 Boarders sustain friendly and constructive relationships with one another and enjoy particularly strong relationships with the boarding staff, for whom they have a high regard and with whom they enjoy participating in after-school activities every day. Indicative of this relationship is the way in which staff and boarders collaborated on the innovative '*DH Boarding Magazine*', which contains lively contributions from both. Boarders report that the staff listen carefully to what they have to say and are confident that their opinions carry weight, pointing to changes for which they have been responsible. Through being given particular responsibilities around the house, in the dining room and as prefects, boarders are well prepared for the next stage of life at school or beyond and look forward to increasing independence and responsibility.
- 4.17 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders are extremely well cared for and the boarding provision is highly effective in keeping them safe, fit and healthy. The house staff take a close interest in the boarders' well-being, supporting their individual needs. Internal systems of communication are excellent, records are kept meticulously and medical staff provide highly efficient care for all the pupils' needs. The boarders reported that they felt safe and cared for and that they enjoyed the regular contact with the enthusiastic team of boarding staff who organise activities for them and assist in boarding in the evenings. Boarders know to whom they can turn if they have a problem and they have a particularly close liaison with the independent listener, who visits regularly.
- 4.18 Boarders take extensive advantage of the wide range of opportunities available to them in the evenings and pursue interests such as cooking, making kit cars and participating in a particular favourite pastime, 'Manhunt'. These activities, whilst encouraging the development of many different skills, allow for self-directed time and freedom of choice. Good indoor and outdoor facilities enhance the strength of the programme in the evenings.
- 4.19 Boarders are accommodated in dormitories that are characterful, warm and clean. Some have taken the opportunity to personalise their areas with posters and photographs. A programme of refurbishment is underway and new mattresses have been provided for many beds which boarders had previously indicated were uncomfortable. The school development plan also contains proposals to provide improved sick bay facilities for both girl and boy boarders. Great care is taken to ensure that clothes and bedding are kept suitably clean and stored efficiently. Lockable storage is provided for those who need their possessions safeguarding. Food is plentiful and the boarders appreciate the cereal and toast which is provided as a snack in the evenings. Effective arrangements are in place for boarders to maintain regular contact with their families and the school communicates in a number of ways with parents and carers.

- 4.20 Arrangements for the boarders' welfare, health and safety are good. The National Minimum Standards for safeguarding are fully met through a clear and comprehensive policy and effective safer recruitment procedures. All boarding, academic and support staff are given training in safeguarding and rigorous health and safety policies and procedures for boarding are in place, overseen and monitored by senior managers and governors with designated responsibility for health, safety and child protection matters. Arrangements to know the whereabouts of boarders are well observed and the routine for finding a missing boarder is clearly established. Suitably qualified and experienced members of staff take care of the boarders and they have the means to contact a member of staff in the night. Boarders stated that incidents of bullying were rare, but if they did arise, staff would deal them with firmly and fairly.
- 4.21 The leadership and management of the boarding provision are good overall, with many areas of excellence, particularly the enthusiasm and dedication which is evident from the staff. There is a commitment to self-evaluation and improvement and the school has a coherent vision for the development of boarding, with priorities that are clear and in line with its aims. Efficient management of the boarding area ensures that boarding life runs smoothly, with appropriate routines followed and well understood by boarders. Some boarding staff have not yet been able to participate in training to help them develop their boarding practice, although such opportunities for professional development are being considered. Boarders are enthusiastic about boarding and appreciate the quality of the support they receive and the range of activities on offer. Communication with parents is highly effective and any concerns are responded to promptly and effectively.
- 4.22 In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents report that their children much enjoy the boarding experience and appreciate the support provided by the staff responsible for their care. Likewise, in their questionnaire responses, the boarders expressed high levels of satisfaction with their boarding life. Inspection evidence supported these views.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors have a clear vision for the school which they share with the school's leadership. Governors bring to their work an excellent balance of expertise across many fields including education, finance and marketing. They maintain very well-informed oversight of the school. Lines of communication between governors and senior management are excellent. The school's leadership provides detailed reports for governors. All aspects of education and care provided by the school are discussed as part of the efficient committee system. Governors exercise prudent financial management and are fully involved in strategic planning. Their thorough understanding of the school enables them to oversee strong educational provision and standards and wise investment in staff and material resources, and to fulfil the aims of the school.
- 5.3 Governors are well aware of their legal responsibilities and discharge them carefully. Governors formally review the school's policies and procedures for child protection annually and maintain regular contact with the school's child protection officer. Health and safety policies and procedures and the associated risk assessments are carefully monitored along with the centralised register. Governors maintain a very close view of the life of the school through frequent contact with staff, parents and pupils. They attend school functions and make visits during the working day.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management of the school, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good overall.
- 5.5 Strong leadership enables highly committed staff to provide a positive approach to learning in a supportive, friendly community which responds highly effectively to the needs of all pupils. This is reflected in the educational success and excellent personal development of the pupils, as well as the high quality of pastoral care. A purposeful and clear sense of direction prevails and fosters the 'can do' ethos across the school community. Leadership and management are highly effective in self-evaluation and setting priorities; the school development plan is a comprehensive document reflecting the school's clear vision for the future. Since the last inspection the curriculum has been revised and assessment processes strengthened. The senior management team carries out its responsibilities, including those for pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, highly efficiently across the whole school and all staff are trained in these areas. Safe recruitment procedures are carefully followed on all new staff appointments and the centralised register for the appointment of staff, governors and volunteers is accurately maintained.
- 5.6 Management structures support the needs of the school. Policies are reviewed regularly and carefully implemented. A formal system of appraisal fosters the development of teaching and non-teaching staff. In addition, members of staff are given regular opportunities to attend courses to further their personal professional development. Roles and responsibilities of middle managers are not sufficiently

clarified and as a result a coherent system for the monitoring and recording of teaching and learning across the school, including in the EYFS, is not yet fully established. Procedures vary across the school; in the best they include book scrutiny, informal visits to classes and team teaching alongside maintaining assessment records. Teaching and non-teaching staff are deployed very effectively and make a highly significant contribution to the pupils' welfare and learning, particularly those pupils with SEND. Regular staff meetings and working meetings, together with ease of informal communication throughout this small school, ensure that staff are kept well informed and feel highly involved in sustaining the caring ethos of the school. They are strongly supported by highly committed administrative and support staff.

- 5.7 The school has established excellent links with parents, carers and guardians, in accordance with its aim to establish a valued partnership between home and school, so that school becomes an extension of the family. Parents new to the school and prospective parents are provided with comprehensive information through the prospectus, website, handbook, open days and tours.
- 5.8 In the pre-inspection questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of parents were enthusiastic about the school and the opportunities they have to discuss their children's progress or any concerns. Informative reports and interim reports are regularly written. Parents value the freedom their children have to explore in the woodland learning environment, the adventure playground, and the open spaces. Parents have excellent opportunity to be involved in the life of the school and they are invited to meet staff on formal and informal occasions. The Parents' Association is a thriving body which organises social functions for the school. Parents appreciate the open door policy, and value the excellent communication that exists via email, newsletters, home/school books and *Clarion call*. Parents can access the website for updated policies and procedures and about school events and activities. Parental concerns are handled with care and records kept, although these have yet to be centralised. Parents across the school are pleased with the level of information they receive about their children. Parents and grandparents are willing helpers for clubs such as the kit car club, school outings and school events.

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

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 In meeting the needs of the range of children who attend, the provision is good. The educational programmes provide for children's individual needs effectively and support enables children to make good progress. Self-evaluation has led to the updating of current curricular and assessment documentation with planned training in line with national changes to the EYFS curriculum. A wide variety of activities, together with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated tasks, enables children to respond to the high expectations of staff. However, outdoor learning is not sufficiently planned for throughout the curriculum. Children in Nursery learn through carefully planned play activities which extend the learning of younger pupils whilst Reception children progress to more formal learning at appropriate times during the day. Well-planned tasks encourage children to explore and use their imagination. Children happily use tools for collecting bugs, dress each other up for night time in the classroom and select their own resources to make pictures. Children's progress is carefully monitored and individual education plans outline different strategies to help improve learning. Staff work closely with parents to settle children into school and involve them in their children's learning. Parents' meetings, reading records and home/school contact books further develop the strong systems of communication. Twice-yearly reports do not include future targets. Children thrive in their small teaching groups, where they feel safe. The setting has the capacity to make continuous improvement.

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

6.2 Provision for the children's well-being is good. The key person plays an important role in their personal social and emotional development, including those with SEND. Risk assessments are thorough; buildings, furniture and equipment are checked for safe use. The children are happy and form excellent relationships with adults and one another. They work and play independently and have confidence to explore their surroundings. Children know how to keep themselves safe both on and off the school premises. Their behaviour is excellent, they wait patiently for equipment, tidy their games away quickly and without fuss and share night lights willingly as they explore a 'dark cave.' Staff promote children's good health very well. They are encouraged throughout the day to eat healthily and try foods from a variety of cultures. They understand that exercise is important. Children dress and undress independently from an early stage, and there are well-established hygiene routines. Children are thoroughly prepared for their next transition, which is helped by the small size of the school, where every pupil is known and routines are familiar.

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

6.3 Leadership and management are good. The school's academic committee and governors are kept appropriately informed about the EYFS, although monitoring procedures lack clarity. On a day-to-day basis children are well cared for. Well-written policies are reviewed regularly. Staff and parents work closely together to ensure that children are supported and learning extends beyond the classroom. The pre-inspection questionnaire shows a high level of satisfaction. Staff are well

qualified, and have full training in child protection and health and safety procedures, which are well embedded into the daily routines. Policies promote equality and eliminate discrimination. Staff meet regularly to self-evaluate provision and a new development plan is emerging which outlines the vision for EYFS. Staff are developing appropriate links with outside agencies; however, relationships with the local Early Years Partnership have yet to be formed. Policies are regularly updated and a formal system of appraisal is in place. Since the last inspection the Nursery has been refurbished. Staff attend courses and have time to share ideas and reflect, as recommended in the last report.

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

- 6.4 The overall quality and standards of the EYFS are good. Children's needs are well met and they are encouraged at all times to 'have a go' and explore according to the school's aims. Children, including those with SEND, make good progress relative to their ability. The majority of children complete the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. Children express themselves clearly, they enjoy role play and have a love of books. Nursery children enjoy early writing activities as they 'write' letters to send at the 'post office'. Children across the setting can count and make sense of number. Older children use their phonic knowledge well to support their early reading skills. Their personal and emotional development is good. Children feel safe, in a secure environment in which their welfare is properly safeguarded. They take risks and enjoy the challenge of the woodland learning environment and climbing and swinging in the outdoor adventure playgrounds. Leadership and management are evaluating practice across the setting to contribute to further development planning.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.