



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST JOSEPH'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Joseph's Preparatory School

Full Name of School	St Joseph's Preparatory School		
DfE Number	861/6000		
Registered Charity Number	254312		
Address	St Joseph's Preparatory School Rookery Lane Trent Vale Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST4 5RF		
Telephone Number	01782 417 533		
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Email Address	enquiries@stjosephsprepschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Hutchinson		
Chair of Governors	Brother John Mullan		
Age Range	3 to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	148		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (88 boys; 60 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	31	5-11: 117
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	148	
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	19 Oct 2010 to 20 Oct 2010 15 Nov 2010 to 17 Nov 2010		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government 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 is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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 31st 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 Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 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, though inspectors will 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Joseph's Preparatory School is a co-educational Roman Catholic school for pupils from the age of three to eleven years. It was founded by The Christian Brothers, a Religious Congregation founded by Blessed Edmund Rice in Ireland in 1802 and, whilst they are the trustees and still own the buildings and land, they no longer have a function in managing or running the school. As one of a group of four preparatory schools in England under the same trustees, the school is now administered by a local board of lay governors, of whom one is the education officer for the Brothers. The ethos of the school originates from the religious philosophy of its founders, who believe in academic excellence with an enduring spiritual dimension. The school welcomes pupils from any faith, or no faith at all. The school is situated in purpose-built premises in a suburb of Stoke-on-Trent, based within the grounds of the local Catholic secondary school, of which this school was the preparatory school before the secondary school chose to become grant-maintained. Since the last inspection, St Joseph's Preparatory School has become completely independent of any services, or use of premises, provided by the secondary school.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, there were 148 pupils on roll, of whom 31 were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), aged three to five. Approximately three-fifths of the pupils are boys. One out of every six pupils comes from a minority ethnic background and twelve pupils use English as an additional language (EAL), with one being at an early stage of learning English. Thirteen pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), of whom two are in the EYFS, and four pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN), of whom one is in the EYFS. Pupils come from families with a broad range of backgrounds, including various professions, businesses and skills. The ability profile of the school is in line with the national average, although the range of the pupils' abilities is wide. When pupils leave St Joseph's at the age of eleven, approximately half transfer to independent schools, while the others continue their education at maintained secondary schools.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide a caring Christian community with an ethos which brings the Gospel message alive, in which individuals can develop fully, contributing as happy and caring members of a school community which values their unique talents, whilst learning to live as well-mannered, self-disciplined and tolerant individuals. The school strives for excellence in all areas, such as the academic, sporting and musical, encouraging pupils to attain the highest possible standards of work and behaviour. It also seeks to develop and value a close partnership with parents and strong links with the wider community. These aims are encapsulated within the school's motto, 'Growing in Faith and Knowledge'.

- 1.4 National Curriculum 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 (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception

Pre-Preparatory and Preparatory Departments

School	NC name
Pre-Prep 1	Year 1
Pre-Prep 2	Year 2
Prep 3	Year 3
Prep 4	Year 4
Prep 5	Year 5
Prep 6	Year 6

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning over time in relation to their ability at all ages within the school, including in the EYFS, and this is the result of the school's encouragement to strive for excellence in academic work and behaviour, in line with the school's aims. Pupils succeed in their academic work because they display good attitudes towards their learning and their behaviour is exemplary. They also enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and with each other, and they benefit from good teaching. Since the previous inspection, the assessment and recording of the pupils' progress have improved. On occasion, the style, expectation and pace of teaching does not offer enough opportunity for pupils, particularly the more able, to think and learn for themselves. An effective curriculum, supported by improved planning since the previous inspection and a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, matches and trips, also enables pupils to gain a broad base of knowledge and skills. The recommendations from the previous inspection concerning the curriculum have not been fully resolved and timetabling issues remain. Information and communications technology (ICT) and library provision are still not fully developed. Provision for those pupils with SEN, LDD and EAL is of high quality.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent; pupils demonstrate qualities of exceptionally good manners, courtesy, tolerance and respect in all their relationships, contributing very well to the school community and so fulfilling the school's aims. They reflect carefully on faith issues and have strong moral values, collaborating extremely effectively in lessons. Their cultural awareness is also outstandingly developed. Since the previous inspection, the school has increased the pupils' awareness of institutions and services in England through citizenship activities. Supporting their personal development, which is firmly based on Christian principles, is the outstanding pastoral care shown by the staff who are excellent role models. Policies and procedures for safeguarding, and for health and safety, are effective and a suitable medical room has been provided since the previous inspection.
- 2.3 The school is largely successful in fulfilling its aims, because of effective governance and successful leadership and management. Since the previous inspection, leadership has been strengthened with the appointment of a deputy head, and good progress has been made in some management systems. However, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not carried out sufficiently rigorously and the newly-appointed deputy head and subject co-ordinators do not have adequate time to carry out their roles. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all areas of school life, and there were no significant issues raised in the pre-inspection questionnaires. All who responded were particularly pleased with the progress their children were making, behaviour, the worthwhile attitudes and values promoted, the guidance and support offered, the curriculum, the availability of information and communication with the school. Inspection evidence agrees with these views. Pupils too are very happy at school and, whilst few responded to their pre-inspection questionnaire, their positive views were confirmed in formal and informal discussions during the inspection.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Extend the range of teaching styles, providing greater opportunities for independent learning, including further use of the library and ICT.
2. Reassess the allocation of time to subjects, particularly ICT, and review the timetable so that the distribution of lessons is more suitable for pupils' abilities.
3. Monitor teaching and learning more effectively through examining pupils' books and observing lessons more rigorously.
4. Provide the newly-appointed deputy head and subject co-ordinators with sufficient time to carry out their roles and responsibilities.
5. Raise further the standards of the children's writing in the EYFS.
6. Provide more natural resources in the EYFS for outside investigative and problem-solving activities.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 Pupils are well educated and their good achievement in academic work is in line with the school's aim of providing pupils with a caring environment in which individuals can develop fully and can strive for academic excellence. Pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively both in lessons and in the extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities in which they enthusiastically participate. From an early age, they reason well and can think for themselves when given the chance, for example when engaging in 'talking partner' activities to share their ideas. On occasion, the style, expectations and pace of teaching restrict opportunities for pupils to participate in activities which developed their independent learning and critical thinking skills, thus reducing the level of challenge for more able pupils. Their creativity is suitably developed, as evidenced in the art club and examples of creative writing. They have satisfactory ICT skills and apply their numeracy skills well within different subject areas. Pupils are articulate and express themselves orally with confidence, and, although the amount of written work is not substantial, their writing is imaginative or factually accurate. Most pupils read fluently and these skills have been supported by improved library provision since the previous inspection. They have developed effective physical skills, both individually and in team activities.
- 3.2 Pupils achieve well in a wide range of disciplines and this has a strong impact on their personal development. Three pupils have been awarded scholarships to their senior schools over the last three years. Pupils perform strongly in local music festivals, instrumental and speech and drama examinations. They are successful within the Independent Schools Association (ISA) in many sports, for example five-a-side football, tag rugby, mini hockey, athletics, gymnastics, swimming and mini tennis, with an individual national sprint champion and representatives for national swimming and athletics squads amongst the pupils.
- 3.3 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. The pupils follow an effective curriculum and, on leaving the school, the majority of pupils gain places at their first choice senior schools in either the independent or maintained sectors. Inspection judgements confirm this evaluation and include consideration of performance in lessons, written work and curriculum interviews, as well as the levels at which pupils are working in relation to national targets. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability, even though results from nationally standardised measures of progress indicate that the pupils' progress is appropriate for their ability. This improvement is because the school has recently focused on developing their procedures for assessing the pupils' learning at the end of lessons. These are now more rigorous and are beginning to have an impact on the progress pupils are making.
- 3.4 The pupils' successful achievement is supported by their strong attitudes to learning, their exemplary behaviour and the extremely good relationships they enjoy between themselves and with staff. They work well either individually or together in pairs and groups. They are well motivated, they concentrate and persevere with their tasks

and they show enthusiasm and enjoyment for their studies. Most work is neatly presented, demonstrating the effort pupils put into it and the pride they have in it.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.5 The contribution of the curriculum to the pupils' achievement is good in line with the school's aims of striving for excellence in all areas, including the academic, sporting and musical. The curriculum is suited well to the ages and abilities of pupils. All National Curriculum subjects are covered, with significant emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Linguistic development involves French taught from Year 1, and Italian and Latin taught from Year 3. A thorough personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) scheme of work balances social and emotional development, relationships education and citizenship, and, together with religious education (RE), is important and supports the aims and ethos of the school well.
- 3.6 Whilst schemes of work are variable in detail, medium-term planning has improved a great deal since the previous inspection, with helpful information recorded about how tasks will be matched to the needs of pupils and the opportunities taken for assessment. Although the school offers a wide range of learning opportunities, recommendations from the previous inspection to balance the curriculum have not been fully met. Some subjects, for example ICT, do not have sufficient time allocated to teach their schemes of work adequately, and this limits the development of the pupils' skills. The distribution of subjects throughout the week is uneven which, for several classes, gives days which are either heavily academic or mostly practical. In addition, the strength of the pupils' oral skills in relation to their writing skills accentuates a previous concern about the limited amount of written work, which continues to be an issue. Pupils clearly enjoy and benefit from themed weeks, such as multi-cultural and humanities weeks, and lively displays are produced.
- 3.7 Pupils with SEN and LDD are strongly supported, both in individual lessons with specialist teachers and by subject teachers and teaching assistants in the classroom. Those with SEN are educated effectively according to the requirements of their statements. Individual education plans are written for all these pupils which focus clearly on the targets for future learning. Pupils with EAL are given individual help by staff who speak their mother tongue when it is needed and all staff focus on meeting their needs through targeting language difficulties and gradually extending their vocabulary. Provision for those who are gifted and talented is also effective in particular activities; pupils are identified and given specific lessons on an occasional basis which enables them to use their logical thinking skills, reason well and be challenged at a higher level.
- 3.8 The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent with a wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school. These are very popular and range from sign language, cookery and gardening to various sports clubs, dance, art and craft. In pupil interviews, pupils spoke enthusiastically about their involvement and these activities strongly support their achievement and personal development.
- 3.9 Links with the community are good, meeting the school's aims. The school welcomes many visiting speakers and takes pupils on numerous visits to local attractions to enrich the curriculum. Pupils benefit from using a primary school's sports field for sports day, they sing in the community at Christmas and support local charities. The school hosts some ISA sports tournaments and uses local facilities

for this purpose. Links with the local premier league football club also benefit the children, with coaching sessions held at the school. Pupils benefit from connections with the worldwide community involving reciprocal links with a school in India.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 Teaching is of a good quality overall, and makes an effective contribution to pupils' achievement in all areas of the curriculum and in their extra-curricular activities. It generally enables most pupils to make good progress and work hard, in line with the aims of the school to encourage pupils to strive for excellence in their academic studies. Individual lessons provided for those with SEN, LDD and EAL give strong extra support, enabling those pupils to make good progress according to their ability, in line with their peers.
- 3.11 The teachers' subject knowledge is strong and enthusiastically demonstrated, with effective responses given to satisfy the pupils' own curiosity, enabling them to make good progress. They are encouraged to apply themselves with concentration, and only occasionally do they lose focus because teaching lacks liveliness. Excellent relationships encourage exemplary behaviour. In the best lessons, teaching makes use of good questioning techniques which encourage pupils to think independently and achieve well; tasks set are appropriate for each pupil's level of ability, or suitable support is given, and lessons are well planned and conducted at a brisk pace. In the less successful lessons, planning affects time management in that the teachers talk too much and for too long, and this limits the interactions in the classroom, particularly between the pupils themselves. Fewer activities are carried out and there is a lack of overall expectation about how much work can be covered in the time available, resulting in a reduced amount of work being recorded in books by the pupils. On these occasions, learning is less rapid for all. Praise and encouragement are frequently given and this motivates pupils to work hard and persevere.
- 3.12 Classrooms are adequately resourced, with some having interactive whiteboards or digital projectors, and these resources are used appropriately to stimulate pupils and maintain their interest. Since the previous inspection, greater use has been made of the library, and ICT has been used gradually to enhance learning across different subjects, although both of these are not yet fully used to support pupils' independent learning skills.
- 3.13 Marking is variable with some subjects giving helpful comments which enable pupils to know their strengths and weaknesses and to improve. Most marking is regular and encouraging, some showing evidence of oral feedback and target-setting. Other marking is perfunctory and not sufficiently focused on the detail of the pupils' written work. A good range of assessment data is collected and analysed, and staff have opportunity to discuss individual pupil progress in regular meetings. The school has recently introduced a monitoring system in English, mathematics and science which checks individual pupils' progress more carefully and is having a positive impact on achievement. In all subjects, in response to the previous inspection, staff evaluate and record the progress individual pupils make in lessons in relation to the achievement of the learning objective.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The personal development of the pupils is excellent and a strength of the school, in accordance with the school's aims to provide a caring Christian community with an ethos which brings the Gospel message alive. Within this, individuals can develop fully, contributing as happy and caring members of a school community which values their unique talents, whilst learning to live as well-mannered, self-disciplined and tolerant individuals.
- 4.2 The pupils' spirituality is outstanding and the school's religious ethos encourages pupils to reflect very well on several occasions throughout the day when they are provided with regular opportunities for prayer, as seen in registration sessions. Some develop a personal faith through the Christian teachings and support given by staff, or contribute to the multi-cultural nature of the curriculum with information about their own faith. The pupils develop a strong appreciation of the world around them through art and music, which welcomes them to assembly. Hymns are sung with vigour. Pupils demonstrate self-esteem, self-confidence and a sense of excitement when practical science enlightens their understanding and explains how night and day and the different seasons are caused.
- 4.3 Pupils show a strong moral sense and can clearly determine right from wrong. Their behaviour is excellent and there are few if any disciplinary issues. Pupils contributed to assemblies through role-play on bullying situations to reassure everyone that support would be given if needed. They develop an effective understanding of fair trade through a weekly tuck shop which sells only fair trade produce. Pupils are enthusiastic about house points and are keen to convert these to merits for the honours they bestow.
- 4.4 The pupils' social awareness is outstanding. Pupils benefit from the excellent rapport and relationships that exist with staff and each other and they are generally confident and engaging. They contribute keenly to the school. They take on responsibilities as buddies, head boy and head girl, and prefects, and this enables them to support other pupils, particularly younger ones. Eco-monitors have an important role in switching off lights and preserving electricity, and supporting the environment through recycling. The election of form representatives for the school council instils a good understanding of democracy and offers an opportunity to contribute to the development of the school and represent the pupils' voice. Their knowledge of public services such as the role of the police is strong and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils empathise very well with the needs of others and have supported many worthwhile causes recently.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. They gain great benefit from themed weeks on the humanities, PSHCE and multi-culturalism throughout the school year as well as from their International School status; this award recognised the work of the school in immersing the pupils in other cultures and bringing the wider world into the classroom. Pupils derive a comprehensive understanding of other religions and local cultural customs from such initiatives. They are able to compare their education with that of children from other parts of the world, such as Ghana and Sierra Leone, with whom they are in contact. In humanities, pupils reflect extremely well when learning about people from other places and times and comparing their existence with current lifestyles.

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

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety to the pupils' personal development and achievement is excellent, and fulfils the aims of the school in encouraging pupils to develop fully, participating as happy and caring members of a school community. The pastoral care shown to pupils is outstanding; the staff provide exceptionally strong support and guidance through the roles of the class and subject teachers. Educational and welfare support for those with SEN, LDD and EAL is successfully carried out. Senior managers offer further support as and when needed. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, promote the pupils' self-confidence over a wide range of activities through support, praise and encouragement. Pupils say that they are very well cared for; they feel appreciated and valued, and this gives them the confidence to turn to an adult should they have a problem. The school provides a before- and after-school care club which effectively provides for the pupils' needs.
- 4.7 Relationships between all in the community are extremely strong, promoting a very caring atmosphere that is evident throughout the school. The pupils are polite and well-mannered, and all adults are excellent role-models. Staff know the pupils very well and this helps provide a very happy and caring environment in which pupils are generally given the opportunity to thrive. Any issues or concerns about pupils are thoroughly discussed at staff meetings. The pupils play and work happily together and with a sense of care, empathy and understanding of the needs of others. Older pupils help younger ones at various times during the school day, for example at breaks and lunchtimes, and class buddies support those on the playground who want someone with whom to play. Effective procedures promote behaviour which is exemplary both in lessons and around the school; pupils treat each other with respect and courtesy. They believe that bullying is rare, and most agree that staff would deal with any difficulties quickly and constructively.
- 4.8 The safeguarding of pupils is effective; all staff are trained as appropriate for their roles and responsibilities in this area. The school has followed its procedures rigorously and carefully when linking with the local safeguarding children board over issues in the past. Measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards; regular fire drills are held and staff receive fire training. Health and safety procedures are effective, with risk assessments undertaken which cover all aspects of school life. A health and safety committee, of which one member is a governor, operates and meets regularly to discuss any issues arising. Electrical testing is carried out regularly, and health and safety documentation is thorough. Accidents are suitably recorded and facilities for those who become ill during the school day are appropriate, an improvement since the last inspection. An accessibility plan has been written which is designed to improve the educational provision for those pupils with disabilities. Pupils understand very well the importance of choosing a healthy lifestyle; they enjoy the school meals, which are nutritious and give plenty of choice, and they participate in physical exercise with enthusiasm. The admission and attendance registers have been accurately maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The local board of governors administers the school effectively and successfully, supporting the school's aim to provide a caring Christian community. The governors bring expertise in different areas to their roles and have organized themselves into two committees: finance and premises, and personnel and curriculum; these committees enable them to keep a good oversight of the school. They receive helpful reports from the headteacher and the bursar which inform them of school life and its challenges and achievements. In addition, they have each taken responsibility for linking with subjects and have only recently formalised their regular visits into classrooms which are intended to further inform their knowledge of school issues. Through an annual away-day conference, the governors help to construct the short-, medium- and long-term sections of the school development plan, giving strong support to the school both in terms of strategy and by providing secure financial oversight. They seek input for the plan from parents through a questionnaire. They ensure that material and human resources are suitable for the needs of the pupils.
- 5.2 Staff know most governors well as they attend different functions throughout the school year. The governors have set up a calendar for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating school policies and procedures, and in this way endeavour to keep abreast of their regulatory responsibilities. They also undertake training in some areas which they have identified for development. They have ensured that their responsibilities in the areas of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are carefully carried out. The minutes of their meetings indicate that they debate educational matters in detail. Through their support for, and challenge of, senior leadership, they provide stimulus for growth and improvement.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 Leadership and management are effective overall in fulfilling the school's aims of providing an environment in which pupils can contribute as happy and caring members of a school community. The strong leadership of the headteacher and her deputy is effectively supported by a dedicated group of staff who enable pupils to achieve well, although the fulfilment of the school's aim to strive for academic excellence and the highest possible standards is currently less successful overall than securing their outstanding personal development.
- 5.4 Over recent months, the workload of the headteacher has been reviewed and improved with the appointment of a deputy head, enabling leadership to be more effective. Subject co-ordinators are involved in monitoring the outcomes for pupils through the scrutiny of the pupils' books and the observation of lessons. However, these management processes have not been carried out sufficiently rigorously to have an impact on raising achievement. This is partly due to the fact that staff are not given sufficient time to carry out their roles and responsibilities, and this is also true of the newly-appointed deputy head. The vision of the governors and staff team is represented in a clear school development plan which sets out specific areas of improvement across various aspects of school life, particularly related to the five outcomes of 'Every Child Matters'. Whilst the criteria against which the school will

measure its success in achieving its objectives are missing, the objectives themselves are realistic.

- 5.5 Effective policies and procedures have been written and implemented, covering all areas of school life, and a review calendar has been drawn up to monitor and evaluate subjects of the curriculum. The pupils' progress and welfare are discussed in all staff meetings and, in addition, a great deal of informal discussion takes place. Staff deployment is good as most teach within their specialist areas of interest and expertise; strong support is also given by teaching assistants. A suitable appraisal system operates annually. In-service training is a regular feature in-house and some external courses are attended. The safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of the pupils are high priorities, with all staff trained in these areas. The recruitment of staff is carefully carried out, and all checks, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau, are recorded accurately on the single central register. The accommodation is used to best effect with bright and colourful displays around the building, some of which value and celebrate the pupils' achievements. The pupils are happy and proud of their school.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.6 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent and support the achievement and personal development of pupils very well. This is in line with the school's aim to develop and value a close partnership with parents. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive and there was no area of significant dissent. All parents who responded were satisfied with the range of subjects offered, the information received about the school and the progress their children were making. They were also fully content with the support and guidance given, the high standards of behaviour, the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and values, and the ease of communication with the school. Inspectors agree with these positive views.
- 5.7 Parents have many opportunities to be involved with school life and their children's progress. An open door policy exists; parents are warmly welcomed to class assemblies, masses and lunch and some parents assist with classroom support and reading on occasions. A successful parent-teacher association raises funding through social events and is very supportive to the school; for example, it has recently provided a number of interactive whiteboards for classrooms. Parents receive statements about their child's curriculum at the start of the term and detailed reports at the end of each term which summarise their child's achievements and progress, with the best subject reports setting targets for future improvement. Parents of children with SEN, LDD and EAL are closely involved with the development and review of individual education plans. Parents' evenings are held twice a year and parental views are sought through an annual questionnaire, with the chair of governors endeavouring to contact parents personally in response to any concerns.
- 5.8 Parents of pupils and prospective pupils receive all the necessary and relevant information and the school website also provides a detailed insight to the school. Parents are invited to meetings about their children's transfer to the next year group and to presentations about important matters such as e-safety. They also receive regular communications from the school in the form of newsletters, texts and the headteacher's weekly blog which keep them updated with news and events. The school handles parental concerns with care and sensitivity. Procedures are

published on the website and no formal complaints have been received in the last two academic years.

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) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.1 This is a good setting that meets the needs of children well by providing a stimulating environment that enables each child to make progress with firm foundations for the future. Practitioners have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and have identified areas for continuous improvement. The school has implemented the recommendations of the last inspection to improve the outdoor area and develop new planning documents.

6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.2 Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. Effective welfare policies and procedures ensure that children are safeguarded. Adults are suitably qualified and are well deployed, and good quality resources are used well to ensure progress. Very positive links have been forged with parents, who are pleased with all aspects of the setting but particularly the progress their children make. Very effective links with outside agencies provide valuable support. Regular monitoring ensures that standards are maintained and the provision is evaluated to identify priorities for the future. However, the setting was not fully aware of the relative weaknesses in children's writing in comparison to the strengths of their oral and mathematical development. Staff are committed to inclusive practice and work hard to ensure that all children are provided with learning activities that are well matched to individual needs.

6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.3 The quality of provision is good with outstanding features. The practitioners' comprehensive knowledge of the children, together with regular observations, enables them to provide a wide range of exciting activities so that children are suitably challenged or supported. A good balance is achieved between adult-led activities and those the children choose for themselves. Nursery children rose to the challenge of building a Sukkah when investigating life in Israel. Although children experience exciting, purposeful play, lack of natural resources means that opportunities are limited outdoors for investigative and problem-solving activities. High priority is given by committed practitioners to promoting the children's health and safety. Children are very effectively supported by their key person, who fosters their welfare by constantly reinforcing good health and hygiene routines such as hand washing. Regular checks on the learning environment ensure that all equipment is safe.

6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.4 Outcomes for children are good. They enter Nursery with ability in line with age-related expectations in communication, language and literacy, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy and physical development. Their ability is slightly lower in the other aspects. By the end of the EYFS, children have made good progress in all six areas, and their skills are particularly strong in speaking, listening and numeracy

but less well developed in writing. They are confidently articulate, engaging in interesting conversations about the wider world in their role play. Children in Reception could do simple addition and subtraction sums, for example when working out how many children were absent. They are happy, well motivated and eager to learn, responding very well to the expectations of staff and developing the habits of good learners. Their personal development is strong. Children enjoy accepting responsibility as monitors and contributing to the smooth running of the classroom by helping to clear away equipment. They are well behaved, and develop excellent relationships with each other and with their teachers. They are highly active, enjoy physical exercise and understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. The calm environment helps them to feel safe so that they enjoy all activities.

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

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 another governor, 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. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Elizabeth Coley

Mr Gareth Davies

Mrs Jennifer Morris

Mrs Valerie Goode

Reporting Inspector

Headmaster, ISA/IAPS school

Head of Lower School, IAPS school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector