



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BANCROFT'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Bancroft's Preparatory School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	Bancroft's Preparatory School
DfE Number	317/6071
Registered Charity Number	1068532
Address	Bancroft's Preparatory School 611-627 High Road Woodford Green Essex IG8 0RF
Telephone Number	020 85066751
Fax Number	0208 5066752
Email Address	prep.office@bancrofts.org
Head	Mr Joe Layburn
Chair of Governors	Professor Philip Ogden
Age Range	7 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	259
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (114 boys; 145 girls)
Inspection dates	19 Nov 2013 to 22 Nov 2013

PREFACE

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

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.

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 and vice-chair of governors, 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 Diane Gardiner

Mr Simon Willcocks

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Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Former head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	7
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	7
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	8
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	8
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	10
(a) The quality of governance	10
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	10

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bancroft's School aims to be a centre of excellence and believes its role is to bring out the very best in pupils both academically and in terms of their emotional intelligence. Within a vibrant multi-cultural environment their aim is to prepare pupils for life in the outside world where the ability to form positive relationships and to lead a happy life is as important as the ability to read or reckon. They believe that by having fun while they learn their pupils will develop a lifelong love of learning.
- 1.2 Bancroft's Preparatory School is the junior section of Bancroft's School, which was founded as a boys' school in 1737 in the East End of London. It moved to its current seven-acre site in Woodford in 1889 and is still supported by the Worshipful Company of Drapers, which has significant representation on the governing body. The preparatory school, which caters for boys and girls from the age of seven to eleven, opened in 1990. Most pupils proceed to the senior school at the age of eleven. A small number of pupils leave Bancroft's to attend other local senior schools.
- 1.3 The school is a charitable trust, administered by a governing body, which oversees both schools with a designated governor for the preparatory school. A new chairman of governors was appointed in 2013. The head of the senior school has overall responsibility for Bancroft's, and delegates the responsibility for leading and managing the preparatory school to its headmaster. The preparatory school maintains its own distinct character whilst remaining an integral section of the whole school. The school is accommodated in purpose built contemporary buildings, which provide facilities for science, art and design technology and performing arts whilst sharing a dining hall and swimming pool with the senior school.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection there has been capital investment in new accommodation for information and communication technology (ICT), art and science for the whole school. The preparatory school has reviewed the curriculum in order to allow pupils to spend more time with their teachers with the aim of developing strong pastoral relationships and to allow the younger pupils to develop cross-curricular opportunities. The management team has also been strengthened by the addition of phase leaders.
- 1.5 The school has 259 pupils on roll in four year groups. Admission to the school at the age of seven is by competitive assessment and the average ability profile is well above the national average with very few pupils having ability that is less than average. Pupils come from a wide local area and a wide range of social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. A number have English as an additional language (EAL) although none requires support with language skills. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs but 29 benefit from specialist learning support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 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 table.

School	NC name
Alphas	Year 3
Betas	Year 4
Prep 1	Year 5
Prep 2	Year 6

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school successfully meets its aims and provides a high quality educational experience to its pupils. Pupils' achievement is excellent across the age-range due to a consistently energetic, enthusiastic and positive attitude for learning. They reach high standards in their academic work and a broad range of extra-curricular activities. Recent changes to the curriculum have increased opportunities for cross-curricular links for the younger pupils and provided pupils with time each day with their class teacher. The curriculum is now broad, well balanced and provides appropriate diversity. Excellent and inspiring teaching is backed by thorough planning and schemes of work. Pupils of all abilities make rapid progress in relation to their starting points and are particularly adept at evaluating their own strengths and areas for development.
- 2.2 The personal development of pupils is excellent across all age groups. Pupils display a maturity of thought and understanding of the needs of others and articulately express their own opinions while listening carefully to the views of others. Arrangements for pastoral care are carefully embedded into all aspects of school life ensuring that pupils feel secure and happy. Warm, mutually respectful and supportive relationships help pupils to develop high levels of interpersonal skills, confidence and self-esteem. Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good. All necessary procedures and policies are now in place and staff are carefully trained to ensure the safety of the pupils.
- 2.3 The governors provide good oversight of the school; they discharge their statutory duties well and have a clear vision for the school's future development. They are aware of their regulatory responsibilities. However, it took some time before the school complied with the action point of the previous inspection on recruitment checks. By the time of this inspection all staff had been suitably checked, and a system is in place that ensures that all checks are now done in a timely manner in all cases. The quality of leadership and management is excellent and highly committed. The management structure of the school has been reviewed since the previous inspection and now includes phase leaders. A transition leader ensures that entry to the school is managed effectively. A staff appraisal system is in place but does not yet link into monitoring processes or continuous professional development. The school development plan is a useful short term tool but does not yet contain sufficient detail to assist in the process of moving the school forward. The head is now more involved with the management of the whole school, meeting a recommendation from the previous inspection. Links with parents are excellent. In the pre-inspection questionnaire and in meetings with inspectors they were highly appreciative of all aspects of the work of the school but particularly commented on the high level of pastoral support and guidance provided for their children.

2.(b) Action points**(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Strengthen the development plan to include longer term goals, supported by more detailed objectives and timescales for implementation.
 2. Develop the staff appraisal system to include links to continuous professional development, the monitoring of curriculum development and of teaching and learning.
 3. Ensure that pupils of all abilities are fully supported in the classroom to access the school's challenging curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement is excellent.
- 3.2 The school successfully meets its aim to provide its pupils with the best possible academic education and reach their full potential as rounded individuals. Across a wide range of areas, including academic subjects, music, art, sport and drama, pupils achieve high standards. Pupils demonstrate a strong factual knowledge, effectively apply their skills in all subjects and show excellent understanding across the curriculum as a whole. At all levels, pupils achieve excellent standards in their numeracy skills and effectively apply them to work across the curriculum. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their independent and logical thinking skills, for example when interrogating historical sources to a very high standard or discussing the similarities to be found in different world religions.
- 3.3 Across the age range pupils are highly articulate and are able to express their opinions and views fluently, both in their speaking and in their writing, using a wide and varied vocabulary. Their skills in ICT are broad and applied effectively to a range of subjects and for individual research. Pupils listen well in class and to their peers and display strong debating skills across a wide range of challenging topics.
- 3.4 Throughout the school high standards are attained in the creative and performing arts. The skill level of pupils in physical education (PE) and games is high. Boys and girls achieve equally well through the school in all sports. Pupils receiving assistance for SEND develop well across the curriculum and achieve a good understanding of mathematical concepts through careful setting by ability and additional teacher support. Achievement of the most able is particularly high in their understanding of number and written tasks and pupils achieve regular success in the UK Maths Challenge each year. In open competition with external candidates, a significant number of pupils are awarded scholarships to the senior school for academic subjects as well as music.
- 3.5 Significant success has been achieved in fixtures and competitions at local, regional and national level in a number of sports, most notably in netball and hockey. A large number of pupils achieve high levels of success in music and drama examinations each year.
- 3.6 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national average, but based on the evidence available, including work seen in lessons, work scrutiny and curriculum interviews, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. These high levels of achievement are evident in results of standardised tests undertaken at the end of each year. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND and the most able, make excellent progress in relation to their different starting points.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages are exceptionally well-motivated and enthusiastic learners who bring determination, energy and self-reflection to their learning. They successfully assess their own progress in an open dialogue with their teachers through assessment for learning, and display a strong capacity to evaluate their own strengths and areas for development. Pupils work well independently and collaboratively and demonstrate excellent ability for research. They organise

themselves effectively, enjoy taking on responsibility and show a maturity of thought for their age.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of the school's curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 It fully supports the school's aims of providing high academic standards, producing well-rounded pupils and celebrating the multi-cultural intake of the school. The curriculum is very well planned and is suitable to the age groups, ability range and learning needs of the pupils.
- 3.10 The curriculum is broad and well balanced. Since the previous inspection, changes to the structure of the curriculum have allowed for greater use of appropriate cross-curricular links and greater emphasis has been placed on the role of the form teacher. In the lower years, time has been created that allows pupils to engage with topics for longer periods of time and follow their own lines of enquiry. The introduction of year group leaders means that there is greater continuity and consistency in planning. Subject leaders are increasingly effective in monitoring their subjects, although the tracking of pupil achievement in some areas is underdeveloped. Pupils express high levels of satisfaction and value the opportunity to benefit from the range of subjects offered. The introduction of a new reading scheme is a good example of curriculum development increasing pupils' enjoyment of reading and raising standards in literacy. The pupils' aesthetic development is enriched by additional opportunities in music, art and drama. They have the chance to flourish in the orchestras and music groups, choirs, dance lessons and regular school productions and there are ample opportunities for the children to perform.
- 3.11 The curriculum provides a suitable level of challenge for the pupils and provides opportunities for them to use their initiative, work independently, work collaboratively and co-operatively and engage in self-directed research. It provides a secure framework for pupils to take risks in their learning. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to regularly evaluate their progress through a marking dialogue with their teachers and a system of peer review. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 benefit from careful setting by prior attainment in mathematics. Planning is meticulous and provides for work to be suitably varied to match the range of ability. Planning also provides for the support of SEND pupils, but in practice, support is sometimes inconsistent. The use of ICT permeates all aspects of the curriculum. It is used productively and imaginatively and offers a rich diversity of experience including programming, blog making and pupils using videos of themselves to evaluate their work.
- 3.12 The provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent for all pupils and the range is exceptionally wide, offering activities as diverse as journalism, German and debating. Pupils express great enthusiasm for the type and diversity of activities provided by members of staff and after school activities are extremely well attended. There has been a significant increase in the number of teams in which the children can represent the school and the school enjoys a considerable degree of success in the sports in which they compete.
- 3.13 The curriculum is further enriched by a wide and diverse assortment of day and residential trips that support the topics being studied across the school. Pupils spoke enthusiastically and excitedly about the trips they have been involved in. Pupils' experiences are broadened by a wide range of visits and workshops and by

members of the wider community and subject-specialist experts who visit the school to provide talks on specific subjects ranging from Shakespeare to forensic science.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.15 Teaching is extremely effective in promoting pupils' progress and fosters their interest in learning, strongly supporting the school's aims. At its best, teaching is inspirational. Through a clear understanding of children's individual needs, staff prepare engaging activities using excellent resources to motivate and interest them, helping them to learn effectively. Staff are knowledgeable and through their enthusiasm they ensure that children are eager to learn. Pupils are challenged to think and question in considerable detail.
- 3.16 Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and teachers use a range of teaching styles that appropriately challenge and extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Thorough and detailed planning ensures consistency between classes in the same year group. Pupils are extremely well behaved in their lessons and relationships are excellent. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and pupils feel confident to seek help should they require it. Teachers support individual pupils who need additional help in lessons. On the whole, tasks are very well matched to the range of abilities in the class, but in a small number of cases, pupils with SEND who had been identified in planning were less well supported.
- 3.17 Almost all teaching is encouraging, supported by high expectations of pupils. This allows pupils to develop the confidence to contribute to their lessons with great enthusiasm and perseverance, and to work independently and take risks, leading to excellent achievement in almost all cases. Pupils feel that they make good progress with their work through the support of their teachers. They are helped to develop study skills and strategies, including meditation, to be used in their future education and in preparation for examinations. The breadth of pupils' learning is further enhanced by the appropriate use of cross-curricular links between subjects such as English and history, or English and PSHE. Many teachers exploit the use of ICT effectively in lessons and pupils are given a rich diversity of opportunities to use technology in their learning.
- 3.18 Since the previous inspection, assessment has been improved. It now provides opportunities for teachers and pupils to communicate through a marking dialogue. At its best this is constructive and informative; it gives pupils regular opportunities to reflect upon and evaluate their work in order to improve. The process provides additional targeted challenges and areas of research. This is appreciated by parents, while pupils value greatly the individual feedback and targets that they are given about their work. Subject leaders are increasingly effective in monitoring their subjects which meets a recommendation from the previous inspection, although tracking of pupil achievement still needs further development.

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' excellent personal development fulfils the school's aim to ensure that the school is a happy, productive, supportive community where pupils are encouraged to use their initiative but are not afraid to ask for help. By the time pupils leave the school they are confident, capable young people who have a strong awareness of their place in the wider community and of the need to help others. Pupils demonstrate a high level of personal and emotional maturity. They have a strong sense of their own self-worth, understand their own strengths and develop these through participation in drama, music, sport and PSHE lessons.
- 4.3 Pupils' excellent spiritual awareness is demonstrated on a daily basis through their willingness to share each other's customs and practices and openly discuss the similarities and differences between the many faiths represented in the school. In an RE lesson, for example, they discussed a number of sites considered holy for Buddhists and recognised their importance to other world faiths. They are aware of the non-material aspects of life, as demonstrated in a discussion to explore the range of feelings that humans feel following bereavement of different kinds. Pupils demonstrate keen awareness of the impact that music and the arts can have on emotions through the sharing of a wide range of musical and artistic traditions.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent moral awareness. All year groups actively support and take responsibility for each other. They understand the needs of others, reflected in the calm way they move around the school and the strong mutual respect and support they show for each other and staff. They explore challenging moral and ethical issues such as what would be the correct thing to do if they found a large sum of money. Their awareness of right and wrong and the importance of helping others is clearly displayed through their contributions to the elected school council and their work in raising money for their own carefully chosen charities throughout the year.
- 4.5 The pupils' social development is excellent in all respects. Year 6 pupils apply for the role of prefect and receive training in supporting the younger children, resulting in positive and warm links across and between the year groups. They are highly supportive of one another's learning and sensitive to the different needs of their friends. They are polite to one another and work extremely well together in lessons, extra-curricular activities and in teams. Pupils are tolerant of one another and express their own views articulately but also experience a good range of political opinions. They have an excellent understanding of British public institutions, key figures in society such as government ministers and the election process.
- 4.6 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. The school's location with its broad international mix of cultures and faiths promotes genuine understanding, tolerance and awareness of the customs and traditions of others. Pupils develop a clear understanding of different faiths and value the achievements of each one, as well as having a strong understanding of the Western cultural tradition. The links that the school has with communities in Tanzania and India and the pupils' sharing of each other's musical and artistic traditions broaden this cultural appreciation. They demonstrate civic pride when performing to groups outside the school community, for example when the choir sang to help raise funds for a local charity. A broad

range of school trips, both in the local vicinity and abroad, enable pupils to learn about different cultures at first hand.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The arrangements for pastoral care support the school's aim to build strong relationships between children and staff, fostering a happy, supportive community. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are excellent and are highly valued by the pupils, who speak of Bancroft's with pride. School rules are few and effective, and there is an often unspoken understanding of what constitutes good behaviour in school. Sanctions and rewards are clearly understood and encourage the children to do their best.
- 4.9 Praise is widely used in lessons, teachers circulate freely, offering support and challenge; pupils are highly appreciative of this and recognise its impact on their progress. The restructured school day and curriculum mean teachers spend more time with their classes, improving their relationships with their pupils. Concerns are swiftly dealt with and pupils feel safe in school, knowing to whom they should turn if they are unhappy. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy; pupil interviews and questionnaires indicate that bullying is rare and swiftly dealt with. Anti-bullying week involved lessons on how to respond to bullying, encouraging pupils to reflect on the most appropriate responses.
- 4.10 School council members conscientiously seek the views of their classmates. Pupils are confident that their views are listened to and acted upon and were able to name several recent changes to aspects of school life that had been identified by the school council such as the introduction of new water fountains.
- 4.11 Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. Opportunities to reflect on what contributes to keeping healthy are provided through science, PSHE and PE lessons, and the many opportunities to participate in sporting activities complement this well. There is a wide range of healthy choices available at lunch time and the pupils express appreciation of the quality of the food.
- 4.12 The school has suitable plans to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.14 The policy to safeguard pupils' welfare is comprehensive and accurately matches current practice. The designated person ensures that all teaching and non-teaching staff have a thorough knowledge of their responsibilities for safeguarding and attends regular training updates through the local authority, with which there are very effective links. New staff receive high quality safeguarding induction training. A designated and suitably trained governor supports the school in emphasising its priority for pupils' welfare. All staff within the school have completed checks which have been properly recorded, although in the past some of these checks were completed after the appointment date. Rigorous procedures now exist for undertaking the necessary recruitment checks on all new staff.
- 4.15 There is a suitable health and safety policy and a committee, including a governor, meets termly to review all health and safety matters. This group is representative of

all key areas within the school and acts as a valuable forum for discussion and subsequent action. The fire policy clearly defines emergency procedures; fire drills are regularly carried out, logged meticulously and any matters arising are dealt with promptly. Additionally, fire and electrical equipment is tested systematically and any deficiencies quickly remedied. Risk assessments for activities and off-site visits are suitably detailed; risk assessments for the premises are in place and the school is putting in place a new system for monitoring and implementing any outcomes.

- 4.16 The medical centre provides excellent care for pupils who are sick or injured, or for those who simply need a sympathetic ear. Medical records are comprehensive and accidents are appropriately reported. Medicines are stored correctly and there are very good channels of communication between the medical team and the school staff. The needs of pupils with specific conditions are also dealt with very thoroughly and concern for the individual is paramount.
- 4.17 Admission and attendance records are correctly maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governance provides committed and effective oversight of the school and is highly supportive of its aims and ethos. The governing body has a broad range of experience and expertise and the committee structure, including finance, education and estates, provides strong monitoring of educational standards, together with secure financial planning. This enables the school to provide high quality accommodation, staffing and resources for learning. New governors are recruited carefully to complement the existing skills and there is a thorough programme of induction and training.
- 5.3 Through a well-structured and thorough process of oversight and monitoring, the governors have an excellent understanding of the work of the school. Since the previous inspection the establishment of a preparatory school committee has given the governors a greater insight into the needs of the junior section and enhanced its position within the context of the whole school. The head of the preparatory school now reports to, and attends, full board meetings ensuring that he is more involved in financial and strategic planning, which meets a recommendation from the previous inspection. Designated governors make regular visits to the school with a clear focus and report back to the whole board on a termly basis. A programme of detailed reports, lesson observations, support for development planning and self-evaluation, as well as regular attendance at school functions ensures that governors understand and support the nature of the preparatory section of the school and are well known to parents, staff and pupils.
- 5.4 Governors understand and discharge their responsibilities for the statutory requirements well, including the annual review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy and the child protection arrangements. Following the previous inspection, it took some time to ensure all of the necessary checks on some staff were made. However, these historic anomalies in vetting staff were corrected, and checks were carried out and recorded appropriately for all those who needed them. The current system ensures that the proper checks are carried out in a timely manner, and as a result, all recently appointed staff have been checked appropriately.
- 5.5 Governors review all policies annually on a rolling basis and a newly appointed member of the board has the responsibility for ensuring that these meet requirements.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 Leadership and management are highly successful in promoting the aims and ethos of the school, as reflected in the high quality of pupils' education and the excellent standard of their personal development. Throughout the school, policies are implemented efficiently and the measures to safeguard pupils are now effective,

signifying the level of commitment that senior leaders have towards fulfilling their responsibilities and meeting their aim of providing the best possible education for their pupils. The high quality, well designed accommodation, along with an excellent range of learning resources and a good range of outdoor play areas, provide for an excellent learning environment.

- 5.8 There is clear educational direction from the leadership. Processes for self-evaluation are good and demonstrate that senior leaders and managers have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff have ample opportunities to contribute their views towards priorities for improvement. The school development plan is clear and contains many short-term objectives, although longer-term planning is limited at present.
- 5.9 Management is successful in recruiting, supporting, developing and motivating high quality staff. All staff at the school are now appropriately checked for their suitability to work with children and receive high quality induction and continuing guidance for their respective roles in safeguarding and welfare and guidance matters. Priority is placed on the continuous professional development (CPD) of staff, to ensure their continuing high quality practice. A comprehensive programme of in-house staff training is regularly organised to support the school's development, and staff attend external courses on an individual basis. Staff appraisal is in its infancy and the process does not yet link to the monitoring of teaching and learning or CPD.
- 5.10 The school maintains highly effective relationships with parents, fulfilling its aim of building strong relationships between pupils, staff and parents. Parents comment upon the evident team spirit and commitment of the whole teaching staff and of the exceptional management of the leadership team. Across the school, in responses to the questionnaire and conversations with inspectors, the overwhelming majority of parents expressed great satisfaction with all aspects of the quality of education and care that the school provides for their children.
- 5.11 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents are highly appreciative of all that the school does to involve them in their children's education, and particularly praise the school's pastoral support, saying that every member of the school seems to know every child. Parents feel that the school handles their concerns promptly and in accordance with its published procedures including the complaints procedure. There were no complaints on record at the time of the inspection.
- 5.12 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school, being invited to a wide range of performances including lunchtime music concerts, Christmas concerts, plays and opportunities to celebrate their children's success. They regularly share their cultural customs and personal passions, including rock-climbing and religious festivals, with the pupils as part of assemblies and other school events. There is a flourishing parents' association, which organises many events to support the school.
- 5.13 Parents receive high-quality information about the school. All required information is available to parents of existing and prospective pupils. The school's open door policy gives parents easy access to senior leaders and all teaching staff are readily contactable through electronic communication.
- 5.14 Parents are well informed about their children's progress through newsletters, email and the school's virtual learning environment. They receive report cards half termly on core subjects and termly for all subjects, with a full written report at the end of the

academic year. Parents' evenings are held twice a year. Parents say that teachers are very well prepared for parent consultation evenings and particularly value the highly individual comments on the end of year reports which celebrate their children's achievements as well as indicating future targets. Parents have found that since the implementation of self-evaluation as a means of assessment, they are increasingly well-informed about their children's progress through sharing the dialogue between pupil and teacher in the books that are brought home for homework tasks.

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