



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BALLARD SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Ballard School

Full Name of School	Ballard School
DfE Number	850/6012
EYFS Number	EY311188
Registered Charity Number	307328
Address	Ballard School Fernhill Lane New Milton Hampshire BH25 5SU
Telephone Number	01425 611153
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Email Address	admissions@ballardschool.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Alastair Reid
Chair of Governors	Mr Richard Blake
Age Range	1 to 16
Total Number of Pupils	503
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (275 boys; 228 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 24 5-11: 132 3-5 (EYFS): 61 11-16: 286
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 503
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Valerie Chapman
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	18th October 2011 to 19th October 2011 16th November 2011 to 18th November 2011

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 2005.

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 Ballard School is a co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of one and a half and sixteen years. The present school is an amalgamation of several schools, the earliest of which was founded in 1895, and the school maintains its Christian foundation. The school is situated in extensive grounds on the southern edge of the New Forest. The original country house, with its own chapel, is at the centre of a complex of modern classroom and specialist buildings. The preparatory and pre-preparatory schools are linked to the main house; the senior school for Years 9 to 11 is separate. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), including the Nursery, is part of the pre-preparatory school, which has its own separate playgrounds.
- 1.2 The school aims to be a caring family school, welcoming to parents and, through encouraging an ethos of good citizenship, giving self-confidence to pupils of all ages. It seeks to provide an all-round education which, by offering a breadth of opportunity, particularly in the performing arts, will enable pupils of all abilities to achieve beyond expectations in public examinations. The school is an educational charitable trust, whose trustees form the board of governors.
- 1.3 There are 503 pupils on roll; 85 in the EYFS, 24 in Years 1 and 2, 191 in Years 3 to 8, and 203 in Years 9 to 11. Of the 237 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), three have statements of special educational needs. Sixty-nine pupils receive specialist learning support; the needs of the remainder are monitored and attended to within the classroom. No pupils have English as an additional language. The school does not set academic tests on entry although there is an assessment procedure.
- 1.4 On entry to the preparatory school, the ability profile is similar to the national average, with the spread of abilities broadly following national trends. The ability profile of Year 7 and of the senior school is slightly above the national average. A wide spread of abilities is represented, although half of the pupils have an ability that is at least above average.
- 1.5 The majority of pupils are white British, with few from minority ethnic groups. Pupils' families live within a radius of twenty miles from the school, and most have professional or business backgrounds. A few pupils leave at the end of Year 6 or Year 8, but most continue to the end of Year 11. Pupils then transfer to sixth-form colleges or the sixth form of boarding schools or local day schools, including grammar schools.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school in the EYFS setting and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalent are shown in the following table. The school uses NC year group names from Year 1 onwards.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Kindergarten 1	Nursery
Kindergarten 2	Nursery
Reception	Reception

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good overall, and excellent in some areas. The school's aim to provide an all-round education which will enable pupils of all abilities to achieve beyond expectations in public examinations is amply fulfilled. Pupils are well motivated by the wealth of opportunities they are offered to achieve both within the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities, particularly in the creative and performing arts. Good, and at times excellent, teaching leads to an enjoyment in and commitment to learning and, consequently, achievement and examination results which are good in relation to pupils' abilities, indicating that their progress is often above the average for pupils of similar abilities. In interviews and in class, pupils express themselves clearly and with confidence, showing interest and commitment not only in their academic subjects but also in the wider curriculum. Their subject knowledge and understanding are good; they use computers efficiently and apply their skills capably for independent research.
- 2.2 The school amply fulfils its aim to be a caring family school, welcoming to parents. Through encouraging an ethos of good citizenship, it gives self-confidence to pupils of all ages. The personal development of pupils is excellent; they are helpful, considerate and courteous around the school. They are responsive to and appreciative of the excellent pastoral care, support and guidance which are offered and the warmth and kindness which surrounds them.
- 2.3 The governance of the school is excellent; the trustees exercise effective financial oversight and control. They have a strong commitment to the school and fulfil their duties responsibly. Highly effective leadership and strong management make a significant contribution to the good levels of academic and other achievements of the pupils and to their excellent personal development. Throughout the school, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is rapidly developing which is bringing benefits not only to teaching, learning, assessment and communication with parents but also to administration and management systems.
- 2.4 Parents are very pleased with the progress of their children, the pastoral care and high expectations of behaviour. They praise highly the range of curricular and extra-curricular activities and the attitudes and values evident within the school; there is much appreciation of the encouragement they are given to be involved, the ease of communication and the ready availability of information. Their children expressed similar views. An area of concern to both parents and children is homework, and a lack of clear direction and consistency which causes problems in the evenings. The inspectors and the school understood the difficulty facing parents and children in finding the correct balance between the demands of homework and the benefits derived from participation in the school's excellent extra-curricular programme. The recommendations of the previous inspections have been successfully addressed.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.5 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Prioritise a review of the structure and monitoring of homework requirements at each stage in order to give clear guidance to pupils and parents.
 2. Implement promptly the proposed new school virtual learning environment (VLE) to develop wider opportunities for online learning and further informing parents.
 3. Develop further resources and the outdoor areas for the youngest Nursery children.

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 successfully educated in full accordance with the school's aims. The quality of their academic and other achievements is good overall, and excellent in some areas. Their all-round achievement is based on strong levels of knowledge, understanding and skill in curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 3.2 Pupils listen attentively both to their teachers and to each other; they express themselves clearly and with confidence. In modern foreign languages, pupils concentrate carefully to understand and respond; paired discussion and learning is effective throughout the school. Pupils have many opportunities for extended writing, and Year 7 creative writing competition entries were of excellent quality. Logical and independent thinking was illustrated across the ability range from Year 1 and 2 as they arranged pictures of predators in order, to Year 11's controlled assessment work in English and history, which frequently demonstrated high level word-processing skills and clear evidence of independent internet research.
- 3.3 The curriculum is rich in creative subjects and all pupils are encouraged to participate fully from the pre-preparatory school upwards. Year 4 were working at a high standard for their age on decorated clay boats in a contemporary style; Year 7 were learning to put lyrics to melodies they had created, and those in Years 6 to 8 were seen in a performance of *Treasure Island*. Creativity continues into the rich range of extra-curricular after-school activities, where Years 3 to 8 were painting with oils on canvas and others were enjoying silk screen printing.
- 3.4 The application of ICT is embedded in many subjects, it is clear that pupils are confident in their use of computers and related technology and rely on this ability to research subjects and, in mathematics, to complete their homework. Classroom walls are rich with the display of pupils' ICT work. The comprehensive range of projects underway in technology requires the application of mathematics as one of the many skills applied. A Year 4 science class was actively involved in measuring bones, collating data and comparing it with that of adults to learn about growth. The physical education (PE) department, offers a wide range of activities including dance, and has a strong record in team competition sports.
- 3.5 There is an excellent record of Year 11 pupils gaining their first choice places in the next stage of their education and their significant achievements include a recent national award for a team of young engineers. A wide range of academic awards and scholarships, together with distinctions in external examinations and challenges, are much to the credit of the school. Other recent successes at national level have been achieved in sports, including sailing, water-polo and wind-surfing, and in music, dance, speech and drama, with pupils appearing in major London productions.
- 3.6 Pupils' results in GCSE are good in relation to the national average for maintained schools and have shown improvement from 2008 to 2010. Increasing numbers of pupils are achieving A and A* grades, and also C grades and above in English, mathematics and science. GCSE results are good in relation to pupils' abilities, indicating that their progress in Years 9 to 11 is above the average for pupils of similar abilities.

- 3.7 Since the previous inspection a very effective system of tracking academic progress has been implemented with every pupil's progress being monitored, and action taken as appropriate. All pupils are aware of how they are performing, what they need to do to improve and where help is available if they need it. Nationally standardised tests are used to identify pupils with particular needs, but also allow the school to measure pupils' progress against predicted levels of attainment throughout a pupil's life at the school. Trends over time, indicated by results of standardised tests together with lesson observation, scrutiny of work and conversations with pupils about their work, point towards improving standards of attainment and good progress.
- 3.8 Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning and involvement in activities. The school has a strong learning ethos to which pupils subscribe and in which they participate willingly. Pupils interact well and show respect for each other's opinions. A relaxed yet respectful relationship between pupils and staff allows them to share the common goals of a joy in learning and striving to do their best, whatever the task.

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

- 3.9 Together, curricular and extra-curricular provision make an excellent contribution to the pupils' consistently good achievement and progress throughout the school, from the EYFS onwards. The curriculum is well-balanced, effectively covers the requisite areas of learning at each stage and offers additional breadth, with its opportunities from an early age in modern foreign languages, art and ceramics, design and technology, music and dance, speech and drama, and sports and games. The curriculum significantly supports the school's Christian ethos, and its aim of nurturing pupils of all abilities. The extra-curricular programme is outstanding throughout the school and reflects the commitment of staff to the all-round development of the pupils.
- 3.10 In all sections of the school, the curriculum is timetabled effectively, while planning is thorough and appropriate for the abilities and needs of the pupils. Across the curriculum, ICT is used extensively, and pupils display an array of competencies which support and complement their learning.
- 3.11 Excellent provision is made for pupils with SEND, and the cohesive nature of the staff ensures that individual needs are consistently integrated into teaching and learning. Individual education plans are effectively implemented and monitored, and again reflect the care and professionalism of the staff. Teachers are alert to the needs of gifted and talented pupils, providing opportunities and challenge throughout a busy curriculum programme.
- 3.12 Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education. The school policy of ensuring that, whenever appropriate, specialists teach subjects such as French, PE, music, drama, dance and art throughout the age groups gives pupils an excellent foundation for the future.
- 3.13 The curriculum continues to grow and enrich the lives of the pupils. Outstanding work in the creative and performing arts and technology confirms the school's commitment to continuous improvement and high standards.

- 3.14 The range of extra-curricular activities, held regularly after school, at lunchtime and at break-time, is excellent and drawn from the interests of a talented and supportive staff. Extra-curricular activities are valued and enjoyed by the pupils who benefit from the school's drive in reviewing existing practice and providing new challenges. Participation is high and is actively encouraged; attendance levels are tracked as recommended by the previous inspection.
- 3.15 An extensive fixtures list, combined with high-quality sporting facilities, enriches the curriculum and provides opportunity for personal development and representative honours.
- 3.16 Community links are fostered through a wide range of charity work, business links and valued engagement with the local community and schools. The many outstanding examples range from the spring term lecture programme, with visiting high-profile speakers, to working closely with local cricket clubs and dance groups, all of which directly benefit the pupils. The enthusiasm and energy demonstrated by the staff is testimony to their support for the values of the school.
- 3.17 Pupils benefit significantly from the staff's openness to self-evaluation and their willingness to embrace curriculum development, which is embedded in a culture of collective responsibility and appreciation of the whole child.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.18 The quality of teaching overall is good and it contributes effectively to the progress of pupils, their learning and personal development at each stage. A substantial proportion of excellent lessons were observed. Religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons are thoughtfully taught throughout the school and contribute significantly to pupils' excellent personal development and pastoral care.
- 3.19 Relatively small class sizes allow pupils to be well known as individuals, and the encouraging teaching enables them to make good progress and give of their best. Carefully developed policies which take into account the needs of individuals facilitate good planning throughout the school and lead to effective teaching methods. The talents, enthusiasm and engaging nature of the pupils are nurtured and celebrated by staff who are dedicated to their subjects and age groups. Teaching methods are diverse and cater to a range of learning styles. Relationships between pupils and staff are consistently good natured and are based on mutual respect, which is evident in all areas of school life.
- 3.20 Pupils with SEND are well supported and make good progress, reflecting the school's aim to value pupils of all abilities. Strategies for challenging the more able pupils are in place and teachers share with them their extensive knowledge and passion for their subjects.
- 3.21 Highly effective use is made of the school's extensive resources, including ICT areas, libraries, sports facilities and the very well-equipped music and performing arts centres. Pupils are provided with internet access to online learning resources in a number of subjects, which encourages their independent learning skills. In modern foreign languages in the senior school, their speaking skills are tested and graded electronically. A new VLE initiative is being developed to further enhance online learning.

- 3.22 Pupils are provided with numerous opportunities for independent learning and respond positively to the challenges set by their teachers. Effective questioning techniques, peer-assessment and self-assessment promote a lively and enthusiastic atmosphere, enabling the pupils to achieve well. Praise and encouragement are used to good effect which increases pupils' enjoyment of the topics studied. Behaviour within and outside the classroom is of a consistently high standard. Teachers' discipline is kindly but firm and alert to straying attention. Pupils respond readily to the range of school incentive and reward schemes and applaud one another's successes.
- 3.23 Work is marked regularly and in line with appropriate policies. The best marking is consistent, detailed, and annotated with helpful comments to support further progress. Teachers' comments and related targets are appreciatively received by the pupils and enhance their learning.
- 3.24 A focus on the use of data, monitoring and target setting is having a significant impact on the way teachers track their pupils' progress. The use of standardised testing ensures that the pupils' abilities and projected achievements are identified, and this information is disseminated to all teachers to guide their planning. Appropriate assessment procedures are in place throughout the school, and staff regularly review and reflect upon the impact of teaching on each individual child's progress.

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 pupils at the school is excellent. The school's aim to give self-confidence to pupils through encouraging an ethos of good citizenship in a secure and caring environment is fully supported by staff and is successfully achieved. The recently extended PSHE and citizenship programme has reinforced the development of the pupils' personal qualities and built on the good practice in place at the previous inspection.
- 4.2 The spiritual development of pupils is nurtured most successfully in the creative arts, assemblies and in religious studies when pupils from an early age visit places of worship of different faiths. The response of pupils in assemblies to the hymn and short prayer and talk is thoughtful and respectful, and an appreciation of the ideals and ethos of a caring Christian community is continually strengthened.
- 4.3 Pupils clearly have a strong and developing understanding of moral and ethical values, a sense of right and wrong, and a respect for the school's expectations of good behaviour. Pupils were eager to speak of the opportunities they had to develop their independent thinking and consider world issues such as racism and homelessness, along with an appreciation of the needs of people in other countries. Pupils also have a good understanding of the benefit of charitable giving. Their recent charity week initiative raised a considerable sum to support a ward in the local Children's Oncology Centre, while significant sums are raised during the year for schools and projects in India and Africa.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent social and environmental awareness and feel a valued part of a caring school. Pupils are courteous and articulate, and show an appreciation of the achievements of others. Acknowledgement and celebration of success, and praise for something well done, are part of the school's life, through which the pupils develop self-confidence and self-belief. Pupils in various years are given opportunities to take on responsibility, particularly prefects in Year 11. They value their positions and are dedicated to help improve their school. The school council has representatives from all years and has been successful in having a number of proposals adopted. Older pupils show much kindness and consideration towards younger pupils. A recently introduced Ballard Charter puts emphasis on all pupils taking responsibility for their actions.
- 4.5 Through the PSHE course, the personal development of pupils is enhanced as they learn about public institutions, social services, the wider community and the appropriate response in difficult situations such as bullying. They know whom to turn to for help and advice.
- 4.6 Culturally, pupils develop an excellent appreciation and understanding of life and education in countries other than their own through the well-established and organised school exchange programmes. Their cultural development is greatly enhanced by the emphasis on the creative arts in the school; from an early stage, they are surrounded by examples of literature, art, dance, drama and music from around the world.

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

- 4.7 The quality of the pastoral care and the attention given to the welfare of pupils is excellent throughout the school. The caring and friendly environment is a major strength of the whole school. Pupils feel valued and independence is fostered. The pupils' welfare is paramount in the aims and ethos of the school, and the measures and procedures to safeguard and promote this and their health and safety are comprehensive, successful and are kept constantly under review. Frequent and well-recorded pastoral meetings are held by a dedicated team of staff. The child protection training programme for staff is efficiently run and the training programme for Year 4 pupils to mentor and help Year 3 pupils is an excellent example of commitment to pastoral care. Year 4 pupils spoke of their own Year 8 mentors as being their 'big best friends'. Parents are extremely happy with the care, help and guidance given to their children by the staff. Pupils expressed their appreciation of the listening skills of both the school counsellor and the matron.
- 4.8 The school has effective measures in place to promote good discipline and behaviour, which are understood by all. Relationships are extremely positive between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves. They move around the school purposefully and happily, and settle quickly into lessons. The anti-bullying procedures are made clear to pupils, who consider that they are effective and helpful. In discussion, and in response to their questionnaire, pupils are confident that they can ask an adult for support if they have a concern and that issues will be dealt with promptly. Team building and leadership training courses from Year 7 onwards encourage a sense of responsibility for others. The Ballard Challenge, which is a week of lectures and activities off-timetable in Year 9, is frequently referred to positively in conversations with pupils as an important part of their transition to the responsibilities of senior school.
- 4.9 The safeguarding arrangements have due regard to official guidance and take proper account of any particular circumstances related to the school. Exemplary attention is given to ensuring that all necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards.
- 4.10 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are thorough, comprehensive and effective; the medical room is professionally staffed and provides excellent provision for pupils or staff who are ill or injured. Risk assessments and associated routines, such as those for fire safety throughout the school, are meticulous. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained, and correctly stored. The school has a suitable, successfully implemented plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.11 Pupils are taught the importance of participating in physical exercise and choosing a healthy diet. Staff are keen to encourage exercise as a life skill and a route to the enhanced self-esteem of pupils. The catering department provides a choice of freshly prepared, balanced and nutritious meals, all made with care in their spacious modern kitchen. The quality of the food was praised by pupils and the inspectors agreed with them.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The governing body provides outstandingly effective oversight of the school. It is entirely in sympathy with, and supportive of the school's aims, and committed to their successful fulfilment.
- 5.2 The governors receive regular reports on achievement throughout the school and exercise, with care and diligence, their responsibilities for educational standards. They give careful attention to the need for prudent financial planning to enable them to appoint well-qualified staff, in addition to continuing their programme of investment in accommodation, playing fields and learning resources which will enhance and enrich the education of pupils at each stage. The pre-preparatory department, which includes the EYFS, enjoys spacious, well-resourced classrooms and playgrounds with play equipment of high quality. Every effort is made to enable teaching staff to provide the best possible learning environment for their pupils.
- 5.3 The governing body has an excellent balance of relevant expertise, experience and professional qualifications; this enables it to give invaluable and understanding support and advice to the senior management of the school. It has high expectations and includes challenging targets in its strategic plan. Its members engage in regular training for governance and take very seriously their responsibility for child protection, welfare, health and safety throughout the school.
- 5.4 The governors have an excellent insight into the working of the school through their review and approval of policies, through their efficient and productive comprehensive committee structure, and through their individual responsibilities for supporting specific areas such as safeguarding, safe recruitment, religious education, PSHE, learning support, buildings and access. They work closely with the headmaster, the bursar and the leadership team; budgets and forward strategic planning are thoroughly discussed. Governors are also kept well-informed through their representation on the parents' consultative committee which meets once during each half of term.
- 5.5 The governors carry out their monitoring duties and responsibilities effectively, in addition to those for financial planning and viability. The recent new performing arts centre, dining hall, kitchen and artificial grass pitch are testament to their commitment and success.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.6 The highly successful leadership and strong management of the school are totally committed to the achievement of its aims. The school benefits significantly from experienced, determined, highly professional and supportive leadership which inspires confidence in pupils and parents. Happy, self-confident pupils of all ages enjoy a breadth of opportunity which enables them to achieve good results not only in public examinations but also in many other areas of interest and endeavour.
- 5.7 The leadership provides clear educational direction. At whole-school and at departmental level, the leadership has been successful in recruiting, supporting, motivating and developing high-quality staff, and ensuring that they are suitably checked and trained for their roles in meeting the needs of pupils. Great care is

taken in the areas of safeguarding, safe recruitment and welfare, health and safety, with appropriate training regularly given to staff.

- 5.8 The past two years have been a period of review and analysis after the appointment of a new headmaster. This has been followed by significant change and development in the leadership and management of the school and the structure of the school day. The preparatory school is presently divided into two sections for Years 3 to 5 and for Years 6 to 8, and a pattern of longer lessons has been introduced. The leadership team, which includes the bursar, is highly committed and cohesive; the three deputy heads each lead a section of the school and there is excellent liaison. Comprehensive policy documents give clear guidelines and are regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- 5.9 At senior management level, staff have accepted new challenges and responsibilities and this has resulted in successful initiatives in several areas, particularly induction, professional development and appraisal. Staff are very positive about the way in which the latter two areas are interlinked and the encouragement they are given to continue their professional development. The introduction of a school management information system has brought many benefits, including keeping staff well informed about pupils who require additional support or extra challenge.
- 5.10 During this period the recommendation of the previous inspection with reference to reducing the timetable commitments of senior staff has been accomplished and an ethos of praise, encouragement and an emphasis on achieving one's best and caring for others has been at the heart of the philosophy of the school. Staff, pupils and parents have recognised the value of this approach and responded with appreciation.

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

- 5.11 The school maintains an excellent ongoing and constructive relationship with parents in accordance with its aims. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the parental questionnaire indicated that the school encourages them to be involved in its life and work, that they can communicate easily with the school and that information is readily available. A very large majority of parents indicated that they have received timely responses to enquiries and that the school has handled well concerns they have had. They know that senior staff are available in the car parks each morning, and the headmaster has a weekly drop-in session for parents.
- 5.12 The school provides weekly news letters, termly news digests, an informative brochure for new parents, a substantial advice document for the parents of GCSE pupils, pupil reports three times a year giving achievement and effort grades, targets and comments about progress, in addition to at least one parent-teacher evening each year. The parents' social and fundraising organisation, the Friends of Ballard School, is an energetic group; they play an important part in the effective arrangements for cultural and sporting activities. They organise popular fundraising events such as the recent extremely successful fireworks evening and the forthcoming Christmas Fair.
- 5.13 Parents have good opportunities to become involved in the work and progress of their children. Teachers' school e-mail addresses are available to parents and direct communication is encouraged. All pupils have log books in which to record

homework and effort grades. These are signed by teachers and by parents who may use them for communication. Parents take their children into their classrooms in Years 1 and 2, and frequent contact is encouraged. Parental helpers come in to assist with plays, sports, pupils' reading, and to give talks. The high degree of parental involvement includes the delivery of the spring lecture series in the senior school.

- 5.14 The Parents' Forum, at which the governors are represented, meets each half term with the head and senior staff to discuss issues relating to the provision of facilities and curriculum opportunities.
- 5.15 The school handles the concerns of parents with care and follows its published procedures. In their responses to the parental and pupil questionnaires, a small minority expressed concern about bullying which had taken place. Others recognised the value of the present anti-bullying policy and the high quality of the pastoral care. It is clear that the school presently pursues a rigorous approach to ensuring that pupils treat each other with care and respect.
- 5.16 A major issue with both parents and pupils was homework and the apparent lack of structure and guidance about time to be spent. Inspectors found that while supervised homework sessions are available each evening, many pupils were very enthusiastic about after-school activities. Therefore problems arose later in the evening when homework had to be completed and an organisational problem did exist for many families. The school is developing measures to alleviate the difficulties.

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 The effectiveness of the EYFS setting is outstanding. The excellent knowledge of all aspects of each child's development by every member of staff, together with careful planning and imaginative use of the accommodation, ensures that the aim to provide a happy, exciting and supportive learning environment, promoting core values and academic excellence is well fulfilled. Children achieve extremely well irrespective of gender or disability. Strong links with parents and outside agencies help to provide an outstanding start to the children's education. Self-evaluation and reflection, fed into the ambitious school improvement plan, produces innovative plans to sustain high standards. There have been many improvements to the EYFS provision in recent years, including those made in response to recommendations raised at previous inspections. The seamless structure and whole school approach to strategic planning ensures the capacity to sustain continuous improvement.

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

6.2 Leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. Effective implementation of comprehensive policies, procedures, training and risk assessments ensure that all children are safeguarded well. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, including those to eliminate discrimination and promote equality, and updated as necessary. Appointment checks ensure that all adults are suitable to work with children. The dedicated, hard-working team benefit from training events and a strong leadership culture that values the importance of continuing professional development. Monitoring and regular team meetings all contribute to the successful identification and action of ambitious development plans. Clear vision has led to some inspiring initiatives in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments. A wide variety of high-quality resources are used effectively to support learning. Parents are well informed and supportive of the school.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. Staff use their secure understanding of the EYFS framework extremely well to establish clear health and safety routines, and to create interesting learning environments with a rich range of opportunities. Thorough observations, aims and target sheets, development charts and scrap books document children's progress and enable staff to plan challenging activities for each child across all learning areas throughout the EYFS. Planning provides an excellent balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities which is sufficiently flexible to accommodate children's interests. Generous staffing ratios support the needs of all children. The spacious accommodation, including sports hall, quiet library area, role play rooms and activity bases provides a stimulating and safe learning environment. The excellent outdoor areas are used well by Nursery and Reception but such opportunities and some resources are not yet fully developed for the youngest Nursery children. Robust risk assessment procedures ensure that the setting is safe and clean.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for the children in the EYFS are outstanding and reflected in the EYFS Profile results. The children are enthusiastic about their considerable achievements in all areas of learning. Both the children under three and those over three make excellent progress. They enjoy completing tasks independently and are confident, active learners, curious enquirers and enthusiastic participators. They respond eagerly to adults' high expectations, and demonstrate good behaviour. They co-operate with both peers and adults, are helpful and enjoy collaborating with each other. Good listening skills are demonstrated at group focus times and story time. They climb and balance skilfully, and use ICT competently. Excellent displays throughout the setting provide evidence of the breadth and quality of the children's experiences. Older children demonstrate good understanding of how to stay safe and turn confidently to an adult when upset. Children know the importance of clean hands for lunch. Children under three take ownership of their room and take pride in sweeping and cleaning, modelling and rehearsing skills and conversations in the home corner.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Complaints since the last inspection

- 6.6 Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints received by Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

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, 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 Danice Iles	Reporting Inspector
Mr David Edwards	Deputy Head, IAPS School
Mr Christopher Emmott	Headmaster, ISA School
Mr Vaughan Jelley	Deputy Head, IAPS School
Mr Cliff Vote	Vice-Principal, ISA School
Mrs Kathy McLauchlan	Early Years Lead Inspector