



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ABINGDON HOUSE SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Abingdon House School

Full Name of School	Abingdon House School		
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Head	Mr N Rees		
Chief Executive Officer	Mr Graham Able		
Age Range	4 to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	45		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (38 boys; 7 girls;)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0	5-11:	45
	3-5 (EYFS): 0		
Number of Day Pupils	45		
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Olivia Thomas		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection date/EYFS	11 May 2010 to 12 May 2010		
Final (team) visit	14 Jun 2010 to 16 Jun 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 May 2006.

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 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard 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.

The inspection did not include the extent to which the school fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families under the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended. However, limited inspection of the early years was included, by ISI criteria.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS	3
(a) Main findings	3
(b) Action points	4
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	4
(ii) Recommended action	4
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	5
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills	5
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	6
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	8
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	9
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	11
(a) The quality of governance	11
(b) The quality of leadership and management	11
(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians	12
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	14

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Abingdon House is an independent school for pupils aged four to eleven years who have specific learning difficulties. The school aims to offer specialist holistic education and therapy within a safe, caring environment that raises the pupils' self-esteem and confidence, and fosters a sense of pride and belonging. In addition, the school aims to encourage pupils to become increasingly independent and return to mainstream schooling at the appropriate time.
- 1.2 Established in 2005, in two specially adapted and linked Victorian terraced houses in Kensington, the school is based on a Christian ethos but welcomes pupils of all religions. It is owned by the Alpha Plus Group. Until the recent past the company directors acted as governors to the school. They have now appointed a governing body but this has yet to become active. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is intended for children between four and five years of age. However, during 2009 to 2010 no EYFS children were on roll and none has been registered for the 2010 to 2011 academic year. As a result, only documentary evidence could be examined when inspecting the EYFS setting.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the age range has been expanded to provide for Year 6 pupils. Middle management roles have grown and school policies have been reviewed and developed. A new personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is in place and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by staff and pupils has increased. An external activity space has been created for EYFS children.
- 1.4 The school roll of 45 pupils comprises 38 boys and 7 girls. Entry to the school is non-selective and based upon the detailed identification of the pupils' individual learning needs, discussions with parents and previous schools and the results of specialist assessments.
- 1.5 The school does not enter pupils for national tests. The results of diagnostic testing carried out by educational psychologists indicate that the pupils' ability range is wide, but in line with the national average overall. Pupils reflect a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. Some travel significant distances to attend the school.
- 1.6 Three pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and thirteen have a statement of educational needs (SEN). The range of pupils' difficulties is wide including dyslexia, dyspraxia, speech and language disorders, fine and gross motor disorders, attention-deficit, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders, and Asperger's Syndrome. Teaching groups are often of mixed ages as they are based on ability for academic subjects.

- 1.7 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 NC equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Oak Class	Reception

Preparatory

School	NC name
Oak	Years 1/2
Pine	Years 2/3/4
Birch	Years 2/3/4
Lime	Years 3/4/5
Ash	Years 4/5/6

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Throughout the school pupils are well-educated. They benefit from the school's success in achieving its aim to offer holistic specialist education and therapy within a safe, caring environment that raises their self-esteem and confidence, and fosters a sense of pride and belonging. Highly effective teaching of outstanding quality promotes good progress and enables pupils to attain standards that are at least satisfactory and, in literacy and numeracy, often good in relation to their starting points, abilities and specific needs. However, in a few cases, teaching could involve the pupils more. The pupils' acquisition of basic skills begins slowly on entry then gathers speed as the positive impact of individualised provision takes effect. Specialist therapies are successfully integrated into the good quality curriculum. This nurtures the pupils' increasingly positive attitudes to learning, excellent relationships with adults, and a growing ability to relate well to each other.
- 2.2 Outstanding pastoral care, support and guidance meet individuals' academic and pastoral needs well, significantly enhance their good personal and excellent social and moral development, and assist in speeding their readiness for reintegration into mainstream education. The school ethos surrounds pupils with a safe and calm environment in which, as their personal self-esteem grows, they learn to explore their views safely and reflect upon issues affecting them. They are supported by suitable welfare, health and safety measures.
- 2.3 Oversight of the school by the company directors has been good. They are well-versed in school provision, have informed oversight of special education, high expectations of the school, and provide strong support. They ensure pupils are suitably safeguarded and have rectified past errors in implementing appointment procedures. However, the recently established governing body does not as yet include members with specific experience of special school education. Outstanding, imaginative and creative leadership and highly effective management by senior staff contribute significantly to the school's success. The roles of senior managers have recently been expanded to include the regular monitoring and appraising of staff. The school ethos is strongly reflected in well-written policies and procedures that are suitably amended in reaction to changing needs. The school has successfully met the recommendations of the previous report and expanded the curriculum and range of therapies available since that time. Relationships with parents, who are highly appreciative of all aspects of school life, are outstanding. In particular, many parents mentioned the significant increase in self-esteem and confidence exhibited by their children after a short time at the school.

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 did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended, and therefore it was required to:
- implement all parts of the safeguarding policy correctly [Regulation 3.(2)(b), under Welfare, health and safety] and, for the same reason [Regulation 4.(2)(d), under the Appointment of Staff] and [Regulation 4C.(2)(b) under the Central Register of Staff];
 - make certain the ratio of hand-basins to WCs in the girls toilets meets requirements [Regulation 5.(k), under Premises and Accommodation]
- 2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report.
- 2.6 In order to comply with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school was required to:
- provide parents with receive written notification of their child's performance against each of the assessment scales at the end of the EYFS.

Since the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is inspected under a different system of regulation, within a two-day limit, the report cannot mention any regulatory deficiencies which are remedied by the end of the standard inspection.

(ii) Recommended action

- 2.7 In addition to rectifying the weaknesses in meeting regulatory requirements, the school is advised to build upon existing good practice by making the following improvements.
1. Ensure all teaching reflects the effective balance between teacher input and pupil activity that is evident in excellent lessons.
 2. Build upon the newly implemented procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning by senior managers.
 3. Make certain that knowledge of special education is made available to the members of the new governing body.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Standards are broadly average overall, and at all levels, progress is good in relation to the pupils' starting points and special needs. Pupils are well-educated overall, and the school is successful in meeting its aim to reintegrate pupils into mainstream education as swiftly as possible.
- 3.2 In Years 1 to 6, the pupils' personalised, interactive learning programmes contribute effectively to their sound understanding of the subjects studied, and support their acquisition of an increasingly wide range of skills. Pupils show good standards in literacy and numeracy, enhanced by the mixed age groups which enable pupils of similar abilities to be taught together. They listen carefully, explain their views with increasing accuracy, and enjoy reading with partners. Writing skills develop well, and by Year 6 pupils produce longer, well-presented narratives. The school newspaper, written by pupils for a wider audience, includes especially interesting articles about how the Icelandic volcanic eruption stranded members of their community across the world. Participation in the school production illustrates the pupils' growing confidence and expertise with public speaking. Numeracy skills develop and are applied well, for example when knowledge of graphs and tally charts was applied efficiently to produce traffic records.
- 3.3 Standards in ICT have improved since the previous inspection and are satisfactory overall with examples of good progress across all ages. Older pupils are highly competent when using search engines for information, and proficient when using the interactive whiteboard during lessons. Pupils of all ages are developing suitable keyboard skills. Pupils use their creative skills well to illustrate learning in each subject. The well-constructed models and artefacts of World War 2 battlefields and realistic Egyptian masks by Years 3, 4 and 5 demonstrate a sound understanding of these periods. Pupils achieved considerable success in the creative sphere recently, gaining first prize in the Under-11s textiles section of a national art competition. Significant improvements have been made in the standards achieved in physical education.
- 3.4 Past records show that EYFS children have made suitable progress towards the goals required for this stage of learning. The results of annual reading and spelling assessments indicate that pupils made good progress and reached good standards in these areas in relation to their starting points.
- 3.5 Pupils often enter the school with extremely negative attitudes. Their enjoyment of learning grows as they relax and contribute positively to lessons. This is because they receive support appropriate to their needs. Over time, pupils gain the skills to settle well to their tasks, listen carefully, work independently and enjoy their learning. Pupils respond well to their teachers' sensitive questioning, that assists them to sustain their concentration and remain focused on their tasks.
- 3.6 The school prepares pupils well for re-entry into mainstream education. Links and discussions with the schools who receive pupils confirm that pupils reintegrate successfully and continue to make progress. During extra-curricular sport pupils develop their skills and techniques and make good progress in working as a team.

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

- 3.7 Curricular provision has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall, meeting the school's aims. The EYFS curriculum now reflects the framework for this stage of learning, an EYFS outdoor area and additional play opportunities have been provided, and a new PSHE programme and schemes of work in all subjects are now implemented fully. Pupils benefit from the effective use of good local sporting and swimming facilities. A progressive programme of specific gross motor exercises prescribed and monitored by the physiotherapist and occupational therapist, based on each pupil's individual stages of development, significantly enriches their ability to benefit from the academic curriculum. New, rigorous planning and robust curriculum monitoring systems ensure that coverage is effective. The good extra-curricular programme has been expanded and supports learning well. After-school activities are developing appropriately.
- 3.8 The curriculum meets the aims of the school to provide for individuals' needs. It is suited to the pupils' ages, abilities, and specific needs and is sufficiently flexible to adapt swiftly in response to changing circumstances. The curriculum is well planned, demonstrating progression in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding across all subjects and years. It is adapted very well to incorporate the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational need and their specific individual learning plans. Since the previous inspection the use of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-related), targets across the curriculum has developed further and they are used effectively to promote learning.
- 3.9 Classroom learning is significantly enriched by additional activities such as visits to a variety of museums and places of worship, which are appreciated by parents and enjoyed by pupils. An interest in reading is stimulated and further developed through work with a publishing company, whom they assist with editing books for reluctant readers. Learning and enjoyment are significantly enhanced by lunchtime and after-school activities. For example, participation in the jewellery club improves fine motor skills and close observational skills are sharpened in the sketching club. Team work and personal techniques develop well in the sports clubs.
- 3.10 Because of the lack of recreational space on the school site, pupils are taken to the local park daily for physical education, games, activities at break and lunchtime and for sports practice. During the walk there and back good use is made of developing social skills and attitudes to members of the community. The pupils' knowledge of their local community is further expanded through good links with a number of local organisations such as the church, the local jobcentre and a number of local shops. Knowledge of personal safety increased significantly during an enjoyable interactive presentation from local road safety experts to pupils in Year 3.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The school has built well upon the standards identified at the previous inspection. Teaching is now outstanding overall, and is a significant factor in promoting good progress from pupils who have a wide range of needs. The teachers' subject knowledge has expanded suitably since that time, as has their use of ICT. The school successfully achieves its aim that teaching provides positive relationships within the classrooms, and good teamwork by teaching staff and therapists.
- 3.12 The pupils' increasing interest in, and enjoyment of, learning is cultivated during outstandingly effective lessons led by experienced and highly competent teachers

who know and understand them extremely well. For example, pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 were totally engaged and made rapid progress during a fast paced numeracy lesson. This was because of the high expectations of the teacher, and the use of a range of appropriate methods, including the interactive whiteboard, which stimulated pupils and sustained their interest throughout. The imaginative interaction of a wide range of therapies with academic provision is extremely successful in preparing pupils for learning, increasing the effectiveness of teaching and promoting progress. The excellent relationships with, and extensive knowledge teachers have of, pupils resulted in highly effective personalised support during an ICT lesson for Years 4, 5 and 6 which promoted rapid progress.

- 3.13 The pupils' confidence is nurtured well by staff during good lessons, when their independence is developed. This was particularly evident when, whilst involved in an activity blending sounds, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were encouraged, cajoled, praised and challenged in equal measure, which led to their success. Behaviour is mostly good because teachers use a wide range of personalised strategies that assist pupils to concentrate, focus on their work, and manage their problems successfully. Team-work, especially during physical activity sessions in the local park, is enjoyed by pupils and their group skills are assisted well by teachers, whose high expectations and provision of a good range of activities are specifically directed to individual need.
- 3.14 Thorough planning of lessons starts with clear learning objectives, and details of how staff and therapists will communicate effectively to meet individual needs, and maximise use of a wide variety of resources. As a result, pupils are motivated effectively and sustain their interest throughout the lesson. All teachers ensure that the requirements of pupils' statements and individual education plans are met, both in planning and during lessons. Daily evaluation of lesson effectiveness enables teachers to adapt provision immediately in reaction to pupils' responses. Excellent use of new monitoring methods, such as a new planning, assessment and evaluation sheet during and following lessons, enables teachers to react instantly to changing needs.
- 3.15 Against this generally strong background, some teaching could be better. On occasion, pupils lose concentration, they become distracted, and their progress slows. This is usually because the teacher uses too few learning resources, and over-directs the slowly-moving lesson, giving pupils little opportunity to contribute and thus take control of their learning.
- 3.16 The extensive marking procedures and assessments identified at the previous inspection have been maintained and developed, and remain meticulous. Teachers and therapists make excellent use of the detailed analysis of assessment information concerning individual performance to adapt provision and plan future learning. Marking is constructive, encouraging and informs pupils of the quality of their work. A significant amount of marking is completed alongside pupils, as this allows them to see how their individual needs are being met. This is sensitive and challenging, and helps pupils to understand how they can progress even further.
- 3.17 In their questionnaire, a large number of parents made particular comment on the effectiveness of teaching in nurturing confidence amongst their children, and in reintroducing them to learning as a pleasurable experience. Inspectors agree with this.

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 good overall, with some outstanding features. In line with school aims, increasingly confident pupils relate well to each other and their teachers and respect each other's differences.
- 4.2 The pupils' spiritual development is good. Their low self-esteem on entry is reversed effectively, and they make rapid gains in personal confidence and the ability to express their feelings. Many articulate their feelings well and those who have difficulties receive maximum assistance so they too feel valued. Pupils reflect carefully on their reactions to different situations during assemblies and PSHE lessons. They identify values they hold important, such as friendship, and confidently explain their choices to visitors. The excellent provision for music therapy contributes significantly to relieving the pressures felt by some pupils. Across all ages, pupils are keen to celebrate others' successes.
- 4.3 The moral development of the boys and girls is outstanding. Their clear view of right and wrong is assisted by codes of conduct which they discuss and understand. For example, they nominate a 'Rule of the Week', which they then ensure is followed. There is a good awareness of social courtesies as they walk safely and sensibly to the local park. Pupils understand the consequences of their actions, and consider the feelings of others, assisted by discussions during PSHE lessons. They explain the need to help those in need, especially their support for the homeless charity 'The Passage', based at their local church. Pupils are very interested in local matters that affect them. Their studies on the effect of car pollution in the locality, and contributions to the travel plan, have gained the London Transport sustainable travel award. There is a clear concern for the wider environment; this is recognised in the Eco Club bronze award for their commitment to recycling.
- 4.4 Social development is excellent. Many pupils have very underdeveloped social skills on entry, but they soon learn to care for each other, and are courteous and polite when greeting their peers, staff, parents and visitors each morning. Pupils of all ages mix well and chatter happily together during recreational activities. They clearly enjoy representing their peers and are proud they can bring about change in school through the recently established school council. Pupils particularly enjoy taking part in team-work, as when organising an assembly. However, opportunities for pupils to gain experience of serving each other at snack time are missed in Years 1 and 2. In general, however, their ability to work in small groups, to share and listen effectively, develops well, so that by Year 6 they contribute effectively to group work. Pupils have expanded their extended social network and their knowledge of various genres of music successfully during participation in the central Alpha Schools music celebration.
- 4.5 The good cultural development of the pupils and the school's easy approach to different nationalities, are enriched by the range of cultures represented in the school, all of whom live and work harmoniously alongside each other. A good knowledge of world cultures is supported well through studies in geography, art and music. Knowledge of European culture is good, and pupils enjoy first-hand experience of French culture and lifestyle during talks by a mother from France. Pupils extend their knowledge of art and drama through visits to galleries and theatres. The good understanding of different religions and lifestyles is enhanced

through visits to the local church, mosque and synagogue and through talks by parents of faiths such as Judaism.

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

- 4.6 Throughout the school, outstanding pastoral care meets the school aim to support, care for and guide pupils individually, and establish multi-disciplinary teams that create effective, individual programmes of pastoral support. The school pays good attention to welfare, health and safety. The extensive work and meticulous detail put into ensuring that the requirements of all statements of special educational need are met has a very positive impact upon the progress made and the enjoyment of school life.
- 4.7 In conversation, pupils express the view that they are supported well by adults, with whom they have excellent relationships. At all ages, the tailoring of high quality academic and personal support to specific needs promotes progress and raises standards. Excellent daily interaction between multi-disciplinary staff teams raises everyone's awareness of how pupils are reacting to school and each other. During the regular case notes review prior to the beginning of each term, pastoral provision is analysed, efficiency assessed, provision amended as required, then new strategies shared with all staff, and explained to pupils and parents.
- 4.8 The excellent, positive relationships between staff and pupils contribute to the calm and happy atmosphere which permeates the school. Relationships between pupils are good overall, but should they deteriorate, adults step in swiftly to assist pupils to handle problems and reinstate quality interactions with each other. In their questionnaire, many parents commented on the high-quality of pastoral care in the school.
- 4.9 Good behaviour is strongly promoted through a wide range of strategies and conduct codes, to which pupils contribute. The emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour successfully reduces incidents to a minimum. When such cases occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively, recorded fully, analysed carefully, and actions taken are discussed with pupils. Subsequent monitoring of situations is effective in preventing recurrences. In conversation, pupils feel confident to talk to adults about possible cases of bullying, knowing it will be dealt with. Participation in national anti-bullying week raised the school's awareness of bullying.
- 4.10 Pupils are safeguarded appropriately and staff suitably checked for safe access to children. All staff are trained in protecting children. At the time of the initial visit, administrative errors had occurred when appointing staff. This was rectified by the time of the second visit to the school.
- 4.11 Appropriate measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Clear guidelines for the assessment of risk and hazards indoors, outdoors and for school visits are implemented correctly. Findings are recorded and, where areas for action are identified, they are dealt with swiftly. Satisfactory medical facilities are available to care for pupils until their parents collect them, medicines are handled efficiently and accidents are suitably recorded. Sufficient staff are first-aid trained, including paediatric first-aid training. The school accessibility plan details how pupils with all types of disability, learning or physical, will be catered for in the short and long-term. Pupils understand what constitutes good health. They enjoy healthy menus taken from a range of organic food choices, discuss how to stay healthy during science studies and bring healthy snacks to school daily. They have extensive opportunities

for daily exercise and are fit and healthy. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Oversight of the school by the company directors is good, and a major factor in enabling the school to achieve its aims. The directors are strongly committed to the school ethos, the provision of specialist care, pupil standards and their successful reintegration into mainstream education. The company directors' wide-ranging expertise includes special education, which benefits the school. They monitor all aspects of school life efficiently. The significant investment in accommodation and wide-ranging staff expertise, specialist resources, and continued school development demonstrates efficient financial management. The directors have instituted a rolling programme of refurbishment to ensure premises remain bright and updated regularly. The defect in the girls' washroom, identified at the first visit, was corrected by the time of the final visit. The new governing body, recently formed by the directors, has yet to meet. It is planned that suitable knowledge of special education is made available to members of this body.
- 5.2 The directors' regular visits to the school, plus a clear, regular reporting framework from the school to the directors, ensures they have an up-to-date informed view of what is succeeding and what requires development. Their clear strategic plan assists them to order priorities for action efficiently. Through the observation of teaching and learning and discussion of the school development plan, the directors have first-hand experience of the quality of provision. They provide extensive, high quality opportunities for all staff to train and update their skills. The regular meetings and training for heads of all company schools makes certain they have continual support, the opportunity to share concerns and are updated of all policy changes.
- 5.3 The company keeps abreast of new legislation. A number of directors are suitably trained in matters of child protection and health and safety and they ensure staff are regularly updated of matters in these areas. They discharge daily oversight of these areas to senior managers and, on occasion, external consultants. However, a nominated director checks the efficacy of procedures annually, as required. The directors acknowledge that an administrative error was made in implementing staff appointment procedures; the situation has now been rectified.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The outstanding leadership and management of the school contribute significantly to the school's success in achieving its aims, especially that to successfully reintegrate pupils into mainstream education. The imagination, energy and dynamism of senior managers are supported by creative thinking, flexibility and tireless hard work that ensure the pupils' needs are met, and their lives enriched.
- 5.5 Senior managers have high aspirations and provide clear direction on the way forward, so that all share the same vision. The good and on occasion outstanding quality of the education, the progress made by pupils, the highly effective pastoral care and personal development, and the excellent relationships between staff and parents reflect their effectiveness.

- 5.6 The senior managers' thorough annual review of provision, and evaluation of outcomes, is used effectively to identify priorities for the school development plan. For example, the identification of training needs for developing the EYFS have been recognised and responded to appropriately. Senior managers have ensured that recommendations made at the previous inspection have been met. The careful monitoring and evaluation of progress ensures senior managers know how plans are advancing and highlight areas of continuing concern. Amongst middle managers, curriculum development and management is effective and efficient and identifies areas for future development.
- 5.7 The school secures a good range of high quality, experienced staff who offer a wide variety of skills and expertise relevant to the pupils' needs. Appraisal is used suitably to promote personal development. Extensive training opportunities for individual staff and for the staff team ensure expertise in whole school matters such as safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, as well as individual professional development, is regularly updated. Non-teaching staff contribute well to the pupils' personal development through their support roles.
- 5.8 The company has meticulous arrangements for checking the suitability of directors and governors. The checking of staff is delegated to the school. On occasion, an error has been made when implementing appointment procedures; however this has been resolved and procedures are now followed rigorously.

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

- 5.9 The good links with parents identified at the previous inspection have been built upon well, and are now outstanding. The school continues to achieve its aim to enable parents to feel part of the school family. Links with the community have increased significantly since the previous inspection and are now good.
- 5.10 Parents have considerable input into the lives of pupils, especially in sharing ideas and information concerning their child's work and individual education plans. They play an active part in learning, having extensive, regular opportunities to meet with staff to discuss their child's progress, changes in personal targets, and in provision regularly. Some parents visit to talk to pupils about their various professions, and a number of parents assist with the reorganisation and the upkeep of the school library. An informal parents group organises social evenings, and new parents all have a mentor to help them settle into the school family. Parents offer considerable assistance in school sporting events, shows and concerts, and help pupils with various fund-raising activities. They are keen to supply the school with additional resources such as additional library books. The school web-site enables parents to be involved in the everyday life of the school. News is updated regularly; pupil events are listed and reported on fully. Parents who may have a concern of query regarding their child's work or progress may contact the school at any time.
- 5.11 Parents receive extensive and good quality information that is both useful and regular. The prospectus, which contains information relevant to parental needs, is updated regularly. The school website informs parents of school aims and ethos, and provides access to school policies, all of which are also available to parents at the school. The handbook for parents helps them to understand how the school functions on a day-to-day basis. Each term, parents receive considerable information as to how their children are progressing and they have many opportunities to discuss their child's work with staff. Documents show that when children reach the end of the EYFS, their progress against the assessment scales in

place at the end of this stage are discussed in detail with parents, but parents do not receive this information in writing. Otherwise, reports to parents provide extensive information on what pupils know, their attitudes to learning, their progress against their targets and their reaction to the individualised provision the school offers to meet specific need. Parents are also given the opportunity to discuss the content of reports fully.

- 5.12 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire demonstrate strong parental support for the school and approval of all aspects of school life. Parents made specific reference to the good progress their children had made since joining, of their appreciation of the additional therapies available and of the many ways they are included in discussion of programmes of learning for their children. Many parents referred to the positive changes in their children's attitudes toward school and learning, the helpfulness of teachers and the availability of staff to see them at all times. Inspection findings confirm parental views.
- 5.13 The school has a clear procedure for parental complaints. Concerns are handled with care and recorded suitably. No formal complaints have been made.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of the pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with directors of the company, 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 Sandra Gordon

Mrs Mary Burridge

Mrs Susan Hulmes

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector

Head of Learning Support Department (IAPS)