

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

St Nicholas School

Full Name of the School	St Nicholas School
DCSF Number	881/6023
Early Years Number	EY 511629
Registered Charity Number	310876
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Age Range (of the whole school)	4 to 16
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	3rd to 6th November 2008
Head of Early Years Setting	Miss M Jones
Early Years Age Range	4 to 5
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	22nd and 23rd September 2008

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. The inspection was carried out by ISI, a body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting EYFS provision in schools belonging to the ISC Associations. Section 7 of this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the EYFS 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 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

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Characteristics of the School	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	3
	The Educational Experience Provided	3
	Pupils' Learning and Achievements.....	4
	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	7
	The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment).....	8
3.	THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	12
	The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils.....	12
	Pastoral Care.....	12
	Welfare, Health and Safety.....	13
	The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	14
4.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	16
	The Quality of Governance	16
	The Quality of Leadership and Management	16
5.	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....	18
	Overall Conclusions	18
	Next Steps.....	18
6.	SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE	20
	List of Inspectors	20
7.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)	21
	What the Setting should do to Improve	23

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 St Nicholas School is a day school for boys and girls aged four to sixteen years. It was founded in 1939 in the centre of Churchgate Street, and moved to its present fourteen-acre site in 1977. The school occupies a much adapted large country house, built in 1906, together with purpose-built accommodation, including a sports hall and heated swimming pool. Games pitches and tennis courts are laid out in the grounds. Although the school is made up of three departments, it is managed as one school.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, the number of pupils on roll was 399. Thirty-four pupils were under Year 1 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and 199 were in Years 1 to 6 in the infant and junior departments. In the senior department, 166 pupils were in Years 7 to 11. The number of boys and girls is roughly even at every stage. Pupils come from families where expectations are high in respect of examination results, and represent professional, business and farming family backgrounds. Most pupils live within a twenty-mile radius of the school.
- 1.3 Pupils have open entry to the Reception classes and those under five may attend on a part-time basis in the first term. Elsewhere in the infant and junior departments, admission follows a half or full day in school to evaluate potential and suitability for the curriculum. Entry at the age of eleven is by the school's own selective examination. Standardised tests taken in the infant and junior departments and shortly after entry to Year 7, confirm that the average ability of pupils is above the national average, although a number of pupils are well above the national average and others below. Where pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results will be above the average for all maintained schools. No pupil has a statement of educational need, but the school has identified 78 pupils as requiring learning support. All pupils are proficient in English. Just under a quarter of pupils leave at the end of Year 6. Those who leave go to a number of other independent or maintained schools. Almost all Year 11 leavers continue their education in other independent schools or sixth-form colleges.
- 1.4 The school has a Christian foundation, but it admits pupils of all faiths and of none. Its philosophy is based on 'a commitment to sound moral principles and a view of education as an all-round preparation for life. Academic work is given strong emphasis, and equality and sound guidance in personal development are seen as an integral part of a good education'.
- 1.5 Since the last inspection, a number of changes have taken place. A new headmaster was appointed in 2003, the deputy head took up his post in 2005 and an additional senior teacher post has been created. The head of the junior department was appointed in 2006. A two-form entry in the senior department was introduced in 2004. A new building to house the infant department was opened in 2006. A considerable amount of refurbishment of classrooms has taken place and an extension to Swire House, opened in 2007, provides two science laboratories, a preparation room and two mathematics rooms. Building work is almost complete on a replacement 250-seat theatre.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

School	Age of children
Reception Class	4 to 5 years

Infant/Junior School Departments

School	NC name
Class 1	Year 1
Class 2	Year 2
Class 3	Year 3
Class 4	Year 4
Class 5	Year 5
Class 6	Year 6

Senior Department

School	NC name
Class 7	Year 7
Class 8	Year 8
Class 9	Year 9
Class 10	Year 10
Class 11	Year 11

- 1.7 See Section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 St Nicholas School provides a good quality educational experience consistent with its aim that education should be an all-round preparation for life. The good standards reported on at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and the school has addressed in full three of the four recommendations made at that time. The school has not yet fully implemented an appraisal scheme in the senior department. Significant development and expansion of the premises have enhanced the school's provision for teaching and learning.
- 2.2 The curriculum overall is suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, although it is not fully implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS which became a legal requirement for all settings for children of this age group from September 2008. It effectively promotes their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. Almost all parents expressed satisfaction with the range of subjects offered. Whilst the school's aims refer to developing ideals and values in keeping with Christian traditions, religious studies (RS) does not form part of the curriculum after Year 9, reducing pupils' opportunities to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith. It does, however, teach the philosophy of all faiths. Equality of access and opportunity exist for all pupils. They acquire a secure foundation in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy and these skills are used well in all areas of learning. The increased provision of computers since the last inspection enables pupils to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well.
- 2.3 In Years 1 to 6, subjects of the National Curriculum, together with drama, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and RS provide a secure foundation for learning. The addition of French from the Reception class and food technology in Years 4 to 6 add breadth, but the two-week timetable hinders steady progression in creative subjects, such as music and drama, in those years where they are taught only once every two weeks. The amount of specialist teaching in the infant and junior departments increases as pupils move through the school. The curriculum in the senior department is largely based on the National Curriculum, together with drama, French, German, Latin, PSHE and RS, and although pupils are taught sciences separately, they are entered for science and additional science. The choice of options for GCSE is wide for a small school and with careful selection keeps open subsequent subject selection for AS level study. Since the last inspection, ICT and physical education (PE) have been added to the range of GCSE subjects offered.
- 2.4 At every stage the curriculum is complemented by a good range of field work, residential visits, music and theatre performances, visits to places of interest and visiting speakers, all of which enrich pupils' experience.
- 2.5 The range of extra-curricular activities is good in the infant and junior departments but the range of clubs is small in the senior department. The programme places emphasis on sport, with the addition of ballet, choir and an art club for the junior department, and choir, drama and photography in the senior department. Through participation in the annual drama and music performances pupils have opportunities to grow in confidence and gain a belief in themselves. Those pupils involved in the recently introduced Duke of Edinburgh's Award have the opportunities for voluntary work through its service section. This involvement in voluntary work increases pupils' awareness and appreciation of the needs of people of different circumstances and, together with fund raising for charity, plays an important part in developing their social responsibility. Participation in the Young Enterprise Scheme adds balance to the programme as pupils prepare for the GCSE examinations.

- 2.6 Each successive stage of education is suitably managed. From the earliest years in the infant department, pupils are made aware they belong to the larger school community. The transition from Years 2 to 3 and from Years 6 to 7 is smooth and made easy for pupils as a number of staff teach throughout the school. Helpful attention is given to preparing pupils for the next stage of education, training or employment and for adult life. Good quality careers education and guidance begins in the PSHE programme in Years 7 to 9 and is effectively supported in Years 10 and 11 by the services of the Independent Schools Careers Organisation (ISCO) and Connexions, the county careers service. Pupils said they receive the information they need as they plan for the next stage of their education. In Year 10 pupils have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the realities of life beyond formal education through the work experience programme. The careers library is centrally located and available throughout the day for pupils to browse in their spare time. The school recognises that much of the stock is out-of-date and steps are being taken to refresh the resources with an appropriate range of information to guide pupils as they prepare for the future.
- 2.7 The curriculum is thoughtfully planned so that pupils can increase their knowledge and understanding in an orderly and progressive way. Subject handbooks, however, vary in quality and usefulness. In some subjects in the junior department, planning is exemplary. A good feature of the handbooks is continuity of the curriculum from the Reception class to Year 11. However, curriculum links between subject co-ordinators in the junior department and heads of department and subject leaders in the senior department are yet to be fully developed. The introduction of a ten-day timetable, with six 55 minute lessons each day, maximises the use of specialist teachers in all three departments of the school and is a popular innovation amongst teachers.
- 2.8 The school supports pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) in mainstream classes. Once a learning difficulty has been identified, teachers throughout the school are required to plan appropriate tasks to match closely a pupils' particular learning difficulty. In this they are given guidance by the specialist educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who prepares and monitors individual education plans (IEPs). The quality of the provision in the infant and junior departments is good, but the SENCO does not have enough time to support fully pupils with LDD in the senior department. The school recognises this is an area where further work needs to be done. Provision for the most able pupils is embryonic.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 Pupils achieve satisfactory and frequently good standards in relation to their ages and abilities. The standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and in some areas improved. By the time pupils leave, they are well educated. They have a thorough understanding of the subjects they have studied and the activities in which they have been engaged and they have developed a range of appropriate skills. These resonate with the school's aims, in which academic work is given a strong emphasis. Pupils develop good attitudes to work and study.

Infant and Junior Departments

- 2.11 In the EYFS, children achieve well within the curriculum provided. Particular strengths are in literacy, numeracy and aspects of creative and physical development. However, their achievement and progress in some aspects of mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development in relation to planned outdoor play, designing and making and ICT are reduced in relation to EYFS criteria.

- 2.12 In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn to read with growing confidence and enjoyment. Sound foundations are laid for pupils' mathematical development and they show a growing facility with numbers. Their handwriting is good. In a small number of lessons, all pupils work at the same level, irrespective of their ability. Inevitably, this means that some pupils are not sufficiently challenged, whilst those with LDD are not given tasks to match their particular learning needs.
- 2.13 In Years 3 to 6, pupils build on the firm foundations laid down in the infant department. They apply their expanding skills and knowledge to different subjects in a variety of situations. Pupils leave the junior department with secure foundations across the curriculum and particularly high standards in literacy and numeracy. This is largely due to a well-planned curriculum and good teaching. Pupils are encouraged and are largely successful in developing and applying their knowledge, skills and understanding critically and creatively. High quality displays in classrooms and other areas demonstrate that many opportunities are provided for pupils to be creative and use their imagination. A particular strength is the ability of pupils to infer, analyse and articulate their ideas with confidence. Their ICT skills are developing appropriately in designated lessons, but their use in other subjects is at an early stage of development.
- 2.14 Overall, no significant differences in relative attainment between different groups of pupils or subjects are apparent. No marked difference in the attainment of boys and girls was evident. In Years 3 to 6, pupils with LDD achieve well in relation to their abilities and learning difficulties because of the good support they receive. However, pupils in Years 1 and 2, made less rapid progress when tasks were not matched closely to their needs.
- 2.15 Pupils are not entered for national tests at the age of seven. The evidence of lesson observations, discussions with pupils and the scrutiny of their work in books shows that pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve standards that are satisfactory in relation to their abilities. The results in national tests at the age of eleven in the three years to 2007, are well above the average for maintained primary schools and good in relation to pupils' abilities. The results of nationally recognised measures of progress indicate that pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 2 and good progress by the end of Year 6.
- 2.16 As a result of encouragement and the nurturing of talent, pupils achieve well in a number of individual and team competitions. These include athletics, cross-country running, hockey, gymnastics, netball, soccer, swimming and tag rugby. Several pupils are successful in ballet, instrumental music and speech and drama examinations. Pupils experience success in the UK Mathematics Challenge at the level for which they are entered. These achievements contribute to the development of confidence and an understanding of team responsibilities when they are acknowledged in assembly, the school magazine and the junior department's 'Golden Book' where significant achievement is recorded.
- 2.17 Pupils throughout the infant and junior departments work effectively individually, in pairs and in groups. They listen and respect the views of others. Older pupils can make their own notes. Pupils take pride in their written work and organise their exercise books well. They persevere in their learning and respond well when given targets to achieve. In Years 3 to 6, pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenge of evaluating their own achievements and setting their own 'confidence bands'; this involves pupils evaluating their own learning by grading it on a scale of one to four called a 'confidence line'. They settle and apply themselves to their lessons quickly and sensibly, and they enjoy their work and activities.

- 2.18 Pupils become increasingly more independent in their learning as they progress through the school.

Senior Department

- 2.19 Pupils develop competent skills and positive attitudes for work and study. They have sound foundations in knowledge and understanding, and they develop a wide range of skills, in the subjects and activities provided. They show the ability to think for themselves both critically and creatively when they are given the opportunity, developing these skills well as they progress through the school. However, in some subjects, the style of teaching did not provide opportunities for independent learning, and in others the most able did not display intellectual curiosity because lesson planning did not take account of their particular needs.
- 2.20 Pupils have well-developed speaking and listening skills and they listen carefully and respectfully to one another's comments; their relationships are good and these contribute significantly to their progress in learning. Whilst creative and factual writing are undertaken successfully in English, other subjects make less use of extended writing to support developing literacy skills, because many of the tasks set required one word or short sentence answers.
- 2.21 Pupils' have good numeracy skills and they can apply mathematical concepts effectively in subjects such as science and geography. Pupils' word processing skills are good, and they are beginning to use of a range of software, spread sheets and databases. However, little use of ICT is being made across all subjects of the curriculum to support teaching and learning. The school is aware this is an area it needs to develop.
- 2.22 Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in relation to their abilities in GCSE examinations. Their attainment over the three years to 2007, has been above the national average for all maintained schools, with just over a quarter of the grades being A* or A. However, during the same period, the attainment of girls was well above the national average, with a third of the being grades A* or A. These grades are good in relation to their abilities. In 2008, the number of grades at the higher level for both boys and girls improved. An analysis of nationally standardised measures of progress indicates that progress from Year 7 to GCSE is above national norms.
- 2.23 Apart from the difference in GCSE grades between boys and girls, no other significant differences were apparent between subjects or curriculum areas. Pupils with LDD make satisfactory progress overall.
- 2.24 Pupils' confidence, self-esteem and ability to work in teams are built up through a number of activities in which good standards are achieved. These include individual and team achievements in several sports, notably in athletics, hockey, netball, rugby; they have a good record of success in area and national events organised by the Independent Schools Association (ISA). During the week of the inspection, the swimming team were placed first in the ISA regional competition. Pupils are successful in the UK Mathematics Challenge and bronze level of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. They achieve a high level of success in the performing arts. The school attaches much importance to these successes and they are acknowledged in assembly, the school magazine and in newsletters. The St Nicholas Award, a record of achievement, successfully encourages pupils to take pride in all their achievements and provides an excellent source of information when writing personal statements on applications for sixth form education.

- 2.25 Pupils generally arrive promptly to lessons with all the right books, they settle quickly and quietly to their work. They can work effectively on their own, in pairs and in co-operation with others as part of a team. Pupils concentrate well and persevere when a task is difficult. Their written work is well presented and they can use a range of styles and genre. They are competent at taking dictated notes and their ability to make their own notes improves as they move through the school. Pupils have positive attitudes and their behaviour is mostly good; they show enthusiasm and enjoy their work and activities.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.26 Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The ethos of the school, together with the good quality of relationships between staff and pupils and the consideration pupils show for one another make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. This development is fostered in the curriculum and in many aspects of school life, and the school is successful in achieving its aim to provide sound guidance in personal development as an integral part of a good education. Since the last inspection, the PSHE programme in Years 1 to 6 has been revised and the role of PSHE co-ordinator for Years 7 to 11 has been enhanced. The schemes of work in the senior department are currently being revised. Parents are supportive of the attitudes the school promotes.
- 2.27 The well disciplined, calm and friendly school environment contributes effectively to pupils' good spiritual awareness. Acknowledgements of success and praise for something well done are fundamental to school life from the earliest years, and through this recognition pupils grow in self-confidence and a belief in themselves. The PSHE programme makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness by encouraging them to discuss and express their views. Assemblies and RS lessons provide opportunities to explore personal beliefs and the influences of different denominations and faiths. The school's Christian foundation could be seen in the RS schemes of work, hymns and prayers during assemblies and grace before lunch. Pupils gain insights into religious beliefs when the local vicar and the rabbi speak in assembly. Other subjects in the curriculum, for example art, drama and music, contribute to pupils' developing spirituality, but this is not systematically monitored and at times subjects are unaware of the contribution they make.
- 2.28 Pupils' good moral sense and their respect for the law are well developed. Pupils know what is acceptable behaviour and understand the boundaries beyond which they should not go. Just occasionally some pupils in the senior department fall short of the school's expectations. When this occurs appropriate sanctions are applied. The PSHE programme provides opportunities to reinforce moral issues by nurturing within pupils a set of core values and encouraging them to develop informed opinions for themselves. From an early age, pupils distinguish between right and wrong in an atmosphere of mutual respect. They understand the need for school rules and the necessity for sanctions. The school raises considerable sums of money for charity in this country and overseas, linking this to caring for others and moral responsibility. Pupils have a highly developed sense of care for the environment. In Years 1 to 6, the recycling of foil, ink cartridges and shoes is systematically organised. In Years 7 to 11, several of the Young Enterprise businesses have an ecological theme.
- 2.29 Pupils' social awareness is good and they accept responsibility willingly. Their social skills are highly developed and they demonstrate caring, sensitive and respectful attitudes to one another and courtesy both in and outside the classrooms. They show initiative and contribute to the community life of the school. A 'buddy' system, recently introduced, provides valuable support by older pupils for younger pupils in Years 7 to 11. They learn leadership skills through taking on responsibilities such as prefects, house officers, team captains, class

and library monitors. House and inter-house competitions provide opportunities to learn team building skills and how to become a responsible team member. Through the PSHE programme, pupils in the senior department learn how to make safe decisions through drug, health, sex and relationships education and these contribute effectively to their growing social awareness and responsibility. Through the school council in Years 6 to 11, pupils begin to learn about the democratic process. It provides a proper channel of communication for pupils to raise and discuss issues that matter to them. This has recently effected change in some areas of concern for pupils, such as changing boys' swimming trunks to shorts. In the wider context, pupils' understanding of public institutions and services is developing appropriately. Citizenship is threaded through the PSHE programme in the senior school; in the infant and junior departments, through charity work pupils begin to understand the needs of others and this contributes well to their understanding of what it means to be a good citizen.

- 2.30 Pupils' cultural awareness is good in Years 1 and 2, and again in Years 7 to 11; it is outstanding in Years 3 to 6. Excellent displays in the junior and infant departments included Chinese dragons and lanterns, Aboriginal art and Indian batik and these all engage pupils' interest in cultures beyond their own. A Chinese week in the junior department provided opportunities for pupils to learn about Chinese culture. Numerous visits, including those to art galleries, museums and overseas trips, develop pupils' understanding of their own and others' cultures. Several subjects, for example geography and history, bring pupils into contact with different cultures and environments distant in place and time. The school acknowledges not only Christian festivals, but also festivals of other traditions and cultures, for example Chinese New Year. Through these opportunities pupils begin to learn about the need for tolerance and harmony and respect for those from different cultures and traditions.
- 2.31 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.32 In the infant and junior departments the quality of teaching is good overall, with some outstanding features in Years 3 to 6. In the senior department teaching is satisfactory. It supports the aims of the school and effectively encourages almost all pupils to work hard and make good progress. The quality of teaching reported on at the time of the last inspection has been maintained.

Infant and Junior Departments

- 2.33 Teaching is effective in providing a secure foundation for pupils, including those with LDD, to acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding according to their ability and develop new skills. The support of classroom assistants in lessons helps pupils, especially those with LDD especially, to achieve well in relation to their ability. However, in a small number of lessons in the infant department, the tasks chosen did not match closely pupils' different abilities and the most able, in particular, were not routinely provided with challenging work to stimulate their intellectual curiosity. As a result these pupils made less rapid progress.
- 2.34 Teaching helps pupils to learn and think effectively. The best teaching nurtures pupils' interest in learning and encourages them to apply their intellectual, physical and creative abilities. Just occasionally in Years 1 and 2, when there was an over reliance on worksheet activities and when the teaching was too prescriptive, opportunities for creativity and individuality were reduced. A strong feature of Year 6 teaching is the way pupils can evaluate their own learning using the 'confidence line'.

- 2.35 Teachers have high expectations of pupils and encourage them to persevere and take an interest in and enjoy their work. Good relationships between pupils and teachers are based on mutual respect, which helps pupils to feel confident about expressing their ideas and asking for help when it is needed. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and the ethos of the school encourages pupils to conduct themselves responsibly in lessons.
- 2.36 In the majority of lessons teaching is well planned, taking account of the needs and prior attainments of pupils. However the school does not have a formal teaching and learning policy. In Years 1 and 2, teachers plan thoughtfully what they will teach, but do not always give sufficient consideration to teaching styles and the range of activities to be used. This results in the overuse of worksheets or in all pupils being given the same task irrespective of their ability. In Years 3 to 6, teachers manage time wisely, use a variety of teaching methods and most lessons involve a good balance of activities to motivate and interest pupils. Activities involving role play, investigation, discussion and experimentation successfully inspired pupils' intellectual, creative and physical efforts.
- 2.37 Class teachers have a secure understanding of all the subjects they are required to teach and receive good support from the subject co-ordinators. Many teachers in Years 3 to 6 demonstrated a passion for their subjects which inspired pupils in their learning. Specialist teaching in several subjects throughout the infant and junior departments, significantly enhances pupils' learning. Classroom assistants make a significant contribution in lessons and support pupils effectively because they are involved at the planning stage.
- 2.38 A wide selection of good quality resources supports teaching and learning. They are well organised and used effectively. Full use is made of the site for imaginative outdoor play. The well-stocked library provides mostly good, but occasionally outdated, resources to support teaching. It is effectively supported by a good range of books in class libraries. New computers and other electronic technology are beginning to be used effectively to support teaching and learning. However, the ICT suite remains an under-used resource and ICT is not yet fully integrated into all subjects of the curriculum. The school recognises that this is an area for development.
- 2.39 Throughout both departments, pupils work is regularly marked. In Years 1 and 2, the quality is variable and usually consists of a tick or a well done. In Years 3 to 6, marking is thorough and invariably explains pupils how a piece of work can be improved. Pupils say they find these comments helpful. Marking closely follows the department's policy giving consistency across all subjects.
- 2.40 Suitable assessment, recording and tracking systems are in place in the core subjects in Years 3 to 6. The information provided by assessment is used by teachers to guide planning on what pupils need to do next in order to make progress. Detailed records are kept and pupils' progress is tracked as they move through the school. An effective recording and tracking system has been developed in Years 1 and 2 and teachers use their knowledge of pupils needs, as well as the information standardised tests provide to guide planning. The school evaluates pupils' performance in relation to its aims, each department's aims and national norms in Year 6.

Senior Department

- 2.41 Teaching enables most pupils, including those with LDD, to acquire new knowledge, make sound progress in their understanding and develop new skills. However, in a number of lessons the most able pupils are not set work to explore for themselves the wider implications of the topics they are studying. Consequently, their independent thinking skills are less effectively developed.
- 2.42 Pupils are mostly well motivated by the teaching they receive and they are encouraged to work hard. Good intellectual, physical and creative effort was evident in the work of many pupils, but opportunities were reduced when the teaching style was over-directed with a heavy reliance on text-book exercises. Teachers know their pupils well and seek to provide sensitive support for those pupils with LDD in their classes. They are helped in this task by the SENCO who prepares IEPs, but insufficient time is available for monitoring closely pupils' progress on the targets set. The school is aware it needs to provide more support for pupils with LDD, and is discussing ways of how to achieve this.
- 2.43 Most teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly and enjoy learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are usually friendly and create an atmosphere in which pupils want to learn. Teachers are committed to helping pupils to be successful in the GCSE examinations and readily give up time to assist them.
- 2.44 Without a whole school teaching and learning policy, lesson planning is left to individual teachers and is variable in quality. The best teaching employs a wide variety of activities in lessons, sets an appropriate pace and has high expectations of pupils. When teachers make effective use of resources, practical tasks and good questioning, pupils are focused, behave in an exemplary way, enjoying their learning and applying themselves fully.
- 2.45 Teachers' understanding of the aptitude, needs and prior attainment of pupils derives largely from standardised test information in Years 7 and 9 and end of year tests. Their understanding of the needs of the most able is patchy and means that their needs are not always met, when work commensurate with their ability is not set. The school is aware of this weakness and recognises that work needs to be done in this area.
- 2.46 In most cases, teachers have a secure command of the subjects they teach but, in the lessons observed, some teachers gave unclear explanations to pupils or did not model enough answers for pupils to grasp fully the response to a question.
- 2.47 Teaching is supported by a suitable range of resources. The use of ICT is not yet embedded in the planning of all subjects, and as a result pupils have reduced opportunities to use software programmes to collect, analyse and manipulate data. The library has recently been relocated to provide a resource for the whole department. The number of books and range of the fiction stock is satisfactory. Good class libraries support teaching in some subjects, for example art and English.
- 2.48 An appropriate marking policy provides clear guidance for teachers. Despite this, the quality of marking is variable and some marking is cursory and does not advance pupils' learning. In a number of other subjects, the policy is followed closely and comments on marked work show pupils how to improve a piece of work. Occasionally, pupils are set focused individual learning targets to guide their progress.
- 2.49 Teaching includes regular assessment of pupils' work and most subjects use the information marking provides to guide future planning and enable pupils to make progress. The school is aware of the need to make more use of its standardised test information to identify areas for

improvement and to plan subsequent work. As yet, the school does not make sufficient use of the school's database to record pupils' marks and grades in order to track and effectively monitor pupils' progress.

Whole School

2.50 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care throughout the school is good and the high quality of relationships, identified as a major strength at the time of the last inspection, has been maintained. This reflects the school's aims that it should provide a stable environment in which pupils can achieve high standards in preparation for the challenges of the future. Procedures for protecting the welfare, health and safety of pupils are generally effective.

Pastoral Care

Infant and Junior departments

- 3.2 Teachers know pupils well and have a good understanding of their needs. They provide good individual care and support that contributes to pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils said they are able to talk to teachers about any problems they may have. Some pupils in the junior department prefer to write their concerns down and place them in a box, called a 'worry box', knowing that teachers will respond promptly to their worry. In their questionnaire, pupils said they are happy at school.
- 3.3 Pastoral arrangements are effective. Teachers are assisted in their tasks by a well-understood pastoral framework co-ordinated by the heads of the infant and junior departments respectively. Class teachers deal informally with issues on a daily basis, sharing information with other teachers as necessary. When a concern is identified appropriate support is arranged immediately. These communication arrangements work well and contribute to the calm working atmosphere.
- 3.4 Relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst pupils themselves, are outstanding. Pupils show tolerance and understanding towards one another; they listen to the viewpoints of others and are courteous. Older pupils in the junior department recognise their role in maintaining harmony, and they set a good example for younger pupils through their behaviour and by actively helping staff as monitors in the playground.
- 3.5 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour are effective. Through assemblies, PSHE and a range of rewards and sanctions, pupils are clear about the school's expectations and they are rewarded for good behaviour, care and thoughtfulness towards others. The school's house system is enthusiastically supported by pupils, especially the younger ones; they have a strong desire to collect house points for good work and behaviour. Pupils enjoyed deciding what the 'Golden Rules' should be. These are considered to be fair and are respected. Procedures to guard against bullying are clear and shared with parents and pupils, who say that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that should bullying occur, it would be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Senior Department

- 3.6 Staff provide good support and guidance for pupils. Form teachers are central to this care and the allocation of two teachers to each form ensures pupils can easily turn to someone if they have a problem. Teachers offer support in a friendly and caring manner. When concerns about pupils are brought to the attention of staff appropriate support is put in place swiftly. The housekeeper plays an important role in pupils' pastoral care and communicates any concerns to form teachers. The weekly form period is used well to encourage pupils to review their interests and achievements in a positive and constructive way.

- 3.7 Whilst the school has no formal pastoral arrangements in place, pupils are well known to staff and the high quality of relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff means that there is always someone to support them should a problem arise. Pupils' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire suggested a lack of staff concern for them as individuals without anyone to turn to when they had a problem. This was not supported by any discussion with pupils during the week of the inspection. The house system is used effectively to give pupils membership of a group outside their year group, thereby widening pupils' horizons by giving older pupils a chance to support the younger ones and giving younger pupils role models to set an example.
- 3.8 Appropriate measures promote good discipline and behaviour and deal with unacceptable behaviour when it occurs. Clear guidance exists on the use of sanctions, but some pupils perceive inconsistencies in their application, for example in favouritism towards girls. During inspection week, however, no evidence was found to support this view. Measures to safeguard against harassment and bullying are well established and effective because the procedures are clear.

Welfare, Health and Safety

Whole School

- 3.9 Measures to safeguard and promote pupils' health and well-being are generally effective. Most necessary child protection measures are in place. The headmaster is trained in safer recruitment and the designated person is appropriately trained in child protection. She ensures that teaching staff are suitably trained and understand the relevant procedures should issues of child protection arise. However, as yet support, administrative and maintenance staff have not had child protection training. Teaching staff new to the school and supply staff do not receive familiarisation on the school's child protection procedures. The governing body do not make an annual review of the school's child protection policies and procedures and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. The admission register is properly maintained. Attendance registers are correctly completed in line with the school's procedures, and unexplained absences are followed up promptly.
- 3.10 Appropriate checks have been made to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. A whole school fire risk assessment has been undertaken and those risks identified have been addressed. Fire practices are held regularly and recorded by several staff, but no central log is kept. Evacuation procedures are appropriately displayed around the school. All small electrical appliances are tested regularly and records logged. As yet, the staff, including the fire officer, have not received up-to-date training in fire hazards and the use of fire equipment.
- 3.11 Staff take effective measures to ensure the health and safety of pupils. Risk assessments are prepared and followed in subjects, extra-curricular activities, on-site and off-site visits. However, the off-site visit risk assessments do not include staff mobile telephone numbers for emergency contact or ratios of staff to pupils. The school does not have a health and safety committee to monitor the effectiveness and implementation of the school's policies and procedures. The school has measures in place to ensure compliance with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act.

- 3.12 The medical room is functional. The first aid policy has recently been revised and accidents are recorded accurately in the accident book. Most teachers have completed a basic first-aid course and five teachers, including the housekeeper who is responsible for the medical care of pupils, have up-to-date first aid qualifications at the higher level.
- 3.13 The quality of school lunches is satisfactory and both vegetarian and salad options are available. Packed lunches that are brought to school are expected to contain healthy foods. A healthy lifestyle is promoted through good and varied sports provision, through extra-curricular sport and the use of the extensive facilities for outdoor games. The school encourages healthy eating in a variety of ways, for example by organising activity weeks focusing on healthy food and keeping fit, teaching nutrition in food technology, providing easy access to drinking water and holding ‘fruity Fridays’ to replace the tuck shop.
- 3.14 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, school must:
- (a) require training in child protection (updated every three years) for non-teaching-staff and indicate that staff new to the school, part-time and voluntary staff who work with children are to be aware of the arrangements [Regulation 3.(2)(b)];
 - (b) ensure that the governing body undertakes an annual review of the school’s child protection policies and procedures and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged [Regulation 3.(2)(b)];
 - (c) develop fire procedures and provide staff training (repeated periodically where appropriate) [Regulation 3.(5)];
 - (d) appoint one or more competent persons (with sufficient training, experience and knowledge) to assist in taking preventative and protective measures (including fire fighting and evacuation) [Regulation 3.(5)].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.15 The school fosters good links with parents, and it has good and developing links with the wider community. These make an effective contribution to the school’s aim of creating a community in which pupils achieve their potential and leave school as confident and caring individuals. Since the last inspection, these links have been strengthened.
- 3.16 A high proportion of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said they were satisfied with the education provided by the school. They praised particularly the quality of teaching, which helps a child to make progress, the width of the curriculum and the worthwhile attitudes the school promotes. Inspectors agreed with these positive points. A significant number of parents said that the senior department does not provide a good range of extra-curricular activities and pupils with learning difficulties do not receive worthwhile help. Additionally a small number of parents said their concerns had not been handled well. Inspectors broadly agree with parents about the extra-curricular programme and learning support, but found that concerns are fully investigated and appropriate records are kept.
- 3.17 Parents of pupils of all ages are given many opportunities to become involved with the activities of the school and in the work and progress of their children. The school works constructively with parents to support their children’s academic progress and personal development. Regular meetings enable parents to discuss work and progress and information evenings ensure they have a chance to hear about the curriculum and to ask questions. The heads of the infant and junior departments have an open-door policy and parents can meet staff at the start and end of each day. The school warmly welcomes parents to class assemblies, sports days, sports fixtures, drama productions, concerts, prize giving and the

Christmas carol service. Parents assist with the Young Enterprise Scheme as business advisors and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Several parents assist with placements for work experience in Year 10. Homework diaries in the junior department and pupil planners in the senior department are used well for communications between home and school. The Friends of St Nicholas is active in fundraising and associated social events that involve many parents. These include the Christmas Fayre, the summer ball, the summer fete and coffee mornings for new parents. Substantial sums of money have been raised and most recently have been used to provide books for the library, 36 violins to enable Year 4 to learn the instrument and computer equipment, as well as contributing to the new theatre building fund. All of these serve to cement good relationships between home and school.

- 3.18 The school works hard to maintain good links with parents, keeping them suitably informed. The flow of information between school and home is good. The fortnightly newsletter from the headmaster, the attractively presented prospectus, departmental handbooks, the annual magazine and the website provide parents of pupils with the information they need. Annual reports in the infant and junior departments and twice-yearly reports in the senior department give parents an insight into their children's work and progress. These have been revised since the last inspection, but some reports still fail to make it clear what has to be done for a pupil to improve.
- 3.19 Parental concerns are dealt with according to the published complaints procedure and the school handles complaints and concerns with due care and promptly. Proper records are kept. The complaints procedure has not recently been invoked.
- 3.20 The school actively and successfully promotes links with the wider community in a number of ways. Year 11 pupils organise and successfully run a Christmas party for the elderly, and the local church is used for the annual carol service. The school supports children in Zambia, by for example sending surplus school uniforms from the uniform shop. Pupils in the junior department prepare harvest boxes for elderly people in the local area, and Christmas boxes are prepared as part of Operation Christmas Child. A recent Easter bazaar raised money for the Haven House Children's hospice. The 'green machine' environmental group made a presentation to the senior department on the recycling and Year 4 enjoyed a visit from the Essex County Council's 'Wastebuster' bus. By collecting surplus paper in classrooms, pupils learn the importance of recycling. Considerable sums of money are raised by pupils for a number of different charities including Guide Dogs for the Blind, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Royal National Lifeboats Institution and a baby unit at the local hospital. Through letting the sports hall to local groups, the school establishes further close links with the area. All these opportunities make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and promote the school within the community.
- 3.21 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Pupils benefit from a good quality of education in line with the school's aims, which is sustained by satisfactory governance. The structure and management arrangements relating to the governing body are set out in the charitable deed, which has not been updated since it was prepared in 1962. The board, made up of ten governors, meets twice a term and the finance committee meets annually. Ad hoc committees, for example disciplinary and fund-raising are set up when the need arises. This structure has remained unchanged since the time of the last inspection.
- 4.2 Financial management is strong and governors maintain close oversight of the school's finances. They are effectively supported by the treasurer and the school accountant, who serves as clerk to the governors. However, governors have a less secure grasp of the wider and increased responsibilities of governance today, including their responsibilities for monitoring standards, regulatory and statutory requirements. A protocol has not yet been established to enable governors to oversee the monitoring of welfare, health and safety, and at present they are dependent on the lead given by the headmaster.
- 4.3 Governors have a strong strategic vision for the development of the site, intending to provide high quality facilities to support teaching and learning. The new infant department, the extension to Swire House and the new theatre, bear witness to good financial planning and the investment of financial resources. Governors contribute to educational development through their discussion of the development plan and their review of the school's aims. The headmaster provides governors with a comprehensive report at their meetings, through which they have an insight into the working of the school. Governors understand the need for, and are taking steps to receive, training on the responsibilities of governors. Informal arrangements are in place for the induction of new governors.
- 4.4 Several governors have a long association with the school and a concern for the quality of education it provides. They bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their work, enabling them to provide advice across a range of topics. Governors meet staff at school functions, for example prize giving and at social gatherings at different times of the year. Although governors do not routinely make planned visits to see for themselves the day-to-day running of the school and to talk to staff, a small number take an interest in particular aspects of the school's work, and the chairman is in regular contact with the headmaster.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The successful leadership and sound management of the school by the senior management team (SMT) provide clear educational direction enabling it to fulfil its aims. However, some aspects of the leadership and management of the EYFS setting are unsatisfactory. Several senior staff appointments have been made since the last inspection, most notably the appointment of a new headmaster. Additionally, a revised management structure has been put in place. These changes have brought about benefits to the school community and contribute effectively to the quality of education provided, the care of pupils and the promotion of the school's aims and ethos.
- 4.6 An analysis of the school's needs has largely been achieved in response to the requirements of inspection. In this, it has been generally successful. The school's development planning, under the direction of the SMT, for the period 2007 to 2010, draws on discussion with staff

and governors and provides a framework for future educational development. Although responsibility for the management of different sections of the development plan is allocated and a time frame set, it is not supported by action plans to demonstrate how each section will be carried out. It illustrates that the school has an understanding of some of its strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the infant and junior departments both have development plans. That for the junior department gives a clear sense of direction, which is successfully moving the department forward. The role of the subject co-ordinators in the junior department is developing well. However, the leadership and management potential of the heads of department and others with management responsibilities in the senior department, has yet to be fully utilised, for example in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers with sole responsibility for a subject do not have a recognised forum in which to discuss issues relating to their work and thus feel detached from whole school debates.

- 4.7 A range of recently revised and new policy documents and statements of procedure is in place, but some are too general to illustrate how they support the work of the school. The school does not have, as yet, an effective mechanism for ensuring policies and procedures are consistently applied across the school to maintain consistency of good practice.
- 4.8 The recruitment of staff, supply and support staff is well managed and supported by appropriate documentation. Appropriate checks are made before an appointment is confirmed and proper records are kept. The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers, but does not currently have a teacher on the scheme. The recommendation of the last inspection to prepare appraisal has been effectively introduced in the infant and junior departments, but it is still in its infancy in the senior department. Non-teaching staff do not have an appraisal process.
- 4.9 Financial resources are shrewdly managed to ensure good provision is made for learning materials to support the school's educational aims and the needs of pupils. The accommodation works well for its purpose. Classrooms in the new buildings provide high quality accommodation for teaching and learning. Those in the older buildings are mostly of a good size, bright and airy. High quality displays of work, records of pupils' achievements or recent school trips create an interesting and stimulating environment in the junior department. The grounds are imaginatively used for educational and recreational play. A rolling programme ensures the buildings and grounds are maintained to a good standard.
- 4.10 The administrative, maintenance and support staff provide good quality assistance, upon which the efficient running of the school depends. The welcoming and helpful response of the reception office team is important in supporting the school's welcoming and family ethos. Communications within the school usually work well.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 St Nicholas School successfully fulfils its aims and provides a good quality education for its pupils. They are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that provide a secure foundation for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The quality of teaching in the infant and junior departments is good overall, with some outstanding features in Years 3 to 6, and pupils achieve good standards in the curriculum and across a wide range of activities. As a matter of urgency, the school must review and amend its provision for its Reception class children in the light of the EYFS requirements. In the senior department, satisfactory teaching, combined with hard work and good attitudes to learning, enable pupils to achieve results above the national average in a broad range of GCSE subjects. With few exceptions, pupils are well behaved, they show respect for others, they are friendly, polite and well-mannered. Pupils are well cared for and their personal development is good. The attention given to health and safety is generally effective. The school has developed good links with parents and it has developing links with the community.
- 5.2 The school has made substantial progress in almost all the areas identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection. Three of the recommendations have been met in full, but the school still has work to do relating to appraisal in the senior department. The school is also aware that it has issues to address on strengthening the role of governors, monitoring procedures and introducing an appraisal scheme for non-teaching staff. It is also aware that work needs to be done on developing the range of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all pupils and extending the extra-curricular programme.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 3 (Welfare, Health and Safety).

Next Steps

- 5.4 To improve still further the good quality of education it provides, the school should:
1. strengthen the role of governors by establishing mechanisms for overseeing the work of the school and the implementation of the registration standards and other legal requirements;
 2. improve the effectiveness of management by establishing rigorous monitoring procedures for all aspects of the school's work;
 3. adopt a wider range of teaching strategies and extra-curricular opportunities to support and challenge pupils of all abilities to develop greater intellectual curiosity and more experience of independent learning;
 4. continue the work already begun in the senior department on implementing the appraisal scheme for teachers and introduce a scheme for non-teaching staff.

- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
1. require training in child protection (updated every three years) for non-teaching-staff and indicate that part-time and voluntary staff who work with children are to be aware of the arrangements [Regulation 3.(2)(b)];
 2. provide that the governing body undertakes an annual review of the school's child protection policies and procedures and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged [Regulation 3.(2)(b)];
 3. develop fire procedures and provide staff training (repeated periodically where appropriate) [Regulation 3.(5)];
 4. appoint one or more competent persons (with sufficient training, experience and knowledge) to assist in taking preventative and protective measures (including fire fighting and evacuation) [Regulation 3.(5)].
- 5.6 Any failures to meet EYFS requirements are detailed in Section 7.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 3rd to 6th November 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 22nd and 23rd September by one inspector. The inspector observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff and governors. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspector examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Margaret Banks	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Kerstin Lewis	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Joan Mumby	Headmistress, ISA school
Mr Andrew Waddington	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Judith Harrison	Headmistress, IAPS school
Mrs Seona Rivett	Head, HMC junior school in IAPS
Mr Antony Winch	Head, international primary school
Mr Robin Lewis	Early Years Lead Inspector

7. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

- 7.1 St Nicholas School is an independent, co-educational school with 399 pupils aged between four and sixteen years. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for pupils aged four to five years can accommodate a maximum of 36 pupils on its roll. Those who will become five during the autumn term attend full-time. The remainder attend part-time during the autumn and full-time for the spring and summer terms. These children are grouped in two parallel Reception classes, each with a qualified teacher assisted by a teaching assistant. Drama, music and physical education (PE) are taught by specialist teachers who work throughout the school. The school expects that pupils will continue at St Nicholas' until they reach sixteen years of age. The Reception classes are thus integral to the school and aim to enable the pupils to progress seamlessly to Year 1. The school intends that children should be helped to settle by the school's caring culture and become well grounded in the six areas of learning.
- 7.2 The setting is not fully implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS which is a legal requirement for all settings with children aged from nought to five. The evaluation of its current provision for learning and development and the implementation of the EYFS assessment profile has not yet been undertaken. Consequently this reduces the quality of the provision offered to the children.
- 7.3 The setting has devised detailed assessment arrangements to monitor and evaluate children's progress. These assessment arrangements and the resulting planning relate to the previous targets for Foundation Stage pupils known as the Early Learning Goals, but does not meet EYFS requirements. Provision is unsatisfactory in relation to problem solving and reasoning in mathematics, elements of knowledge and understanding of the world, outdoor play, designing and making and information and communications technology (ICT). Within the parameters of the provision made, individual children are well supported. Small class sizes and a high adult to pupil ratio ensure that time can be spent with individuals without disadvantaging others.
- 7.4 Children achieve well within the curriculum provided. Particular strengths are in literacy, numeracy and aspects of creative and physical development. Children respond well to staff, thus reinforcing their developing independence. However, their achievement and progress in some aspects of mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development in relation to planned outdoor play, designing and making and ICT are reduced in relation to EYFS criteria. As yet, parents have not been given written notification that they may have access to their child's records.
- 7.5 The children had only been in the two Reception classes for three weeks at the time of the inspection and were at an early stage of forming relationships, but nevertheless were keen to join in, make friends and respect each others' point of view. They behave well both in class and in the playground emphasising their ability to keep themselves and others safe; they are confident when asking adults for advice or permission showing they understand potential dangers.
- 7.6 Pupils take great pleasure in PE lessons, clearly understanding the benefits of physical activity. Their good, evolving habits are also seen in their enjoyment of healthy snacks, and their attention to good manners and the tidy disposal of litter.
- 7.7 Small group work and persistent, pertinent questions ensure that children develop these and other skills, such as co-operation, well. In a music session, the children took turns and

played the instruments with care and concentration. They understand how to keep safe and make healthy eating choices, for example the opportunity to choose their fruit each Friday. They willingly contribute in small groups and, when all together, are effectively developing skills of sharing and co-operating with each other.

- 7.8 The children are helped to learn and develop effectively. Staff know their pupils well and give good support in these areas. Assessment identifies children who have additional learning and development needs, and on-going assessment is effectively used to plan the next stage of learning for individuals and groups of children. The pupils willingly and enthusiastically respond to the expectations of those who work with them and show a good degree of persistence in carrying out their tasks. Much of the work is carefully directed by teachers but the children nevertheless show satisfactory ability to make choices and decisions. This is reinforced by the well-decorated classrooms and hallways where interesting displays include examples of children's work. Pupils respond very well in lessons, apply what they already know with and make confident advances in their learning. Parents are involved in their children's learning through homework books in which they and the staff exchange evaluations and messages. The parents are overwhelmingly positive in their evaluation of the provision. However little opportunity currently exists for planned outdoor play and exploration, which reduces the quality of the children's experience.
- 7.9 The governors, the headmaster and school senior managers, including the head of infants take EYFS welfare, and health and safety matters seriously. An appropriate number of staff hold a paediatric first aid certificate. Good care is taken to promote the health and well being of the pupils and staff continually reinforce the message of staying safe. Risk assessments are of good quality. As yet, staff are not supported by a behaviour management policy.
- 7.10 The leadership and management of the setting are satisfactory in most respects and in some areas are good. However, the school has yet to incorporate the statutory requirements of the EYFS into its policies and procedures. As a result, the needs of the children are not fully met. The adults who teach and supervise the children are all suitable for their roles and fully qualified, though children have not yet been formally assigned an adult who is the first point of contact for parents. Staff deploy teaching resources very effectively. Dedicated time at the beginning of term enables some thought to be given to improving provision and identifying areas for improvement. However, self-assessment has yet to be fully embedded in the school's management and staff culture, with the result that clear targets for further improvement are not established. In particular, the school has not ensured that it is fully aware of changes in statutory requirements and the failure to fulfil these is therefore a considerable weakness.

What the Setting should do to Improve

7.11 In order to improve further the school must:

1. as a matter of urgency, review and amend its provision for its Reception class children in the light of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements which became statutory on September 1st 2008.

7.12 In order to meet the regulatory requirements of the EYFS the setting, the school must:

1. give written notification to parents that they may have access to their children's records;
2. provide a separate behaviour management policy;
3. formally assign each child a key person.