



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Blue Coat School

Full Name of School	The Blue Coat School
DfE Number	330/6070
EYFS Number	EY309405
Registered Charity Number	528805
Address	The Blue Coat School Somerset Road Edgbaston Birmingham West Midlands B17 0HR
Telephone Number	0121 410 6800
Fax Number	0121 454 7757
Email Address	headssec@bluecoat.bham.sch.uk
Head	Mr Alan Browning
Chair of Governors	Prof Jim Hay
Age Range	2 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	554
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (305 boys; 249 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 14 5-11: 416 3-5 (EYFS): 124
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 554
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Helen Andrews
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	18 Jan 2011 to 19 Jan 2011 16 Feb 2011 to 18 Feb 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in January 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

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

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

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

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

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Blue Coat School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from two to eleven years. Founded in 1722 as a co-educational charity school in the centre of Birmingham, it moved to its current fifteen-acre campus, two miles from the city centre, in 1930. It became fully independent in 1966, extended its age range to accommodate two- and three-year-olds in 2000 and ceased its provision for boarders and pupils in Years 7 and 8 in 2005. Its Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which currently caters for pupils aged two to five, is an integral part of the school's pre-prep department. The school is organised in two sections; the pre-prep department provides for pupils aged two to seven and the prep department for those aged seven to eleven. The running of the school is overseen by a governing body. A range of governors' committees reports to the full board.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide an excellent, rounded education for every child, developing confidence, ability and intellect within a caring Christian environment. It seeks to offer a broad, balanced and forward-looking curriculum in well-resourced facilities for enjoyable, imaginative learning, with dedicated and well-qualified staff, ensuring a secure, positive community, in which pupils learn to 'grow in grace'.
- 1.3 The school is academically selective. Admission at the ages of two to five is based on informal assessments. At all other ages, admission follows formal entrance tests. The majority of pupils are drawn from a relatively small geographical area around the school. At age eleven, pupils move on to a wide range of destinations, often achieving scholarships. Results in standardised tests in verbal and non-verbal reasoning indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the national average. A fairly wide range of abilities is represented although most pupils demonstrate at least above average ability, and some far above average ability.
- 1.4 At the time of inspection there were 554 pupils on roll, of whom three-fifths were boys. Of the 138 children in the EYFS, 16 attended part time. The school has a cosmopolitan pupil population, most coming from relatively advantaged backgrounds; over half are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a number of faiths are represented. The school has identified a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The majority have a good command of English. Where deemed necessary, support is provided in class. Thirty-nine pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), 35 of whom receive specialist learning support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN).
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. National Curriculum nomenclature is used by the school in Years 1 to 6. The year group nomenclature used by the school in the EYFS and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Buttons	Nursery
Nursery	Nursery
Transition	Reception

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils are very well educated in accordance with the school's aims and overall achievement is excellent. Pupils develop high levels of knowledge, understanding and skill and their attainment and progress are excellent. Their attitudes to learning are always positive and often outstanding. An excellent curriculum provides significant breadth and depth of educational experience, allowing pupils of all ages and abilities to make considerable progress. Since the previous inspection the school has developed much wider use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. The vast majority of pupils participate in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. The quality of teaching is good. The best practice, observed in many lessons, notably in the pre-prep, was characterised by varied tasks and levels of support for pupils of differing abilities. Overall, however, planning is inconsistent in this respect. The best marking enables pupils to understand how they can improve their work in the future.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. Their spiritual awareness is seen in their high self-esteem and the great consideration shown for the views and contributions of their peers. The 'Blue Coat Values' are a highly effective moral framework, ensuring that pupils develop an excellent understanding of right and wrong. Pupils understand how to live in a community and are clearly socially aware. Their cultural understanding is broad and highly developed. Welfare, health, safety and pastoral guidance are excellent. Relationships in the school are particularly strong. Safeguarding arrangements and measures to promote good behaviour, guard against bullying and reduce risks are very effective. The school makes excellent provision for pupils who are ill or injured and successfully encourages healthy eating and regular exercise.
- 2.3 Excellent governance provides a wide range of experience and a detailed insight into school life. Governors achieve a comprehensive overview and have a clear and effective commitment to maintaining high standards of health and safety, child protection and welfare. The leadership and management of the school are good, providing clear educational direction and ensuring that the pupils' education accords with the school's aims. The recommendation of the previous report, to develop the roles and responsibilities of middle and senior management, has been addressed successfully. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is well established in the pre-prep but inconsistent in the prep. Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. The school has forged strong relationships and considerable trust with its parents, who are highly appreciative of the breadth and quality of the pastoral care and education provided.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Reflect the highly effective practice of the pre-prep across the school as a whole to improve consistency in the quality of the planning, monitoring, assessment and evaluation of teaching and learning.
 2. In the EYFS, plan for outdoor learning across the curriculum in all classes and develop greater flexibility in timetabling the use of the dedicated outdoor area.
 3. In the EYFS, reduce the use of worksheets and plan daily activities indoors and outdoors for children to investigate, solve problems and become active inquisitive learners.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The overall achievement of pupils in the school is excellent, maintaining the high standards reported at the previous inspection. They are very well educated in accordance with the school's aims to develop confidence, ability and intellect.
- 3.2 Pupils achieve high levels of knowledge, understanding and skill in curricular and extra-curricular activities. Throughout the school, standards of speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematical understanding are high. Pupils have achieved notable successes in regional and national competitions in general knowledge, mathematics and modern languages. Logical and independent thinking are clearly evident across the curriculum. In a Year 6 Latin lesson, for example, pupils analysed the impact of the Roman invasion of Britain.
- 3.3 Achievement in sport is excellent; pupils benefit greatly from the early introduction, in the pre-prep, of specialist sports teaching. In recent years, individual pupils and school teams have achieved a high level of success in regional and national sporting events. The overall standard of creative achievement is high. The large majority of pupils play musical instruments; results in music examinations are strong, pupils have won awards at local music festivals and highly talented musicians perform in regional and national ensembles. Other aspects of the pupils' creativity are also well-developed, with significant achievements in drama, design and technology (DT) and art.
- 3.4 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations.
- 3.5 Pupils follow a demanding curriculum, notably in English, mathematics and science, and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education, almost all of them transferring to selective independent or maintained senior schools at the age of eleven, often with a scholarship. Inspection judgements, including observed performance in relation to national targets, confirm this evaluation of the pupils' attainment. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make exceptional progress in relation to pupils of similar ability.
- 3.6 Attitudes to learning are always positive and often excellent. The pupils settle quickly, take a pride in their work and are keen to make progress. They show high levels of application and perseverance and collaborate very well. In a science lesson, Year 2 pupils showed exceptional application to their task when working in groups, and in a gymnastics display pupils in Years 3 and 4 co-operated very effectively in their interpretation of contemporary music. Pupils engage themselves wholeheartedly in curricular and extra-curricular activities.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is excellent; the school has built further on the high quality noted at the previous inspection. The curriculum fully supports the school's aim to provide an excellent, rounded education for every child, developing confidence, ability and intellect within a caring Christian environment. It enables pupils to extend their learning across a wide range of subjects, which covers all the required areas of educational experience. Pupils have the opportunity to study several modern foreign languages as well as Latin in Year 6. The curriculum ensures that pupils achieve excellent results in transfer examinations to secondary schools. It enables pupils to make progress by the end of Year 6 which is considerably beyond national expectations.
- 3.8 Following recommendations at the previous inspection, the school has successfully developed the application of pupils' ICT skills to other subjects. Their ICT skills are widely used in many subjects across the curriculum. The use of ICT by subject teachers has increased significantly due to a major investment in hardware resources and workshops and training, which have boosted the skills and confidence of the staff.
- 3.9 The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure continuity of education and progress across the years. It provides suitable challenge for pupils of all ages and abilities. Pupils with LDD or EAL receive excellent specialist support to enable them to benefit from the curriculum. Such pupils receive good assistance in class through the provision of tasks appropriate to ability, individual support from teaching assistants or work in small support groups. Their individual education plans, which are reviewed regularly, are well known to staff and contain targets relevant to the needs of individual pupils. However, cross-referencing to them in teachers' planning is inconsistent. A gifted and talented register identifies pupils who would benefit from extension activities. Staff are aware of their needs and consequently provide them with tasks in lessons which are challenging and interesting, enabling them to progress in line with their abilities.
- 3.10 An outstanding range of extra-curricular activities is available to pupils at all stages in the school. They cater for the cerebral, including chess and board games, the musical, such as cello group and jazz group, the dramatic and the sporting. The majority of pupils attend activities, many taking on more than one activity during the week. Their participation is of the highest enthusiasm and interest. Activities benefit from extremely high levels of expertise, run either by members of school staff or by specialists from outside agencies, such as the after-school science clubs. The excellent sports facilities ensure that the school enjoys considerable success in the wide array of inter-school fixtures, which take place in a variety of sports throughout the prep. A good range of community links, both local and international, provides extensive benefit to the pupils. A relationship with an orphanage in Zimbabwe, for example, provokes pupils to think far beyond themselves and develop a greater understanding of their responsibilities for others.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The quality of teaching is good, maintaining the standards noted at the previous inspection. This supports the aim of the school to provide enjoyable, imaginative learning. Overall, the quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good and often, notably in the pre-prep department, excellent. When teaching is excellent, pupils make extremely good progress in relation to their abilities and give of their best.
- 3.12 The teachers' subject knowledge is exceptionally strong across the curriculum. Teaching demonstrates a clear understanding of the pupils' needs. Teaching offers pupils the individual support needed to enable them to make continuous progress. This is a particular strength of the Pre-prep department. Teaching encourages pupils to apply themselves to all tasks with high levels of concentration, great enthusiasm and perseverance. It ensures exemplary standards of behaviour. In the best lessons, high expectations for pupil attainment result in pupils producing work at a higher level than their ability would suggest. In an ICT lesson, for example, the standard of video editing was of a quality normally expected of pupils several years older.
- 3.13 The most successful lessons involve excellent planning of activities, carefully matched to include tasks for pupils of varying abilities, and a brisk pace which keeps the pupils fully interested. The quality of questioning in these lessons allows teaching to make an effective assessment of pupils' progress and alter the lesson accordingly. When teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson is not brisk enough to ensure that sufficient challenge is available to the more able pupils. A wide range of resources is well used in all subjects to enhance pupil learning. In a history lesson, for example, a variety of artefacts enabled pupils studying life for servants in Victorian households to understand how difficult their chores were many years ago. Staff are confident in their use of interactive whiteboards as a presentation tool, often using them well to cater for different learning styles. Pupils were also observed using interactive whiteboards, for example to manipulate a map of the world in a geography lesson, allowing them to learn the location of the continents in an enjoyable and effective manner.
- 3.14 Marking is punctual and regular. The best marking provides advice on how pupils can further improve their work and includes comments relating to clear learning objectives, set out at the beginning of the lesson. Variation in the quality of written marking in exercise books reduces the facility for pupils to review their work and understand for themselves how they can improve in future. Some marking is cursory, only indicating whether an answer is right or wrong. However, many teachers give excellent verbal feedback, successfully encouraging and informing pupils for future tasks.
- 3.15 At the time of the inspection assessment procedures were under review. In the pre-prep, much work has been done analysing attainment in class in relation to scores in standardised assessments. The tracking of literacy using nationally standardised criteria ensures that teachers in the pre-prep have an awareness of levels of attainment in relation to expectation. Teachers subsequently put strategies in place to assist any who underachieve. In the prep, standardised assessments are used to monitor the performance of whole year cohorts. Additionally, the comparison of results in school tests with standardised test results serves to identify any under-performance and such information is effectively used to plan for future lessons and determine additional support, where necessary.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent and has a strong impact on their achievement. The school has maintained its high standards since the previous inspection. The personal qualities of pupils are extremely well developed, in accord with the school's aim for pupils to learn to 'grow in grace'. Pupils benefit strongly from a high level of pastoral care from all staff; they are thoughtful, articulate and sensitive and have a strong understanding of right and wrong.
- 4.2 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They have high levels of self-confidence, and are considerate and respectful towards each others' thoughts and beliefs. They recognise the abilities and skills of all members of the school community. This was clearly shown at a house assembly where the performance of a beginner clarinet player was as warmly applauded as that of a grade 6 pianist. In a pre-prep assembly, all the members of a Year 1 class demonstrated great confidence and enthusiasm in performing an action song and reciting lines from memory. Pupils demonstrated a great sense of awe and wonder in a science lesson on rocket propulsion using an explosive mixture of chemicals.
- 4.3 The development of pupils' moral awareness is excellent. They know and understand the 'Blue Coat Values', which provide an excellent moral framework and underpin their consistently outstanding behaviour. Pupils respond well to high expectations of good manners and courtesy. They respect their working environment and fully embrace the school's reward systems.
- 4.4 The social awareness of the pupils is excellent. They willingly take on positions of responsibility, such as head boy, head girl, prefects and librarians. Year 6 pupils act as 'buddies' to Year 3 pupils when they join a house at the beginning of the prep. They thus develop their understanding of a need to take on responsibility for themselves and the importance of assisting others. In all year groups pupils feel that they can make a contribution to life of the school, since their views are listened to and they can raise issues with an adult. Pupils gain a clear understanding that others are less fortunate than themselves through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum and the school's links to charities in Africa.
- 4.5 Pupils develop an excellent level of cultural awareness. Not only do they have an excellent knowledge of their own culture, but they are also aware of the cultures and faiths of others. Their understanding of the Christian ethos of the school is enhanced by the weekly chapel service, and that of other cultures through house assemblies and PSHE and religious education (RE) lessons. Their awareness of the different cultures around them is further enhanced through parents' visits to the school to talk about their own cultural traditions, such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. Pupils' general knowledge is outstanding and develops strongly through the regular trips to museums and galleries throughout the year. They develop a greater understanding of their own and other cultures through playing musical instruments to a high level of achievement and taking part in musical ensembles. A Latin percussion group, for example, develops pupils' understanding of the characteristics of Latin American music. Dramatic productions, such as 'The Pirates of Penzance', which was being rehearsed at the time of the inspection, further enhance pupils' cultural development.

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

- 4.6 The school has maintained the excellent standards of the welfare, health and safety of the pupils noted at the previous inspection, ensuring that it meets its aim of providing a secure, positive community, in which pupils learn to 'grow in grace'. Throughout the school both teaching and non-teaching staff provide excellent support and guidance, the cornerstone of which in the prep department is the high quality of care and welfare furnished by the house system. The houses are warm, welcoming and relaxed, providing a 'home from home', in which pupils have a base and play together very happily and from which they are collected at the end of the day. In the pre-prep department a nurturing environment is strongly fostered and pastoral care in both departments is successfully promoted by the medical and chaplaincy staff. Pupils are confident that they have someone to turn to should they require help.
- 4.7 Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are particularly strong. Pupils mix readily between age groups and a 'buddy' system enables older pupils to support the younger ones. Measures to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying are very effective. They draw strongly on the school's values and were particularly well supported in the responses to both the pupils' and parents' questionnaires. Should unacceptable behaviour occur, it is dealt with fairly and constructively. The school has excellent safeguarding arrangements. Its procedures are secure and well known to staff who, along with governors, have undertaken relevant training. Senior staff and governors have completed safer recruitment training.
- 4.8 Measures to reduce risks from fire and other hazards are secure and very diligently prepared and monitored. Evacuation procedures are carefully thought out and regularly rehearsed. Any issues arising are addressed promptly. Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of staff and pupils are thorough and effective. Levels of supervision are high and thorough risk assessments are closely monitored. A site visit and careful consideration of risk precede educational visits. A very detailed planning summary facilitates the organisation of a visit and a full evaluation takes place afterwards. The school makes excellent provision for pupils who are ill or injured and keeps accurate records, reviewing them regularly to identify any patterns or trends. A thorough plan details improvements to educational access for pupils with special needs or disabilities. Medical and kitchen staff strongly support the school's initiatives to encourage pupils to be healthy through healthy eating and regular exercise, which are a clear feature of several curriculum areas. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is excellent and has been strengthened since the previous inspection, ensuring that the school meets its aim to provide a rounded education within a caring Christian environment. The governing body, including members representing the church, the university and the city and others appointed to bring particular skills, provides a wide range of experience, ensuring that governance benefits from a detailed insight into the work of the school and provides support, challenge and stimulus.
- 5.2 A wide range of measures ensures a comprehensive overview. Governors' committees, which include members of staff, monitor and promote particular aspects of the school very thoroughly, undertake a timetabled review of policies, receive reports and presentations from staff and report to full board meetings. Link governors provide a detailed oversight of specific aspects of school life. Their focused days in school are central to the work of the governors, providing a dialogue which ensures that staff feel supported and valued. Useful analysis is provided both to the school and the governing body. Together with a detailed headmaster's report, the review of statistical information, attendance at school events, and an effective link with the parents' association, these measures ensure that governors have a clear understanding of the life of the school and discharge very effectively their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning and investment.
- 5.3 Governors have a clear and effective commitment to maintaining high standards of health and safety, child protection and welfare. The health and safety committee, attended by relevant members of staff, undertakes a systematic review of accidents and incidents. Governors are committed to training and have undertaken child protection and safer recruitment training. A governor with particular expertise in safeguarding provides professional support, oversees the school's procedures and undertakes an annual review.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the school are good, have improved since the previous inspection, and are successful in promoting the school's aims to provide an excellent, rounded education for every child and to develop confidence, ability and intellect within a caring Christian environment.
- 5.5 Leadership and management provide clear educational direction, as reflected in the quality of the pupils' education and the standard of their personal development, thereby ensuring that the pupils' education accords with the school's aims. School policies are implemented effectively. School administration is efficient and management is flexible and responsive, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the safeguarding of pupils and the quality of the pupils' educational experiences.
- 5.6 The school has made good progress in tackling the recommendations of the previous report. Staff now have a clear understanding of their roles, a systematic approach to development has been established and pupils apply ICT skills widely across the curriculum.

- 5.7 School development planning is thorough, takes into account the views of staff and governors and guides the school well. Leadership and management are effective in self-evaluation, setting priorities and ensuring that they are achieved. For example, the senior leadership and management team structure, roles and job descriptions have been recently revised. The restructuring has been very carefully considered to ensure that it meets the school's needs to provide greater accountability and focus in the prep and pre-prep for both pastoral and academic areas, and to support better strategic planning. However, at the time of the inspection it was too early to assess its impact.
- 5.8 Self-evaluation, guided by a cycle of curriculum review, is a prominent feature of subject leadership in the pre-prep and is developing in the prep department. Teaching and learning in the pre-prep are routinely observed and peer observation has allowed teachers to share good practice, resulting in high standards of teaching. However, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the prep are inconsistent, resulting in variations in the quality of teaching. Performance management for teachers includes lesson observation and the identification of training needs, and target-setting is informed by the outcomes of the review cycle. School staff benefit strongly from a comprehensive programme of professional development.
- 5.9 The school has been successful in recruiting, developing and motivating high quality teaching and non-teaching staff and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all children and in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Office and support staff play an important role in the smooth running of the school and in providing pastoral care. Thorough and effective arrangements have been made for checking the suitability of all those who come into contact with children, and detailed assessments are made of any potential hazards.

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

- 5.10 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent, maintaining the high standards reported at the previous inspection, and promoting the school's aim to build a secure, positive community in which everyone is valued and appreciated. The school has forged strong relationships and a high degree of trust with parents, who are highly appreciative of the breadth and quality of the pastoral care and education provided, and who recognise the school's success in achieving its aim to provide a rounded education for every child.
- 5.11 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire parents expressed very high levels of appreciation for the quality of educational provision, and were particularly appreciative of the range of subjects offered and the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views.
- 5.12 The inspection findings endorse the parents' evaluation that the school communicates with them very effectively. An excellent range of written information, in handbooks, newsletters, notices and on the website, is provided for parents. Informative interim and annual reports cover all subjects, reporting on attitudes to learning and, in the best examples, on progress, strengths and weaknesses. The school communicates effectively with parents whose children stay for after-school care, using a notebook to communicate messages to and from teachers. The four year progression through the house system enables staff to form strong bonds with parents.

- 5.13 All required information is provided to parents and prospective parents, largely through the comprehensive website, and a detailed letter indicates clearly how such information can be obtained. Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. They visit the school and talk to the pupils about their faiths and cultural festivals. They meet staff over coffee after chapel assemblies, and matches and concerts are supported strongly. Events arranged by the 'Association of Friends' are well attended and the funds raised are used to buy new equipment. The school handles the concerns of parents with care and follows its published procedures.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good. The 'Blue Coat Values' are strongly embedded in everyday practice and evident in children's excellent behaviour. Meticulous attention to safeguarding and a highly organised approach to learning ensure that children's individual needs are met well. Children achieve well in many areas of the curriculum as a result of warm and caring relationships and good staff support. A focus on future major building developments has, however, masked the need to consider current outdoor practice. Staff are committed to improving their practice through ongoing training, good links with the local authority and thorough self-evaluation. Since the previous ISI and Ofsted inspections the EYFS have addressed all the areas for improvement.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are good. Strong leadership provides clear vision, efficient monitoring systems, and motivation to improve. Outstanding systems and policies ensure that the highest regard is given to keeping children safe. Inclusive practice is an integral part of the EYFS with an appropriate focus on appreciating the range of cultures within the school. Current use of the school grounds for learning is limited, although this has been identified as an area to develop. Excellent links with parents strive towards a true partnership in learning. They speak highly of the provision and receive excellent information through parent sessions, the website and documentation.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is good, both for pupils under the age of three and their older peers. Staff develop warm relationships with children and effectively support their learning. The youngest children soar in confidence through exceptional interactions with staff. At best, teaching excites and challenges children's thinking and skills. However, Nursery and Reception staff rely too much on worksheets as a learning tool, which do not encourage children to be active, creative learners. The indoor learning environments are well-organised, safe and stimulating with a good range of resources. Staff use the extensive school grounds well for guided maths trails, nature activities and physical development, but do not plan for child-initiated learning outdoors. Plans build on previous teaching well and are beginning to include children's interests. A rigorous approach to assessment ensures staff identify next steps and the need for additional support. However, staff do not always use this knowledge to challenge children fully during whole class teaching sessions. Staff give vigilant attention to safety, health and well-being through well-established everyday routines. High priority is given to ensuring that children move confidently to their next year group.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are good overall. Children achieve highly across all areas of learning by the end of the EYFS. The youngest children talk confidently and become articulate communicators in Nursery and Reception. All children develop a thorough knowledge of mathematical concepts through a consistent approach to numeracy. Children are keen to learn; they thoroughly enjoy physical education, role play and the sensory area in the classroom for the youngest children. They demonstrate competent computer skills and a growing knowledge of the world, and benefit from outstanding specialist music teaching in the Nursery. However, children are less able to develop their own ideas and theories through investigation and problem-solving. They play socially and independently from an early age, make healthy choices for snacks, develop good hygiene practices and know the importance of being active. Children are friendly, polite and caring as a result of the strong nurturing ethos of the school.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Complaints since the last inspection

- 6.6 Since the previous inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with management and members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Christopher Sanderson	Reporting Inspector
Mr Dominic Crehan	Head, IAPS School
Dr Simon Horbury	Director of Studies, IAPS School
Mrs Jo Blank	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Brigid Dent	Early Years Team Inspector (Early Years Manager, IAPS School)