



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## St Catherine's School

Full Name of School	<b>St Catherine's School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>318/6008</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>1014651</b>		
Address	<b>St Catherine's School Cross Deep Twickenham Middlesex TW1 4QJ</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>020 8891 2898</b>		
Fax Number	<b>020 8744 9629</b>		
Email Address	<b>admissions@stcatherineschool.co.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Sr Paula Thomas</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Edward Sparrow</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>376</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>31</b>	5-11: <b>92</b>
	11-18:	<b>253</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>376</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Beverley Williams</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Girls</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>07 Dec 2010 to 08 Dec 2010</b>		
	<b>17 Jan 2011 to 19 Jan 2011</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 St Catherine's School is a Catholic independent day school for girls, founded in 1914 by the Sisters of Mercy close to the centre of Twickenham. In 1992 the school was transferred to lay management and is now administered by a board of governors. Today the school welcomes pupils from all denominations and strives to provide an education where everyone is helped to achieve their personal best within a caring, supportive and Christian environment. The school vision is to be a school that lives by the Gospel values, promotes the dignity of every individual and is committed to excellence.
- 1.2 The head of the school and the chair of governors have both been appointed since the previous inspection in October 2006. There have been major changes to the premises, including an extension to the preparatory department and senior school to include new classrooms, libraries, a sixth-form centre and creative and technology suites. Building is still in progress to provide a new dining room and other facilities. In September 2010 the school opened a sixth form and welcomed its first pupils into Year 12. The school has recently made the decision to no longer accept boys into the preparatory school.
- 1.3 The school educates 376 pupils aged three to eighteen. There are 123 pupils in the preparatory department, of whom 31 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The senior school caters for 253 pupils. The school community is culturally diverse with the majority of pupils travelling to school from the Twickenham area. The school has identified 72 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 32 have learning support from the school. There are 18 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), and one of these receives specialist support. Standardised national assessment tests show that the ability profile of the preparatory department is above the national average, with most pupils being of at least above average ability, and around a quarter far above. The ability profile of the senior school is above the national average. There is a fairly wide spread of abilities, with most pupils being of average or above-average ability.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The overall achievements of the pupils are good. The pupils are well educated, and the school meets its aim to encourage pupils at all stages to achieve their personal best and to develop curious minds and discerning hearts within a caring, supportive and Christian environment. The progress of pupils at all stages, including those with LDD or EAL, is above average for pupils of similar ability. Results in GCSE are good for the ability of the pupils, and the first Year 12 pupils are working to an appropriate standard. The curriculum of the school is good and pupils achieve well in a range of extra-curricular activities, especially sport, music and drama. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. At all ages they are happy in their work, show enthusiasm for knowledge and work hard to do their best for themselves and their teachers. The teaching is good and sometimes outstanding, but in some subjects, work does not sufficiently extend the learning of the more able pupils.
- 2.2 The personal development of the pupils is outstanding. The school is particularly successful in providing a curriculum with Christian values at its heart. The religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes are excellent and are central to the ethos of the school, making a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the pupils. Pastoral care is an outstanding feature, with suitable systems and policies in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils. Health and safety measures are also very effective. The pupils' questionnaire responses indicated strong approval of the education and care provided. A small number of concerns were raised but the inspection team did not find any evidence to support these.
- 2.3 The governance, leadership and management of the school are good with some excellent features. The governors have good oversight of financial matters. They are committed to striving for high standards in education and investment in high-quality staff, buildings and resources. They take their responsibility for child protection matters seriously, although governors in the past have not always been rigorous enough in ensuring the completion of full checks and records before appointments have been made. Senior leadership and management is good and often outstanding and is very effective in promoting the aims of the school. The excellent leadership provided by the head is instrumental in creating a happy working atmosphere where everyone in the community works as a team, is valued, and try to do their best. All the recommendations of the previous report have been completed. Responses to the parents' questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the majority of parents were satisfied with the education provided for their children. A small number of parents thought concerns were not handled well enough but the inspection team found no evidence to support this.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it was required to:

- ensure that all appointment checks are completed and fully recorded before appointments are confirmed [Part 4, paragraph 19 2(a) and (c) and paragraphs 22(3)(b), 22(3)(d) and 22(4) under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors];
- for the same reason, ensure that the safeguarding policy is always fully implemented [Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].

2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that the school continues to develop and embed into the curriculum provision to challenge the more able and talented pupils.
2. Develop further the good quality of provision in the EYFS by improving the outside learning environment.

### **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 qualities of the pupils' achievements are good. Pupils are well educated and the school is successful in its aim to help pupils achieve their personal best at all stages of their education. In all year groups pupils have a thorough knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They have excellent skills in reading and writing, and they take pride in the presentation and organisation of their work. The pupils are articulate and confident communicators, both as speakers and listeners. This was seen in public speaking and when debating such topics as 'should children with disabilities be educated in special schools?' a lively debate conducted by Year 7 to 9 pupils. Levels of numeracy and scientific knowledge are good and they show competent skills in information and communications technology (ICT). Pupils also achieve national and county standards in a number of sporting activities especially canoeing, swimming and rowing. Achievement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is successful at bronze level. Commendable results in national tests and competitions are achieved in many areas, especially in music, art, dance and drama. Many have talent in the creative subjects, as seen in the impressive art around the school. Junior children enjoy the opportunity to be imaginative, especially in lessons where they can demonstrate their creativity, as seen in a Year 6 English lesson where excellent examples of creative writing were produced with music as the inspiration. Pupils are competent and enthusiastic in sporting activities, and they have an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of drama and dance. Most girls in the preparatory department are successful in gaining a place in St Catherine's Senior school.
- 3.2 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. In the preparatory department, standardised measures show that pupils attain at above average levels. In the senior school, results at GCSE have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools, and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. The school has only recently opened a sixth form and A levels have not yet been taken, but evidence from work seen shows that girls are working at expected standards.
- 3.3 Pupils of all ages show good progress. Standardised measures indicate that pupils in the preparatory department make good progress that is above the average for pupils of similar ability. In the senior school, GCSE results are good in relation to the pupils' abilities, indicating that progress overall in Years 7 to 11 is also above average. These judgements are confirmed by the work seen, and by discussion with the pupils. Pupils with EAL and those with LDD also make good progress across all stages in the school. However, observation of work and lessons shows that gifted and talented pupils are not always making the progress that is expected, because teachers sometimes under-estimate their capabilities.
- 3.4 Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Children in the preparatory department all work with a lively enthusiasm and senior pupils are ambitious and show perseverance and dedication to achieving their best. All pupils are happy in their work, concentrate and listen well, and love to share their knowledge. They work very hard and show respect for their teachers. Excellent social skills allow the pupils to work well together both in and out of the classroom. They are very co-operative

learners in pairs and groups. Excellent team work was demonstrated in a challenging Year 11 physical education (PE) lesson where pupils depended upon each other to complete difficult tasks. They are able to work independently when given the opportunity, especially on research topics and practical tasks.

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

- 3.5 The curriculum is good throughout the school and it is successful in fulfilling the aim of providing pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and embrace the elements and areas of learning that will contribute to their overall progress and achievement. As a Catholic school, the curriculum particularly values the contribution of religious education and PSHE, and all subjects make an excellent contribution to the personal development of each pupil. The recommendation of the previous report to improve the balance of the curriculum has been achieved. The range of subjects has increased in both the preparatory department and senior school.
- 3.6 The curriculum is effective in covering all the different areas of learning and is suitable for all ages, abilities and needs. At all levels of the school, the subjects of the National Curriculum are represented and there is a good range of GCSE and A-level courses available. Sound provision is made for pupils with specific learning needs associated with LDD or EAL. Careers education has improved since the previous inspection and is becoming more fully embedded in the curriculum.
- 3.7 A start has been made on introducing a more structured provision for gifted and talented pupils, but the approach is not consistent across all departments. The International GCSE (IGCSE) has been introduced for the more able mathematicians, and all subjects offer master classes, but these are infrequent and unclear in their aims. Some subjects offer extension activities, but these are not widely applied across the whole curriculum. As a result, such pupils do not always progress as well as they should.
- 3.8 Creative and expressive subjects are satisfactorily represented and physical education provides a good range of team and individual pursuits. Personal, social and health education is intrinsic to the whole-school educational ethos, and it is well represented both as a separate subject and as a cross curricular theme. Pupils learn about British institutions, the responsibilities of citizenship, and how to live healthy lives. The provision for ICT has improved since the previous inspection. Timetabling is effective to ensure a smooth transition from one year group to the next and from the preparatory department to the senior school.
- 3.9 The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Many revolve around sport and creative subjects, but a small range of academic pursuits can be found each term. The provision for individual sporting pursuits is strong, for example in swimming and rowing. In Year 12, activities are also fitted into the school timetable. The curriculum is further enhanced by interesting school trips both in this country and abroad. The school has strong links with the community through the parish church and its local charity work. Pupils also go into the community to share their work, for example, in music and especially the work of the choirs. The pupils also give their time generously to work in voluntary organisations.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.10 The quality of teaching throughout the school is good and sometimes outstanding. In promoting good progress, the teaching fulfils its aim of encouraging pupils to achieve their personal best and to develop curious minds.
- 3.11 Throughout the school, classes are small, allowing teachers to give individual attention. A notable feature of the most outstanding lessons observed was thorough and detailed planning which showed a sound awareness of known learning styles to help individual pupils. A sound use of learning techniques was observed in many lessons, for example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson where children worked in pairs using a balance scale to understand weight and in Year 9 language lessons, where vocabulary was improved through the use of play. The rapid pace in some lessons in the senior school encouraged quick lateral thinking and interesting, highly engaging and challenging tasks to be completed. Skilful use of interactive whiteboard technology was seen, and at its best was employed using a diverse variety of applications to demonstrate concepts being studied, for example, in a Year 8 geography lesson on the social impact for London of the 2012 Olympic Games. In the weakest lessons, the teaching does not fully engage or inspire the pupils, and leads to some losing focus and becoming restless, especially those who are more able and finish work quickly. On a number of occasions, the pupils' ability was underestimated and the more able were not being stretched sufficiently well.
- 3.12 Throughout the school, teaching promotes co-operative learning and pupils are encouraged to share their knowledge in pairs and in groups. The opportunity to work independently on research topics and in practical activities is common. Accomplished examples were seen in food technology and in history. On occasions, teachers use different materials and approaches in lessons to reflect the varying abilities of pupils, for example, in music in the senior school, and in the preparatory department, where pupils in mathematics were given challenging question sheets suited to their individual needs. However, this is not done on a wide scale. On the whole, pupils with LDD or EAL are given appropriate support in the classroom to maintain progress.
- 3.13 Teachers have thorough subject knowledge and manage their classes with confidence. They make effective use of praise and the reward system. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and this allows teachers to engage pupils in interesting and stimulating discussion. Departments are well resourced, but whilst many teachers use ICT well as a learning tool, it is not at the forefront of thinking for all teachers.
- 3.14 The quality of marking and assessment is good throughout all departments, an improvement from the time of the previous inspection. Detailed data collection of academic information allows teachers to set realistic targets and track pupil progress. Good assessment practice in the preparatory department includes the 'traffic light' system for pupils, so that they can assess their own work reliably. In the senior school, excellent use is made of oral feedback to aid further understanding.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of personal development is outstanding and a real strength of the school. The Catholic ethos is instrumental in promoting the growth of individuals as persons and it is successful in its aim to help them to discover the meaning and purpose of life so that they might creatively and critically contribute to and shape the society of the future.
- 4.2 Spiritual development is excellent. The importance of developing a living faith in the pupils is clearly a strong priority and the opportunities provided for spiritual development are excellent. Every girl has the opportunity to reflect on her faith when attending mass twice a term in the local parish church and also through whole-school masses in school on major occasions, to which the parents and parishioners are invited. Each year group also gains in spiritual awareness through attending a one-day retreat every year. Time for reflection and opportunities to share thoughts, doubts and feelings are offered in many parts of the school curriculum and in assemblies.
- 4.3 The pupils' excellent moral development is constantly strengthened, from the concern with fair play and kindness in everyday school matters, to their concern for the hungry in the world and for the planet. Compassion for others is a key feature of the school and staff and older pupils act as excellent role-models in this. Charities week is a huge success in every way and it educates the pupils in the requirement to do something positive for those in need; through charitable agencies and also through the school's own links with India, Peru and Africa. The girls are proud of their environmental commitment and the school now holds the title of 'Eco-school'. Pupils enjoy walking or cycling to school at least once a week, recycling is a constant activity and they have been enthusiastic in their attempts to grow their own vegetables. School assemblies are spiritual and moral in content and the girls address serious themes with a blend of enthusiasm, humour, music and drama which never loses sight of their quest for personal moral integrity.
- 4.4 Socially the pupils develop very well indeed, arriving as small children and leaving as responsible young adults. They show excellent social confidence and personal skills which will equip them well for the future. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to exercise responsibility for others in such roles as prefect, form captain and monitor, and every girl is expected to play their part in the smooth running of the school in this way. The School Council has representatives from every form, and discussions result in improvements to the school facilities and also enhance the mood of open debate inspired by principles of fairness and morality. The 'buddy' system is a good example of the way new pupils at all levels are welcomed and supported into the school by older pupils and enhances the well-being and the social development of all.
- 4.5 The cultural development of the girls is plain to see. There are many trips abroad and to local cultural centres, which give pupils the chance to see and experience new ideas and cultural differences. There is a truly 'catholic' ethos which celebrates the diversity of cultural expression while also pursuing the same common goals. In the creative fields of art, music and drama the cultural boundaries are constantly extended to excellent effect.

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

- 4.6 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good throughout the school and all members of the community work hard to provide a caring, supportive and Christian environment.
- 4.7 The pastoral care provided for the pupils on a day-to-day basis is outstanding and contributes much to their excellent personal development. From before they arrive, the pupils are welcomed and supported by a pastoral framework which gives them friendship and a reassuring introduction to the school. The 'buddy' system works well at all levels and has great benefits, both in the responsibility given to the older girl and in the sheltering reassurance offered to the newcomer. Once in the school the form tutors, house staff and senior leadership team consider care of the pupils as a main priority. The form tutor system works admirably in the teaching of PSHE, and this subject is taken very seriously and is delivered outstandingly well by the form tutors.
- 4.8 Relations between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are seen as uniformly outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and the respect they hold for themselves and for others is notable. Pupils know of adults to whom they can turn with problems and they feel confident that the relatively small number of pupils in the school gives them a degree of friendship and closeness to their peers which in itself is a source of support. The responses to the pupil questionnaire indicate that a small number of girls felt dissatisfied with some aspects of the school's pastoral provision. Some felt that the school did not always listen to their views and some complained of unfair and unequal treatment of pupils by staff. The inspection team found no evidence to support these concerns and pupils interviewed declared a strong feeling of receiving good care and of being valued as individuals.
- 4.9 There are good policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the pupils, including a detailed anti-bullying policy, and one to promote good behaviour which are implemented thoroughly. Clear and effective child protection policies and procedures are in place, but the school has not been rigorous enough in the past in ensuring that every adult working in the school has been subject to appropriate checks before starting work in the school. This has now been rectified; safe recruitment procedures now ensure that all the required checks on prospective employees are made, and they are correctly entered on the central register. All staff and some members of the governing body have participated in safeguarding training.
- 4.10 Detailed risk assessments are undertaken and are regularly reviewed. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken and the required fire prevention procedures are in place. The school has an appropriate three-year disability plan in operation and access to buildings and toilets for those with disabilities is good. An effective healthy living programme is promoted through the curriculum, and the pupils have good access to grounds and facilities for exercise and sporting activities. The school has no dining facility until new buildings open, and facilities for eating lunch are limited at present. The medical room is satisfactorily equipped and the school has the required number of staff trained in first aid. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good with some excellent features, and it is successful in its aim to make St Catherine's a happy, thriving and confident school. The governing body offers a breadth of experience, and many have a personal connection to the school with a deep commitment to maintaining the caring ethos whilst striving for high standards. The governors meet regularly and, with committees responsible for finance, buildings, health and safety, education and marketing, they have a good oversight of the school, especially of financial planning and investment in staff and resources. They offer excellent support for the school's continuing development through their continuing investment in high quality accommodation.
- 5.2 The governors' strategic development plan is detailed and contains some ambitious targets. Meetings of the governing body are regular and the minutes demonstrate a good breadth of discussion of school issues. Although governors have not historically been rigorous in overseeing the undertaking and recording of recruitment checks in the past, they now maintain appropriate oversight of regulatory requirements and their implementation in the school. Governors are involved in the appointment of key staff and a more formal appraisal process for the head is being developed. There is clear allocation of responsibility for child protection matters and appropriate training has been undertaken by some governors, including training in child protection issues. Policies are reviewed regularly.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.3 Through good and often excellent leadership, the school is providing a high quality of education and it is fulfilling its aim to promote a school where everyone is valued and is helped to achieve their personal best. The excellent leadership provided by the head is successfully maintaining a happy community whilst guiding the school through a period of change including the opening of a sixth form and a major building project.
- 5.4 The senior leadership team is united in the vision for the school and, with the governing body, work hard to exemplify the school motto, 'Not Words But Deeds'. All sectors of the school are represented on the leadership team and a good structure of middle-management positions results in the effective distribution of roles and responsibilities. Strong leadership in the preparatory department is building good team work and is resulting in a happy working environment for all pupils and staff, but communication with the EYFS is of an informal nature. The caring nature of the senior leaders contributes to the strong sense of community felt by staff, pupils and parents.
- 5.5 The school takes self-evaluation practice seriously. In the senior school, annual subject reviews with heads of department and target setting are standardising good practice, and giving a stronger focus to the tracking of pupils' progress. A focused and ambitious school development plan has identified the main issues with a well-planned strategy on how and when to deal with them. School documentation is up to date, and the recommendations of the previous report have been completed

satisfactorily, including the improvement of systems to assess pupils' work more thoroughly, and to use assessment to plan teaching.

- 5.6 The school has recruited well qualified and hard working staff and the retention level of teachers has improved since the appointment of the present head and the opening of a sixth form. The school's arrangements for checking staff now meet requirements. Volunteers work happily in the school making an important contribution to the community. Communication is good throughout the school and meetings of all levels of management are frequent and good minutes are kept. All staff are formally appraised and training is plentiful, including up-to-date training in child protection and safeguarding legislation. The administration and support staff are valued for their efficiency and friendly manner and they are appreciated for their helpfulness to pupils and parents.

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

- 5.7 The links between the school and parents are good, with some excellent features that are helping to support the education of the pupils. The school maintains many open and varied channels of communication, and actively encourages parents to be involved in their children's education and in the life of the school in accordance with its aim to be in partnership with parents. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that the majority of parents are very pleased with all aspects of the education provided for their children.
- 5.8 Parents are provided with all the required information about the school. A recently launched and much improved website includes all required policies and a section for parents with current news and events. A good newsletter is circulated once a fortnight and acknowledges the many achievements and successes of the girls. The general information booklet issued to parents annually is full of essential information and guidance. Day-to-day communication has improved recently with the use of e-mail between the school and parents. Should parents wish to raise any complaints or concerns, procedures are clear and the head always makes herself available to listen and help. The school has received no formal complaints in the last academic year.
- 5.9 Communication with parents about their children's progress is frequent and detailed. Homework diary planners are an effective two-way line of communication between home and school. In the senior school full reports are issued twice a year, with the exception of Year 11, and contain pertinent comments about the progress each girl has made. Grade sheets are also issued four times each year and targets are set. An annual parent-teacher meeting is held for every year group. In the preparatory department, a literacy, numeracy and general report is sent home at Christmas and a full report in the summer term. Parents meetings are held three times a year to allow an opportunity to meet with their daughters' form teachers and to discuss their progress. At half-term, holiday booklet packs are issued to give parents a list of places of interest which they might like to visit to tie in with their daughter's geography and history topics for the following term.
- 5.10 Parents are very welcome in school and receive frequent invitations to support events such as concerts, plays and school matches. They are invited to help with supervision on school trips. 'Friends of St Catherine' is an active arm of the parent body which becomes involved with the life of the school by organising events and fund-raising. A small number of parents, in their questionnaire responses, were not

satisfied with how the school handles their concerns but the inspection team found good systems in place to handle concerns quickly and with care. A number of parents commented on the poor quality of the website to access policies and information. At the time of the second visit, the inspection team noted that the website had been updated and improved. The recommendation on the previous report to improve the standard of reporting has been fully addressed.

**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 setting is good. The setting successfully achieves its aim to be a happy community where every child is valued and supported to achieve her personal best. The children enjoy their time in school and make good progress in their learning. The setting has the capacity to sustain improvement: since the previous inspection the school has extended the information given to parents about the curriculum and begun to develop the outside learning environment.

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

6.2 Good leadership and management ensure that staff are focused on giving all children the support they need to make good progress in their learning and development and promoting their welfare. Safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and policies suitably applied, including those to ensure equality and protect against discrimination. Staff are well qualified, undergo suitable checks, and are appropriately deployed. Thorough risk assessments ensure that all areas are regularly checked for potential hazards. Successful partnerships between providers, parents and other agencies ensure children's needs are fully met. Parents expressed strong appreciation for the easy contact with staff and the care their children receive. Resources are well used to improve outcomes for children. Communication between the head of prep and the EYFS co-ordinator is informal, and this sometimes hampers the further efficient development of key objectives. Planning by staff is efficient and shows that frequent self-evaluation takes place. Staff training is satisfactory. A policy of early intervention is pursued so that all children are fully supported and integrated.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is good. Adults support learning and development very well. They listen carefully to the children and respond with encouragement and praise, building on their responses and steering them towards clearer understanding. The quality of lesson planning, based on careful assessment of individuals, stimulates children's interest and contributes to the good standards achieved. Pride in the school is fostered and every effort is made to quietly commend and celebrate achievement in appropriate ways. Teaching effectively balances the promotion of core skills in numeracy and literacy with the development of children as individual learners, able to think and make connections for themselves. The classrooms are bright and stimulating. The outdoor areas are underused as learning environments and planning does not sufficiently take into consideration the outdoor area as a focus for child-initiated learning. The school has identified the outdoor environment as an area for enhancement in the future to enable it to become a useful extension of the classroom. Children are well supported by their key person who promotes their welfare at all times and guides them towards self-sufficiency.

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

- 6.4 Children's achievement is good, most attaining the early learning goals in all six areas of learning and many exceeding them. They achieve competence in reading, and enjoy books and show sound initial letter understanding in their writing. They are confident in working with computer programs and numbers, and actively explore and solve problems. Through clearly focused teaching, children acquire necessary skills in music, PE and swimming, and develop the habits of successful learners through practical activities in art and knowledge and understanding of the world. They learn to communicate fluently and express their thoughts and feelings with developing confidence. Children are safe, secure and happy, demonstrated by their readiness to share their ideas, anxieties and triumphs with their teachers. They are happy to be involved in group activities and socialise well but equally are able to work independently showing a good degree of concentration. Behaviour is exemplary and consideration and respect are consistently shown to others. The completion of a floor jigsaw was a true team effort and the unhesitating sharing of coloured pencils and counting bears was one of many instances observed of co-operation and friendship. Children have a good understanding of the importance of exercise and healthy eating and are able to express a developing awareness of personal safety.

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

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

### Inspectors

Mrs Maureen Bradley	Reporting Inspector
Mr Roger Leake	Headmaster, ISA school
Mr John Godwin	Head of Department, HMC school
Mr Tom Keenan	Head of Sixth Form, HMC school
Mrs Carole Long	Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mrs Pauline Christodoulou	Assistant Head, IAPS school
Miss Louise Savage	Early Years Lead Inspector