



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

FAIRFIELD SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Fairfield School

Full Name of School/College **Fairfield School**
DCSF Number **855/6000**
Registered Charity Number **1081765**
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Head **Mr R Outwin-Flinders**
Chair of Governors **M Pearson**
Age Range **4 to 11**
Total Number of Pupils **507**
Gender of Pupils **Mixed (269 boys; 238 girls;)**
Numbers by Age 4-5 (EYFS): **67** 5-11: **440**
EYFS Gender **Mixed**
Inspection Dates **18 Jan 2010 to 19 Jan 2010**

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous ISI inspection was in June 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

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

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

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

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

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 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 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL 1

2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

The quality of the pupils' personal development

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

3 ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(ii) Recommended action

4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Fairfield Preparatory School, situated in Loughborough, was originally the Lower School of Loughborough High School; it became a separate preparatory school in 1969. It is part of the Loughborough Endowed Schools Foundation along with Loughborough Grammar School and Loughborough High School. Each school has its own head but shares a board of governors and centralised services; each has its own non-executive governors' liaison committee. Fairfield has its own playing fields but shares other sports facilities with the two senior schools. A music school, serving all three schools, was opened in September 2006.
- 1.2 There are 507 pupils on roll, 269 boys and 238 girls. Of these, 36 boys and 31 girls are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); all receive local authority funding and all attend school full-time. Just under one-fifth of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups; one pupil does not have English as the principal language and receives extra support. Pupils come from Loughborough and the surrounding area and from a variety of backgrounds. When they leave Fairfield the vast majority go on to the two senior schools; pupils generally gain places at their first choice schools.
- 1.3 The ability range on entry is above the national average. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but seventeen are on the school's register of special educational needs. Eleven receive specialist learning support.
- 1.4 The school aims to offer a broad and enlightened curriculum. It promotes high levels of academic, sporting and musical achievement against a background of sensitive and well-co-ordinated pastoral care.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 From the EYFS through until Year 6 pupils make good progress in their learning. They achieve high standards. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 they reach standards that are well above the average for all maintained schools, and thereafter annual standardised tests show good progress is maintained in relation to their above average ability. A significant number of pupils gain scholarships to schools of their choice.
- 2.2 In their written work, pupils demonstrate a wide range of vocabulary and write effective descriptive pieces using an impressive range of language to create colour. On some occasions the presentation of work and handwriting, identified as areas for improvement in the school's development plan, are not careful enough. Pupils are articulate and can explain their ideas clearly. They use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively for research and presenting their work. They tackle mathematics with a commendable degree of accuracy. Standards in the arts are high, especially in music. Pupils apply themselves extremely well, take responsibility for their own work and show interest in their studies, all of which contribute to the high standards they reach.
- 2.3 In extra-curricular activities pupils have success at individual and group levels, including representatives at county level and teams that achieve high success rates nationally and locally.
- 2.4 The curriculum offered to the pupils is wide. The inclusion of three foreign languages develops pupils' linguistic skills, and a programme of personal, social and health education effectively supports their personal development. The introduction of thinking skills and drama add to the creative and aesthetic experience of pupils. The extra-curricular programme also offers a good range of choice that includes a variety of sports, chess, juggling and 'Whakee' language.
- 2.5 The success in academic work is related to the generally good, and sometimes outstanding, quality of the teaching. The use of specialist teachers from an early age in certain subjects has a positive impact on their progress. Teaching makes good use of group and individual work and also of resources. Attention is given to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Marking is often detailed and careful and, as expected by the school, targets are set for each pupil, although these are not always followed through to lead to the improvements outlined. Planning across year groups is well coordinated and influenced by the needs of different ability groups.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.6 The pupils' personal development is outstanding. They recognise the mystery associated with spiritual life, seeing it embodied in the uniqueness of each person. This is reflected in their obvious confidence, sense of self-esteem and recognition of the merits of their peers.
- 2.7 Pupils have a strong sense of fair play and see a moral duty to help others through various charities. They behave exceptionally well. Pupils respect the rights of others, identifiable through the politeness they show to adults and other pupils

- 2.8 They develop well socially, willingly taking on responsibility, as in the buddy system. By Year 6 they have a basic understanding of democracy, furthered by their involvement in the school council and various house activities. Pupils learn much about other cultures from the strong ethnic mix in the school, the celebration of festivals such as Divali, assemblies and religious education.
- 2.9 Pupils benefit greatly from the school's excellent pastoral care. Pupils express great confidence in the support they receive from their teachers, through their responses to questionnaires and in conversations with inspectors. They feel happy and secure. The well-written anti-bullying and child protection policies and their regular training in such areas of care enable the staff to build on the already outstanding relations that exist in the school.
- 2.10 The school has an appropriate policy and plans for supporting those with disabilities. It has well-structured policies covering fire precautions and health and safety; the provision for taking care of pupils who are unwell is good. The school has been awarded 'Healthy Schools Status'. The keeping of the admissions and attendance registers is in line with requirements.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.11 The school is well governed. The governing body is effectively organised and through its various committees and liaison groups ensures that the school is well resourced and staffed. It also carries out its responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of the pupils and the overall curricular provision conscientiously. Care has been taken in ensuring that accommodation is of excellent quality, clean and well maintained. Governors provide strong support and key governors visit the school regularly.
- 2.12 From the EYFS to Year 6, the school is well led and managed. Senior managers are open and approachable, and have a clear vision for the school. The concern to improve quality has led to impressive monitoring of the school's work, and a well-structured performance management system. In-service training is given high priority. Induction for new staff and newly-qualified teachers is thorough and supportive. The centralised register is well maintained and reflects the rigorous checks made on the appointment of all staff. The well-structured one-year development plan identifies appropriate short-term priorities but not the longer-term strategic priorities.
- 2.13 The school's excellent accommodation includes specialist rooms for science, ICT and modern foreign languages, and an excellent music area which is shared with the Endowed schools. The playing fields provide excellent facilities as does the gym. The dining area is also first-rate.
- 2.14 The quality of links with parents is outstanding. The school's web site, regular bulletins and open-door policy provide easy access to parents with concerns and the well-written complaints procedure provides a well-publicised framework for more serious complaints. The one complaint received by the school over the last two years was well handled. The regular presence of the senior management team and other teachers on the playground at the beginning of the school day adds to the ease of parental contact. Parents expressed very positive support on all aspects of the pre-inspection questionnaire and very few indeed made any adverse comments.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.

3.2 The school's provision for childcare met the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and no action was required.

(ii) Recommended action

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

1. ensure that recommendations made and targets set by teachers in their detailed and good quality marking are followed up and lead to the improvements specified;
2. ensure that in line with the school's development priorities pupils maintain high quality handwriting and presentation of work in their books;
3. to the whole-school development plan add long term strategic priorities;
4. record individual children's targets and "next steps" in EYFS reports and short term planning; and
5. consider ways of developing the EYFS outdoor areas to enhance the "indoor, outdoor" provision across all areas of learning in all weather conditions.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS setting is outstanding and the setting is highly successful in achieving its aim to offer a broad and exciting curriculum which allows each child to achieve their potential in a safe and happy environment. Children learn and develop exceptionally well through stimulating play, talk and valuable first-hand experiences. They enjoy school and participate with great enthusiasm. This prepares them well for the next steps in their education. Exemplary behaviour and outstanding personal development are strengths. The adults who work with the children are highly effective practitioners who keep the needs of the children at the heart of everything they do. Parents are most appreciative, and speak highly of the progress their children make and of the nurturing, care and support their children receive. Excellent links with external agencies successfully promote children's health, learning and well-being.

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

4.2 Leadership and management of EYFS are outstanding. Leaders and managers have a strong sense of purpose, and an ambition for excellence. This is supported by reflective self-evaluation and clear development plans. Staff are committed to continuous improvement by further developing their knowledge and skills, reflecting on their practice, and enhancing what they do to promote the best outcomes for children. They welcome advice from the local authority and other support networks, attend training, and apply what they learn. Most aspects of early years best practice are implemented throughout the setting. Provision for children's welfare is robust, including in matters of safeguarding. Policies, procedures and practice are detailed and effective. There are no breaches of specific requirements and documentation is comprehensive, showing good attention to detail. Resources are deployed effectively. They are of excellent quality, in plentiful supply and age appropriate. Parents who responded to the parental questionnaire are highly supportive of the setting and feel very well informed of their children's progress.

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

4.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. An interesting, well equipped, and welcoming environment successfully reflects the children's backgrounds and the wider community. The staff's excellent knowledge of the EYFS framework means they are confident in helping children learn well, and the curriculum is greatly enhanced by high quality specialist teaching in physical education (PE), ICT and music. The outdoor area is extensive and well resourced, and children are provided with good opportunities to work and play outside. However, all weather, free-flow access between the indoors and outdoors providing learning opportunities across all areas of the curriculum is not yet fully developed. An excellent balance is maintained between adult-led and self-initiated activities involving choosing, exploring and discovering. This ensures that children develop into increasingly independent learners who can make decisions and organise themselves well. There

is effective provision for both the early identification of children's special needs and continued support for those needs. Planning makes good use of the EYFS framework. Thorough initial and ongoing assessment identifies what children can do and helps adults to match activities to children's needs. The setting of suitable targets and the recording of individual children's "next steps" in learning are not at present included in planning documentation and reports. The setting acknowledges this as an area for development.

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

- 4.4 The outcomes for children in EYFS are outstanding. Children make significant gains in their learning and have consistently good and often excellent levels of achievement. Attainment on entry is generally above age-related expectations but within that there is a broad spread. By the end of the EYFS most children have achieved the early learning goals in all six areas of learning as is evident in the EYFS assessment profile moderated by the local authority. The children's excellent personal and emotional development is clearly apparent. Exemplary behaviour is the norm because children absorb the school's culture of respect and cooperation. Children learn to share, take turns and form happy friendships. They play together harmoniously and show care and kindness towards each other. Children show a growing awareness of which foods are really good for them; they enjoy healthy snacks, and the sociable nature of snack time and lunchtime. They talk about their learning activities with growing confidence and clarity of expression. Children develop a good awareness of personal safety and they comply with the simple rules that relate to this. They display well-developed self-help skills, for example knowing they must wash their hands before eating, changing for PE, putting on their own coats and wrapping up warmly to play out of doors. They are prepared well for the next stage in their learning and have an excellent basis in early literacy and numeracy skills. Children respond well to praise and encouragement and are happy in school, deriving great pleasure from their learning.
- 4.5 **What the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve is given in section 3.**

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 and a member of the governors' liaison committee, 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 Terry Dillon
Miss Patricia Griffin
Mrs Felicity Lawson

Reporting inspector
Junior Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS)
Early Years Lead Inspector