



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST MARY'S SCHOOL, HAMPSTEAD

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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St Mary's School, Hampstead

Full Name of School	St Mary's School, Hampstead
DfE Number	202/6084
Registered Charity Number	2643515
Address	St Mary's School 47 Fitzjohn's Avenue Hampstead London NW3 6PG
Telephone Number	020 7435 1868
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Email Address	enquiries@stmh.co.uk
Head	Miss Angela Rawlinson
Chair of Governors	Mrs Susan McCarron
Age Range	2 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	302
Gender of Pupils	Girls (2 to 11), Boys (2 to 7)
Numbers by Age	2-5 (EYFS): 87 5-11: 215
Number of Pupils	Total: 302
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Amanda Jennings
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	12 th to 15 th February 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State 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, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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 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 Education (DfE) 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, although inspectors 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.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff, parents and with members of governing body, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended Ash Wednesday mass, 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

Mr Kerry Lord

Mrs Anne Farnish

Mr Guy Willatt

Miss Jacqueline Scotney

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Mary's School was founded as a Roman Catholic day school for girls, which also taught young boys, by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1871 in Hampstead, North London. It moved to its current location in 1926 and, in 1992, became a registered charity with a board of trustees and a governing body, to secure the continuity of its Catholic preparatory school education. The order of nuns that formerly ran the school occupies an adjacent property and continues to support the religious life of the school. The school is housed in a range of buildings, including a chapel and new hall, with a Victorian family home as its focus.
- 1.2 The school accepts girls between the ages of two and eleven and boys between the ages of two and seven, the youngest pupils coming to the school in the term in which they have their third birthday. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is an integral part of the school. Since the previous inspection, the school has completed the development of a new hall and a roof top play area, developed a broader range of teaching responsibilities, extended the teaching of French throughout Years 1 to 6 and discontinued the use of national tests at the age of eleven.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide an education firmly founded on Christ and the Roman Catholic faith. It seeks to nurture and reflect spiritual and moral principles in daily life within a happy and caring environment and to recognise the unique contribution, dignity and worth of every child. In the pursuit of intellectual development and academic excellence, the school aims to encourage an active partnership between home, school, parish and the wider community.
- 1.4 At the time of inspection there were 302 pupils on roll, nearly all of whom are girls. This includes 87 pupils in the EYFS; in the Nursery 52 attend part-time and 35 pupils in Reception attend full-time. There are 215 pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- 1.5 The school does not select pupils on the grounds of ability. Many live locally and others come from Hampstead, and much of North West London. Pupils come mostly from professional or business families and about four-fifths are from Roman Catholic families. Pupils come from a range of cultural backgrounds, including Europe, the USA, Asia and the Far East. The school has identified 155 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), 12 of whom receive extra support for their English, and 40 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 33 of whom receive specialist learning support from the school. Two pupils with a statement of special educational needs attend the school.
- 1.6 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 pupils' achievement and learning are excellent; pupils reach high standards in all aspects of school life. They speak confidently, listen well and have well-developed numeracy and literacy skills. Those with SEND or EAL make excellent progress. Pupils play an active role in their learning, think independently, have positive attitudes, and participate with enjoyment. The broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum provides well for a wide range of abilities and is supported well by a rich variety of extra-curricular provision. A regular programme of visits and fieldwork enhances the curriculum, as do the skills of subject specialist staff. Excellent teaching enables pupils to make excellent progress in relation to their abilities and needs. Teaching draws well on assessment and tracking data to monitor the pupils' progress and plan well-resourced lessons, providing appropriate support and challenge. Marking is regular but does not consistently identify the next steps in the pupils' learning.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is excellent, engendering a real sense of community. Pupils show great kindness and respect for one another. The school clearly meets its aim of nurturing spiritual and moral principles in a way that is reflected in daily life. Pastoral care is excellent. Throughout the school, the 'St Mary's Way' ensures a happy, secure environment within an ethos of love and care. Friendly and respectful interaction between staff and pupils and a strong sense of staff teamwork are the cornerstones of the school's pastoral care, strongly encouraging a healthy lifestyle, promoting excellent behaviour and guarding against bullying. Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and well understood. Effective staff training and a high level of safety awareness minimise risk from fire and other hazards, both on and off site. Effective measures provide for pupils who are ill or injured.
- 2.3 Excellent governance shows a thorough oversight of the work of the school. Governors bring a broad range of experience. They benefit from extensive training, enabling them to execute their statutory responsibilities. Governors gain an excellent insight into the working of the school through interaction with staff, governors' committees and designated responsibilities. Leadership and management are excellent, enabling a talented staff to secure the pupils' high levels of achievement and personal development. Departments are well resourced and managed. Policies are rigorously implemented, ensuring the pupils' safety and welfare. The school has identified the lack of a tier of middle management to enable monitoring and management responsibilities to be shared more effectively. Excellent links with parents and carers are evident. They expressed high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school and the quality of communication concerning their children's needs and progress. Inspection evidence supports these views. Parents feel very involved in the life of the school and can access staff and senior management with ease.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Develop consistency in the inclusion of next steps for improvement in the marking of the pupils' work.
2. Ensure that management and monitoring responsibilities are shared more widely through the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Achievement shows significant development since the previous inspection. Pupils are very well educated in line with the school's aims and intellectual development is fostered strongly, along with the pursuit of academic excellence. Pupils are highly confident and articulate in conversation and listen well. They reach very high standards in reading and writing. Their knowledge, skills and understanding are particularly well developed. Pupils achieve high standards in their topic work, where links are made increasingly to other subject areas in a cross-curricular approach; they apply successfully the skills learnt in other subjects. Skills, knowledge and understanding in numeracy are very high and pupils apply their mathematical knowledge confidently to unfamiliar situations. The standard of children's achievement across the EYFS is excellent in relation to their starting points and ability. In Nursery, children show a love for number work and can recall numbers to nine. In Reception, children engage in advanced activities, such as writing a letter to a visitor, including a list of London landmarks to visit, and they independently read and answer questions in a mathematics activity on positional language.
- 3.3 In the creative arts, pupils reach high standards, reflected in the vibrant displays around the school, which both celebrate the pupils' work and pose open-ended philosophical questions for pupils to consider. The standard of music is high; pupils regularly enjoy playing and singing together. Throughout the school pupils develop their independence strongly, beginning in the EYFS, where they learn to self-register and participate actively in the successful mix of self-chosen and adult-led activities, demonstrating strong exploration, creativity and critical thinking skills. Older children create model dragonflies, adapting the design to make it their own, whilst younger children explore the range of office resources in the role-play area. Pupils from Year 1 onwards think independently and make decisions on how to improve their work. Older pupils assessed one another's work indicating 'two stars and a wish', reflecting the marking methods of their teachers. Pupils use information communication technology (ICT) very capably across the curriculum; they make informative and technically complex films on various topics. Pupils play an active role in their learning journey and participate in independent projects, thereby enhancing the development of their intellectual skills. This is an area of strong progress in response to the recommendation at the previous inspection.
- 3.4 Pupils are successful in a variety of individual and team events, performing particularly well in regional athletics competitions and national gymnastics contests. They achieve highly in graded examinations in music, drama and dance. The junior and senior choirs have enjoyed considerable success in a regional music festival. The most able pupils and those with SEND achieve highly due to a rigorous and robust system of tracking, monitoring and support. The achievement of a significant proportion of pupils with EAL is at least in line with their peers.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at age 7 and, prior to their being discontinued after 2011, at age 11, are well above the national average for maintained primary schools overall. The pupils' current attainment is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils follow a stimulating and thought-provoking curriculum

and, on leaving the school, most proceed to selective independent day schools, some gaining scholarships. Inspection evidence confirms this judgement. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make an excellent rate of progress in relation to pupils of similar ability.

- 3.6 The pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are proud of their work and strive hard to do their best. They enjoy learning and are rightly proud of their achievements. In the EYFS, learning is enjoyable, engages children and encourages concentration, enabling rapid progress according to children's starting points. Throughout the school, pupils work particularly well as individuals, in pairs, in small groups or whole classes. They listen carefully and respond appropriately to the teachers' high expectations. Pupils are well motivated, show perseverance with challenging tasks and are eager to contribute to lessons.

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

- 3.7 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The broad curriculum is stimulating and strongly supports the pupils' development in line with the school's aims. The time allocated to each subject is balanced and highly effective in covering the requisite areas of learning. In the EYFS, the children's needs are extremely well met by the knowledgeable staff and a vibrant learning environment. Activities both indoors and out, take careful account of the children's interests and individual needs. The introduction to the curriculum of French from Year 1 enhances the development of the pupils' linguistic abilities very well. The curriculum makes excellent provision for art, and design and technology, fostering success in creative skills. The study and use of ICT across the curriculum are excellent; skills are embedded successfully into other subject areas, permitting pupils to use ICT effectively as a tool for learning. Provision for music is excellent and ranges from whole school singing to ukulele groups. The junior and senior choirs, who perform outside school, enable pupils to perform to a larger audience.
- 3.9 Personal, social and health education (PSHE) makes a strong contribution to curricular provision in promoting the pupils' personal development and wider understanding. The curriculum is enriched through numerous educational visits, visitors to the school and the input of parents, thus enhancing links with the wider community. Older pupils organise charity events, enabling them to take on responsibility and to support good causes, both nationally and internationally.
- 3.10 Curricular documentation is thorough and supports teaching well, strongly ensuring continuity and progression. The allocation of subjects into clusters enables wide staff participation in their development and planning and augments the provision for cross-curricular links. Pupils identified with SEND or EAL are supported extremely well across the curriculum by the excellent learning support team. The support teams in all sections of the school work well together to ensure early intervention, which helps pupils to progress. The curriculum is enhanced by specialist teaching in subjects such as science, French, music, art and physical education, facilitating the pupils' high achievement. Setting is introduced in mathematics and English from Year 5, enabling the curriculum to be closely tailored to individual needs. Careful planning and challenging open-ended questioning ensure closely focused provision for the most able.
- 3.11 Before school, lunchtime, and after-school extra-curricular clubs offer a wide range of varied activities, enhancing the physical, creative and thinking skills of pupils. A

minority of parents reported some dissatisfaction regarding the range and availability of extra-curricular activities. However, the inspection team found no evidence to support this. Pupils benefit from a wide range and variety of extra-curricular activities. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and in discussion with inspectors, pupils reported a high degree of satisfaction with the extra-curricular activities programme. These clubs and activities are very popular with the pupils. A strength of the extra-curricular activity programme is its provision for pupils of all abilities with an emphasis on participation and inclusion, enabling all pupils to enjoy the enrichment of the curriculum.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.12 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.13 Teaching is consistent and extremely effective; it contributes strongly to the pupils' achievements and ensures that the school meets its aim of enabling pupils to try their best to be their best. Teaching facilitates the pupils' excellent progress in relation to their abilities and needs. It is well planned and draws on good subject knowledge to help pupils move forward in their learning. Lesson objectives are explained clearly at the beginning of each lesson and often reinforced in the pupils' exercise books. Teachers know their pupils well and provide activities which are matched closely to individual abilities and offer well-focused support and challenge. Group work often provides opportunities for individual support as well as the facility for pupils to work independently.
- 3.14 Teaching makes detailed use of an extensive range of assessment and tracking data to monitor individual pupils' progress throughout the school. The close analysis of results from regular testing forms a strong foundation for future planning and target setting. Staff in the EYFS monitor the children's progress well and identify precisely what individual children need to do next. Although written work throughout the school is marked regularly, the quality of marking varies. Marking consistently provides positive feedback. However, not all includes recommendations for next steps in learning. The most constructive marking provides evaluative comment which gives pupils a clear understanding of how to improve. Teaching actively encourages pupils to identify for themselves the next steps in their learning; they are encouraged to express the extent of their understanding through a traffic light code and evaluate one another's learning through peer editing or offering 'two stars and a wish' to indicate areas of strength and a point for development.
- 3.15 Structured planning of teaching ensures that time is allocated for pupils to discuss and evaluate their learning. Following a recommendation at the previous inspection, the school has ensured that best teaching practice is shared in mathematics and ICT throughout the school.
- 3.16 Teaching draws successfully on a wealth of resources to sustain the pupils' interest and enthusiasm in lessons and foster a keenness for independent research, both in school and at home. In the EYFS, a wide range of inspiring resources provides a highly stimulating learning environment, especially indoors. A wealth of outdoor equipment enables children to enjoy outdoor learning. From Year 1 onwards, 'Why Wednesday', weekly questions to prompt investigation, and challenge boards in classrooms enable pupils to explore both open and closed questions.
- 3.17 Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that lessons are enjoyable and that behaviour is exemplary. Teaching successfully stimulates the

pupils' pride in their work, their learning environment and equipment. Careful planning ensures that the deployment of dedicated support staff promotes strongly the learning of pupils of all backgrounds and abilities. Teaching makes excellent provision for those pupils with a statement of special educational needs and those with EAL, both through careful planning of activities and the well-focused support teachers receive from specialist staff. The requirements set out in statements are followed meticulously and close collaboration between the learning support department and classroom teachers enables pupils to access their lessons well and make marked progress.

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.
- 4.2 The school successfully meets its aim in seeking to provide an education firmly founded on Christ and the Catholic faith. Pupils show an excellent awareness of non-material aspects of life when participating in the spiritual chapel and assembly services. They willingly attend chapel, for example the Ash Wednesday mass, which occurred during the inspection, and display a real sense of respect for the location and occasion. They demonstrate awe and wonder, not only during the 'Why Wednesday' assembly, but also in class, showing amazement in an outdoor science lesson where rockets were successfully launched. Pupils demonstrate high levels of confidence and self-esteem, buoyed by the supportive community which celebrates every member's successes. This is especially evident when pupils sing and play instruments during whole school gatherings.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral awareness is excellent. The 'St Mary's Way' sets the moral standards throughout the school. It is clearly understood and followed by even the youngest children in the EYFS, who often use it as a code of behaviour, even outside school. Pupils have a very clear sense of right and wrong; as a result of their readiness to follow the school's code of conduct, behaviour and courtesy are a significant strength of the school. Older pupils extend their moral understanding further; they read newspapers and watch the news to keep abreast of moral issues in the wider community, which they then discuss perceptively in class.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent social development. This is a significant strength of the school. They demonstrate great courtesy, both with adults, and in the natural care and respect they show for one another. Pupils of all ages engage readily in polite and cheerful conversation with visitors, for example by asking if they are enjoying their day. Through bodies such as the eco club and school council, pupils take responsibility for their school and the wider community. The pupils' social awareness benefits considerably from the school's strong links with a sister school in Zimbabwe. In helping to raise money to fund the education of less fortunate children, they gain a greater awareness of life outside the school and learn about children who are in a very different situation to themselves. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of public institutions and important figures in society, such as government ministers.
- 4.5 The pupils' excellent cultural awareness is strongly influenced by the Catholic faith, which is threaded through everyday school life. Pupils deepen their awareness through living in a school community which includes pupils from many different cultures and backgrounds. They appreciate one another's differences and willingly support one another. Their knowledge of and respect for other faiths and cultures develops strongly through the school curriculum. They demonstrate their understanding of the wider world through exciting projects such as Indian dancing, linked to a topic on India. School trips, such as the Year 6 residential trip to France, enable pupils to learn about different cultures at first hand, and extend their breadth of cultural understanding, gained in their work in creative and performing arts.
- 4.6 In the EYFS, the children's personal, social and emotional development is excellent and reflects the school's caring ethos. Children demonstrate growing independence

and positive relationships. Relationships are fostered well through the 'good news line', which enables children to share their news from home proudly with others.

- 4.7 Throughout the school, the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness ensures that they reach an excellent level of personal development by the time they leave school.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.8 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 Through excellent support and guidance, the school creates a happy, secure environment within an ethos of love, care and respect for each individual in line with the school's aims.
- 4.10 The excellent relationships between pupils and adults are evident in the respectful interactions that take place inside and outside the classroom. Provision for the children's well-being in the EYFS is excellent; they have an assigned key person and all adults in the setting work as a close team to ensure that children are kept safe and are happy. Staff teamwork throughout the school and their friendly rapport with pupils are the cornerstones of the care provided. Swift responses to concerns ensure that pupils feel strongly supported. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and in discussion, pupils indicated strongly that they like being at the school and appreciate individual help from teachers. The EYFS setting has excellent transition arrangements for each stage of the children's school career. Children visit their new class and teacher at the end of the summer term to prepare to move to Year 1.
- 4.11 A healthy lifestyle is strongly encouraged; lunches are nutritious, well balanced, and appetising. In the EYFS, children learn the importance of keeping healthy through physical exercise and healthy eating. Nursery children are aware of the need for a healthy snack to 'give us energy' and Reception children take responsibility for making their own healthy choices at lunchtime. Children across the EYFS confidently undertake their own personal hygiene. Reminder lists on classroom doors in the rest of the school reinforce the healthy snacks protocol. A full curricular and extra-curricular physical education programme, including team and individual pursuits, underpins the pupils' understanding of the value of regular exercise.
- 4.12 The school successfully promotes excellent behaviour and guards against harassment and bullying. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that staff deal rapidly and effectively with any disagreements. Classroom peer mediators provide additional support. From Year 3 onwards, pupils are actively encouraged to resolve their own difficulties in the playground. Staff are positive role models for the pupils in a strongly inclusive culture, as noted particularly in PSHE lessons and during assemblies. Excellent behaviour is promoted well by the rewards system, through which the staff acknowledge and value the pupils' contributions throughout the school. These include the awarding of house points, merit marks and, for older pupils, trust badges. Sanctions, when required, are fair and their application is consistent with school policy. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were particularly appreciative of their children being happy and safe and of the high standards of behaviour.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND. In the older classes a comments box enables pupils to express their views on the

running of the school and provides school council agenda items, a recent topic being the job description for the requested role of head girl.

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

- 4.14 The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety throughout the school community are excellent.
- 4.15 The school's safeguarding arrangements are prepared thoroughly, scrutinised regularly and are understood by staff, volunteers and governors. Appropriate training in child protection is undertaken, including by those with specific roles. Procedures have due regard to national and local requirements, including an annual review by all governors.
- 4.16 The school has effective measures in place to reduce the risk from fire. Systems for preventing, detecting and combatting fire are correctly maintained and regular evacuation drills are recorded and evaluated carefully. Effective staff training, a high level of awareness and rigorous procedures in areas such as equipment testing and the correct storage of chemicals ensure that the risk from other hazards is minimised. In the EYFS, highly reflective staff provide for the children's care and learning needs extremely well; they react quickly to risks by, for example, mopping up water spillages promptly. A strong culture of risk assessment, including regular review, promotes the safety of staff and pupils, both onsite and on off-site visits.
- 4.17 A health and safety committee, chaired by a governor, ensures that health and safety matters are given due priority and that any concerns can be raised and addressed effectively, resulting in procedures which permit the school community to work and play in safety. Food is prepared and served in clean and hygienic surroundings. The school has effective measures to provide for pupils who are ill, injured or have SEND. A high proportion of staff have appropriate training in first aid, the medical room provides suitable accommodation, medication is stored safely and the school communicates effectively with parents of children who are ill or injured. Admission and attendance registers are completed and stored appropriately, the latter providing a reliable daily record for emergency evacuation purposes.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors have a thorough oversight of the work of the school. They are highly effective in ensuring that the school meets its aims within a strong family atmosphere, clearly underpinned by its Roman Catholic values.
- 5.3 The governing body, which reports to the trustees, some of whom are also governors, brings a broad range of relevant experience to the school, enabling it to provide excellent oversight across all avenues of school life. New governors are appointed to complement the skills of existing ones. They benefit from a useful handbook for governors and induction training in the role. Governors undertake extensive training; this enables them to execute successfully their responsibilities, including for educational standards, finance, the pupils' welfare and personal development, and the maintenance of premises and resources.
- 5.4 Governors have developed many efficient strategies to ensure an excellent insight into the working of the school, such as 'curriculum days', when governors spend time in school tracking a particular subject and meetings with staff. Committees cover areas such as academic matters, finance and marketing. Individual governors have delegated areas of concern, such as the EYFS and safeguarding. In these ways, the governing body is highly effective in monitoring the work of the school and providing support and challenge to all staff. The governing body provides excellent support to the EYFS; the EYFS governor visits the setting regularly and is involved in development planning.
- 5.5 Through a comprehensive programme of policy review and the receipt of reports from the head and various committees, the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities successfully. It has a detailed approach to risk assessment, maintains close scrutiny of welfare, health and safety and undertakes an annual review of safeguarding, which is successively considered and approved by the education committee, governors and trustees.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.7 The head teacher ably leads the senior management team whose members highly successful in meeting the school's aims, ensuring excellent teaching and high quality pastoral care throughout the school. The team benefits from representation from all sections of the school, including the EYFS. The school's leadership ensures a common determination among the staff to ensure that pupils receive a broad educational experience. School policies are implemented rigorously, ensuring that pupils are kept safe, happy and stimulated. Throughout the school, excellent systems ensure that the safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. The school's leadership ensures that members of staff, volunteers and governors undergo criminal record checks and that these are suitably recorded.

- 5.8 A detailed three-year school development plan is reaching the end of its current cycle. The school recognises that this model is over-complex and makes demands on management time which lead to inconsistency in recording the evaluation of priorities. The leadership team has addressed this by initiating from 2013 a system of annual review. Self-evaluation has highlighted the lack of a tier of middle management, to assist senior managers in monitoring the work of the school and ensure that the time of senior managers is used to maximum efficiency. Although still in its infancy, an initiative to address this, approved by governors, has begun to facilitate the delegation of tasks and to create time for strategic thinking. Management at all levels is further strengthened through the appointment of 'leaders of learning'.
- 5.9 The leadership of the EYFS oversees the setting very effectively and provides suitable supervision for staff, ensuring that policies, planning and assessment meet the needs of the children. Through excellent self-evaluation, appraisal and development planning, EYFS staff identify areas for future development. They undertake regular training to benefit the children's learning.
- 5.10 Annual departmental curriculum monitoring provides management with evaluative information about the quality of teaching and learning. Analysis of planning and marking provides useful feedback for improvement. Issues requiring whole-school focus are identified clearly and shared. A rolling, three-year subject development matrix ensures all subject areas receive equal focus on evaluation and planning.
- 5.11 An effective system of performance management for all staff results in clear continuing professional development targets. The process has also informed the decision to create the middle management tier. Staff who meet certain criteria are enabled to spend more substantial amounts of time on schemes of professional development of benefit to the school. Staff are trained appropriately in the roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.12 The school recruits staff of exceptional talent, whose sense of team spirit and dedication is outstanding. They are wholly absorbed in the life of the community and its routines. A team of very able teaching assistants and technicians catering, administrative and ancillary staff all contribute to ensuring that the pupils' daily school experience is of immensely high quality.
- 5.13 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated a highly positive level of support for the school and its direction. They regard communication to be clear and effective. Inspection evidence supports these views. Links with parents, carers and guardians are dynamic and effective. A member of the leadership team is on hand every day at drop-off and collection times, ensuring that parents can make informal contact if necessary. Parents and carers are very welcome in school and participate in services and other events. Parents can alert staff quickly to any concerns and these are addressed quickly. Parents can contact staff through email and class teachers are available each morning and afternoon. The fortnightly newsletter and the school's website provide further useful information and a bulk messaging system provides strong communication. The school's complaints procedure meets requirements and provides parents with a clear framework should they need to raise a concern.
- 5.14 Parents of children in the EYFS are very positive about the relationships they have with the school and the progress their children are making. Leadership in the EYFS ensures that staff work closely with parents and a wide variety of external agencies

to enable children who require additional support to be provided for extremely well. The valuable sharing of information between home and school helps to provide interesting learning experiences for each child. Recommendations from external agencies are followed closely to meet the needs of individuals in the setting.

- 5.15 The parents' involvement with their children's work and progress is frequent and valued by the school. Throughout the school, workshops to support parents' understanding for maths, sex and relationships education and handwriting inform them how they may support their children's learning at home and these are popular. Additionally in the EYFS, leaflets and regular dialogue provide parents with considerable information on their child's progress and offer ideas on how to support their learning at home. Parents of current and prospective pupils receive all the required information about the school. Termly parent-teacher meetings facilitate the flow of information regarding the pupils' progress. A 'bring your parent to school' initiative was successful in raising the parents' awareness of school life, resulting in the leadership team planning to make this a regular feature. Parents receive regular, informative reports on their children's progress.

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