



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE MINSTER SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Minster School

Full Name of School	The Minster School		
DfE Number	816/6006		
Registered Charity Number	N/A		
Address	The Minster School Deangate York North Yorkshire YO1 7JA		
Telephone Number	0844 939 00 00		
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Email Address	school@yorkminster.org		
Headmaster	Mr Alex Donaldson		
Chairman of Governors	The Very Revd Keith Jones, Dean of York		
Age Range	3 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	165		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (78 boys; 87 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5(EYFS):	29	5-7: 35
	7-13:	101	
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Jane Donaldson		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	8 Feb 2011 to 9 Feb 2011		
	9 Mar 2011 to 11 Mar 2011		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in April 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Minster School aims to create a safe, happy, family environment in which pupils achieve their potential, care for each other and understand their role within the wider community, and it places a strong emphasis on the promotion of politeness and good manners. As a department of York Minster, the school is governed by the Dean and Chapter. The governors have clarified and reorganised the structure of governance since the previous inspection.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 627 AD for the education of boy choristers. It became fully co-educational in 1987. In 1995, the Dean and Chapter introduced girl choristers in parallel to the existing boys' choir. In 1996, a Nursery class was opened, expanding the age range to three to thirteen years. The school is set in historic buildings on the south side of the cathedral. The Pre-Prep, for those aged three to seven, is housed in a Georgian residence, The Red House, and the Prep, for pupils between the ages of seven and thirteen, is accommodated in two buildings, the Old School and the Main School.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school roll totalled one hundred and sixty-five. Of the twenty-nine children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), thirteen attend part-time and sixteen full-time. The majority of pupils enter in the EYFS. Years 1 and 2 of the Pre-Prep comprise thirty-five pupils, and the Prep has one hundred and one pupils. Pupils who wish to enter as choristers attend auditions in Year 2 for entry as probationary choristers in Year 3. Prospective pupils attend a taster day prior to being offered a place. Most pupils are drawn from business and professional families in the local area. A wide range of nationalities, faiths and cultures is represented in the school.
- 1.4 Improvements since the previous inspection include a new management information system and Pre-Prep information and communication technology (ICT) suite, refurbishment of the Pre-Prep library and the expansion of outdoor provision. The extension of the Prep school day has enabled the school to expand the curriculum.
- 1.5 The ability range of pupils varies but is above the national average overall. No pupil has English as an additional language or a statement of special educational needs. Of the thirty-nine pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, fifteen receive specialist support.
- 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 Pupils in all parts of the school, including the EYFS, are extremely well educated. They achieve excellent standards, and in music, which is a central feature of the school, achievement is exceptional. Pupils acquire and apply well-developed knowledge and skills across all areas of learning. They make rapid progress through the high quality teaching and extensive activities which, in line with school's aims, nurture individual talents and gifts. The school achieves its desire that within a happy environment, pupils are extremely well mannered and self-disciplined, and in all things demonstrate a determination to realise their potential. Pupils' strong commitment to success, their acquisition and application of a good range of skills, and their excellent attitudes contribute to effective learning.
- 2.2 The pastoral care is of high quality and, combined with valuable academic guidance offered by staff, strongly supports pupils' excellent personal development. Across the school, harmonious relationships reflect the friendliness and tolerance of pupils, whose responses to visitors are mature and courteous. The pupils are self-assured, positive and responsible. Their excellent social skills are evident in both work and play. Pupils' awareness of others is well developed through their charitable work and involvement in community events at the Minster. Good attention is given to pupils' health and safety.
- 2.3 The school is governed well. The governors' commitment and oversight are major factors in enabling the school to achieve its aims. The governors ensure that teaching and learning are supported effectively, and discharge their responsibilities regarding pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety suitably. The clear vision, high aspirations and dedication of senior managers motivate all to achieve. New procedures to monitor and review all areas of school life on a regular basis are not yet fully implemented. Efficient and well-organised curriculum management ensures that pupils are challenged and stimulated to learn. Good relationships with parents reflect the pupils' comments that the school is like a large family. Inconsistencies exist in the quality of marking and report writing. The school has met almost every recommendation from the previous inspection. The choristers' routines and obligations have been readjusted to their benefit, the school day has been lengthened, the curriculum has been expanded and teaching space for design technology (DT) has been created. Building restrictions have prevented the school from meeting the previous recommendation to provide teaching space for indoor physical education for older pupils.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Implement the new monitoring systems rigorously in order to eliminate inconsistencies in provision, particularly those evident in the quality of reports to parents and the marking of pupils' books.
 2. Ensure the implementation of plans to extend and improve outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils' achievement is excellent, and in accordance with the school's aims, well-educated pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding effectively within a happy environment. The school fulfils its aim to value pupils as individuals, and it fosters talent in all areas. Knowledge, skills and understanding develop effectively across all ages, and progress is good and often rapid in relation to pupils' ability. Younger pupils listen carefully, use wide vocabularies to express themselves articulately, read fluently and enjoy books. Original, interesting and well-constructed writing by older pupils across many areas of study illustrate pupils' imagination and their proficiency with a range of literary styles. Younger pupils enjoy manipulating numbers and solving problems, and have a good understanding of what they do. Older pupils tackle high quality investigations and challenges in mathematics with confidence. Pupils' knowledge of graphs is applied well when recording results from geographical field studies and scientific experiments. The enjoyment of science is evident as younger pupils devise fair tests and older pupils make informed deductions when conducting experiments. Pupils' acquisition and use of ICT skills have improved significantly since the previous inspection. By Year 8, pupils' original animations, presentations of work and recording of group compositions for performance to others show dexterity with, and effective application of, a wide range of ICT skills and techniques. Achievement in music is exceptionally good and extremely well supported by daily contacts and interactions with York Minster. Pupils achieve well in sporting activities.
- 3.2 The school does not enter pupils for national tests; therefore attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average. On the evidence available, attainment is high overall and exceptional in music in relation to national expectations. Standardised test results indicate that pupils' progress is better than that of pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils in Years 6 and 8 are successful in gaining entrance to senior schools of their choice, obtaining a variety of scholarships. Pupils who require support with their learning attain well and make good, constant progress.
- 3.3 Pupils' achievement in activities is good and on occasion excellent. In a national mathematics challenge, a number of pupils acquired gold awards and one pupil was a national runner up. The number, range and quality of individual and group musical success are excellent. Some pupils are members of the National Children's Orchestra of Great Britain. Older pupils enjoy representing the school in county hockey squads.
- 3.4 Pupils' strong commitment to success, acquisition and application of a wide range of skills, excellent attitudes, diligence and often exemplary behaviour contribute to effective learning. Well-motivated, enthusiastic Pre-Prep pupils work hard both individually and in groups. Prep pupils manage their work effectively and reflect well upon their progress. Pupils undertake independent tasks successfully and research information efficiently. Throughout the school, pupils' pride in their work is reflected in the excellent presentation evident in their books.

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

- 3.5 The curriculum is excellent overall. Pupils' literacy and linguistic skills are extended significantly with French from Year 1, Latin from Year 6, Spanish from Year 7 and extra-curricular Mandarin from Year 6. Their mathematical, scientific and technological skills are nurtured carefully and utilised well in a range of subjects. Pupils enjoy the stimulating range of work in DT, introduced in response to the recommendation of the previous inspection. Within the imaginative and comprehensive arts programme, pupils' creativity has a wide range of opportunities for expression, with particular emphasis on performance. Pupils' personal development is enriched through a carefully planned programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). The revision of the curriculum and reorganisation of the school day for choristers have enabled the school to meet the recommendations of the previous inspection to expand the curriculum. Pupils' games skills are suitably promoted, with the availability of additional training after school and at weekends. The historic nature of the school buildings has prevented developments leading to the expansion of the indoor physical education curriculum for older pupils, which was a recommendation from the previous inspection. Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding progress smoothly through the organisation and planning systems in place across all ages and subjects of the curriculum.
- 3.6 The curriculum makes a significant contribution to the school's success in meeting its aim to enable pupils to enjoy a wide range of experiences within continuous programmes of learning. It supports achievement effectively, is well suited to pupils' ages and abilities, and prepares them successfully for the next stages of their education. Suitable arrangements are in place to adapt the curriculum for pupils with English as an additional language when required. Systems to adapt the curriculum for pupils who require support with their learning are implemented appropriately. The efficient extension of the curriculum for more able pupils ensures that it matches their needs.
- 3.7 An excellent range of activities enriches and enlivens the classroom curriculum, expands pupils' horizons and supports personal development. Both in their pre-inspection questionnaire and in conversation, pupils speak enthusiastically of visits to the National Railway Museum and other museums. Older pupils' knowledge of history and understanding of French culture and language are enriched whilst visiting the Normandy beaches. During field study tasks in North York Moors National Park, pupils' ability to work together and co-operate develops well. The Youth Theatre, an integral part of the English curriculum, enhances pupils' literary knowledge and promotes performance opportunities. Pupils of all ages enjoy the varied and interesting programme of after-school activities.
- 3.8 All pupils benefit from the choral aspect of school life, which involves substantial links with the local community. Choristers' contributions to public worship at York Minster and community celebration services involving all pupils inculcate in them a sense of occasion. Pupils' self-confidence grows through participation in the considerable number of public performances by orchestras, wind bands and chamber ensembles. Pupils expand their knowledge of local schools through participation in a choral outreach programme each term which culminates in a joint concert in York Minster. Pupils' knowledge of their area and sense of social responsibility are expanded considerably through their charity work, as exemplified in visits to The Salvation Army to distribute gifts for those less fortunate than themselves.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.9 Teaching is predominantly excellent. Across the school, teaching successfully meets the school's aim that staff work together with a common sense of purpose. Teachers' high expectations are a major factor in promoting progress across all ages, and ensuring that pupils are well prepared for and extremely successful in their senior school entrance examinations. Teachers use their extensive general and specific subject knowledge well to motivate pupils, and to promote progress and personal development.
- 3.10 Pupils are challenged to think and express their views clearly through the fast pace and wide range of methods evident in outstanding lessons. During such lessons, pupils progress rapidly because teachers continually adapt approaches and tasks in direct relation to their ability. The efficient organisation of materials and careful matching of time to task ensure that all pupils achieve and complete work successfully. The teachers' own love of their subject engages and inspires pupils, and the excellent use made of visits stimulates pupils' interest and encourages further research. Throughout the school, good, well-planned lessons engage and sustain pupils' interest, and encourage them to plan their work and manage their progress competently.
- 3.11 The high quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and the extensive knowledge staff have of their pupils make a significant contribution to pupils' high standards and exemplary behaviour. The use teachers make of ICT has increased significantly since the previous inspection. They use electronic whiteboards well to stimulate, support and involve pupils in interactive learning. Teachers enable pupils to apply their skills and knowledge of ICT to enhance their learning. The provision for pupils requiring support with their learning is good. Teachers use the guidance in individual education plans suitably to adapt work according to need, thus ensuring that pupils with specific learning needs progress well. The extra challenges and demanding tasks provided for more able pupils extend their knowledge and ability to think and research effectively.
- 3.12 Teachers apply a number of useful strategies to assess pupils' progress. All work is marked and almost all marking provides excellent guidance to pupils on how to raise standards further. Occasionally, work is marked meticulously but advice to pupils on how to improve is lacking. During lessons, teachers continually assess pupils' knowledge and progress and, by adapting their questioning according to ability and need, ensure that pupils increase their knowledge. The effective use of the individual pupil targets on display in Pre-Prep classrooms reminds pupils of their aims and focuses them on success. In the Prep, the information from regular assessment is used to construct helpful summaries of effort and progress each half-term, which pupils understand and use to improve their performance. Standardised assessment results are recorded meticulously. Teachers discuss and analyse the results to ensure that pupils are being challenged according to their ability and are progressing suitably. When areas of concern are identified the guidance of learning support specialists is used well in order to adapt provision accordingly.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 Pupils' personal development is excellent. They are positive, responsible scholars who work and live respectfully alongside each other, in line with school aims. Pupils' readiness to share their views with each other and with adults whom they trust demonstrates their high self-esteem and self-confidence.
- 4.2 Pupils' excellent spiritual development is significantly enriched by the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils have a strong appreciation of their surroundings. They respond sensitively to a range of uplifting experiences, valuing the beauty and history of York Minster and appreciating the opportunity to be involved in Minster life. The choristers lift everyone's spirits with their music. Pupils share in the awe of discovery in lessons such as science and art, and react maturely to a range of media, especially the creative arts. Younger pupils demonstrated a deep sensitivity to others' needs during reflection time in an assembly linked to fair trade in the world. By Year 8, pupils analyse their work carefully and are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They have an extremely well-developed moral code. Pupils show a keen sense of fair play. Younger pupils have a clear view of right and wrong, and display a strong sense of justice when discussing behaviour. Older pupils' understanding of the importance of rules and sanctions in school and in society is well expressed in their contributions to discussion. Pupils of all ages are acutely aware of those less fortunate than themselves. They speak knowledgeably about the effect of their charitable giving. Older pupils' understanding of their wider roles as citizens is promoted well during formal occasions in the Minster. Informative, mature views on issues such as personal health are expressed fluently in PSHCE.
- 4.4 Social development is excellent. Pupils interact well, care for each other, and are extremely courteous and polite when greeting visitors. Pupils of different ages chat happily during recreation times and enjoy working with each other in their respective houses. The house representatives on the pupil council show considerable maturity when discussing their work and roles. Pupils undertake their various school and class responsibilities competently. In conversations with pupils, it is evident that participation in public performances, the varied outdoor educational programme and contribution to organising charity events increase their social confidence.
- 4.5 Pupils have a strong cultural awareness. They appreciate cultural diversity and speak sensitively about Christian beliefs and patterns of life, and older pupils are conversant with and respectful of a range of religions. Pupils' extensive knowledge of local culture is strongly supported by visits from theatre companies, participation in local events, and visits to various museums and places of interest. Pupils interpret art from other cultures effectively and their knowledge of world cultures is enhanced through geographical studies. Older pupils' informed knowledge of European culture is significantly enhanced by their residential visit to Normandy.

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

- 4.6 The provision for welfare, health and safety is excellent overall. The pastoral care of pupils is also excellent. Pastoral systems foster pupils' academic achievement and support, and guide their personal development highly effectively, in line with the school's aim. Pupils' academic and personal progress is monitored and assisted effectively by form teachers. High quality relationships between well-mannered pupils and caring adults are easy and respectful. Staff are good role models, and pupils approach them confidently if they have a concern. In conversation and in their questionnaire, pupils expressed the view that they are supported extremely well. Younger pupils receive good support as they work and play. Older pupils receive excellent academic and personal support in preparation for their senior school examinations. Teachers use the rewards system effectively to acknowledge and value contributions in many areas of school life and promote good behaviour. In accordance with the recommendations of the previous inspection, records of pupils' academic and personal progress are now easily accessible by staff.
- 4.7 The systems to monitor and deal with any harassment and bullying are effective. Pupils are very aware of what bullying means and how it can affect themselves and others. Responses to their questionnaire and conversations with pupils indicate their clear understanding of the school policy regarding bullying, their knowledge of whom to approach if bullied and their confidence that matters will be dealt with as quickly as possible. They appreciate the opportunity to contribute to classroom codes of conduct that express their views on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Pupils' concerns are dealt with effectively on a daily basis and recorded efficiently on the school management system by form teachers, and progress is monitored and evaluated regularly by senior managers.
- 4.8 Pupils are suitably safeguarded. Staff are trained in protecting children at levels appropriate to their roles, and policies are up to date. Safer recruitment procedures are well established and applied correctly, and the central register of staff contains the required details. Health and safety procedures are reviewed regularly. Comprehensive measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are implemented correctly. Fire procedures, appliance checks, training, risk assessments and practices are up to date and recorded suitably. General risk assessments in other areas of school life, including those for pupil visits, ensure that safety is a priority. Actions identified as requiring attention are dealt with swiftly. External guidance on all matters of health and safety is available to the school if required.
- 4.9 Medical facilities are based in a suitably placed and satisfactorily equipped dual-purpose room. A number of staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid. Details of how educational provision for pupils with specific learning needs and disabilities will be catered for are included in the school accessibility plan. In conversation, pupils are clear about what constitutes good health. They speak extremely highly of the food on site. Movement between sites during the day provides pupils with considerable exercise. The school compensates well for lack of on-site facilities for physical education through use of nearby sports sites and a local swimming pool. The admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance of the school is good. The governors are highly committed to the school, and to securing its aims, promoting its continuing success, and maintaining the pupils' high standards, personal development and pastoral care. They strongly support the religious aspect of the school mission through their spiritual and pastoral guidance to pupils, staff and families.
- 5.2 Since the previous inspection, the governors have, together with the headmaster, established a formal document to clarify roles and responsibilities within the governing body and school management. Further reorganisation has resulted in the formation of specific committees to oversee and evaluate provision regularly. In addition, a governors committee has been appointed recently to offer a diverse range of expertise of benefit to the school, oversee day-to-day practice, ensure legislative requirements are met and provide additional support as required. Useful long-term financial planning has ensured regular upgrading of the premises, maintenance of a well-qualified complement of staff, and the supply of quality resources to support teaching and learning.
- 5.3 The governors have a good knowledge of school procedures. Their effective communication and good relationships with senior managers lead to a regular exchange of information. The governors support new initiatives and ensure that the school maintains the quality of provision. Their annual review of policies and examination results, and involvement in school development planning aid understanding of what is succeeding and what requires development.
- 5.4 Governors discharge their responsibilities regarding child protection, safeguarding children, welfare, health and safety suitably, using external consultancies when required. The governors assess the efficiency of the child protection policy and procedures annually. They have ensured that the school has met the recommendations of the previous inspection where possible, and are supporting the school in finding solutions to lack of suitable accommodation for indoor physical education.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.5 Leadership and management of the school at all levels are excellent. Dedicated senior managers support the school's aims effectively and ensure its success. Their high expectations and clear direction are reflected in the commitment of staff, high standard of pupils' achievements and excellent personal development, and high quality pastoral care.
- 5.6 The new and efficient management structure, established since the previous inspection, has clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Senior managers evaluate progress in all areas of school annually, and use the results well to produce a comprehensive school development plan that orders action in terms of priority and states clearly what constitutes success. Extending the plan to staff and governors enables all to move forward as a strong team, share the same vision and work towards the same goals. New procedures to monitor performance across all areas of school life on a regular basis are in place, but not yet implemented fully. High quality curriculum management is reflected in clear documentation and routines.

Excellent communication between managers of key stages of learning ensures a smooth curriculum transition and continuity of learning for pupils.

- 5.7 The school has a well-established complement of well-qualified staff who are deployed effectively. Senior managers ensure that the recruitment of staff is carried out suitably, with the appropriate checks undertaken and recorded correctly on the central register of appointments. Appraisal systems for all staff, including senior managers, identify individual strengths and areas for improvement, and are closely linked with opportunities for staff development. In-service training for individual staff is encouraged, and beneficial whole-school training covers areas such as first aid, child protection, safeguarding and bullying appropriately. Senior managers have ensured success in responding to all but one recommendation of the previous inspection. The care and consideration shown by efficient support staff contribute well to pupils' personal development and to school life in general.

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

- 5.8 The school's good relationships with parents, carers and guardians reflect its aims and contribute effectively to pupils' personal development. Responses to the parental questionnaire completed prior to the inspection indicated wide support for the school emphasis on good manners and good behaviour, and the quality of teaching and high standard of pastoral care. These views are confirmed by inspection findings. Parents of new pupils expressed appreciation of the progress made by their children since joining the school. A number of Prep parents expressed concern that guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not followed. Others commented that they have few opportunities for involvement in school life. These views are not corroborated by inspection findings, which indicate that guidance for pupils requiring additional support is followed and that the school welcomes a range of parental involvement.
- 5.9 Parents have significant input in the Pre-Prep. They enter school each morning, ensuring that communication between home and school is immediate and that any matters of urgency are shared swiftly. Their assistance with many tasks during the school day is appreciated by staff. The opportunity for similar involvement continues in the Prep. A strong parents association contributes by giving talks to pupils on specific areas of expertise, helping with school events, managing the uniform shop, raising funds for additional equipment to enhance learning, and organising a good range of social and charitable events. Staff representatives on the association promote helpful channels of communication with the school. Participation in acts of worship and celebration across the school and in the Minster strengthens the spiritual life of families. The school involves the parents of older pupils in informative discussions to assist them in their choice of senior schools.
- 5.10 Parents receive useful information about the school. Comprehensive information concerning school policies, the governing body and the curriculum is available on the school website. The prospectus states the school's aims and ethos clearly. The school has provided a useful handbook for parents, as recommended at the previous inspection. Parents meet and discuss their children's progress with staff, and are encouraged to contact the school at any time should they have a concern. Parents receive helpful, regular information about their children's effort and attitudes each half-term. Full reports are sent to parents before the end of each term. The best reports include clear information on pupils' knowledge, skills and progress in each subject. They also offer targets for improvement, with information on how these can be achieved. A number of reports lack this detailed information.

5.11 The school procedure for handling parental concerns and complaints is followed correctly and with due care. There have been no formal complaints.

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 This is an outstanding setting which achieves its aims. Children of all abilities respond to the carefully planned and nurturing environment by displaying a growing awareness of their own individual talents and interests, and making rapid progress in their learning. Constant self-review ensures that the setting sustains improvement and meets its own exacting standards of care and provision. In strong partnership with parents, the staff recognise the unique qualities of each child and successfully meet their individual needs, drawing on effective support from advisory agencies when necessary.

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

6.2 Outstanding leadership and management ensure that staff focus effectively on helping all children to progress in their learning and personal development, and on promoting their welfare. Children are safeguarded well by suitably qualified and dedicated staff whose understanding and implementation of procedures are excellent. Comprehensive, detailed risk assessments are reviewed regularly. Strong links between home and school are established swiftly, and parents' views and observations are incorporated into the children's learning profiles. This inclusivity extends to community members and visitors, thus enriching provision and making the learning experience dynamic and relevant. Staff promote equality well. The evaluation of provision is excellent. The information gained contributes well to clear aims for the future and the identification of specific areas for improvement. The effective use of resources enhances learning for pupils. The professional knowledge of staff is expanded through external and internal training and applied effectively to ensure excellent outcomes for the children.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is excellent. Adults support learning and development extremely well. They listen carefully to the children and respond with encouragement and praise, building on their responses and steering them towards clearer understanding. Provision for children's physical and emotional well-being is highly effective. A carefully judged balance of adult-led and child-initiated experiences gives the children many opportunities to develop their critical thinking and independence. Planning is detailed at all levels. Children's own suggestions and ideas are effectively incorporated into short-term plans, and adults fully appreciate the rich contributions that flow from bright and lively minds. Regular use of the outside environment is planned effectively and it is used well as an extension of the classroom. The school is constantly developing the outdoor environment in order to increase its effectiveness as a rich learning resource. Children are extremely well supported by their key person, who promotes their welfare and safety at all times and guides them towards self-sufficiency.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are excellent. The children are eager to learn and make significant progress. They learn to communicate fluently, enjoy books, and express their thoughts and feelings with developing confidence. Reception children accurately use phonic knowledge to write simple words in a neat and well-sized script, and Nursery children confidently recognise initial sounds. The children are confident in working with computer programmes and use the mouse efficiently. Reception children manipulate numbers beyond twenty accurately, identify shapes, measure confidently, and actively explore and solve problems. Children are inquisitive and self-motivated, and respond enthusiastically to challenges. They have good relationships with adults and other children. The children have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They know what constitutes healthy eating and understand the need to eat fruit and vegetables daily. The children are aware of personal hygiene and are careful to wash their hands before eating. All children make a positive contribution to the community, being fully involved in rule making for everyone's safety and well-being.

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 chairman 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 Sandra Gordon

Mr Nicholas Yelland

Mr Graham Venables

Mrs Louise Savage

Reporting Inspector

Headmaster, IAPS school

Former Director of Studies, IAPS school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector