



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

CHASE ACADEMY

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Chase Academy

Full Name of School	Chase Academy		
DfE Number	860/6008		
Address	Chase Academy St John's Road Rumer Hill Cannock Staffordshire WS11 0UR		
Telephone Number	01543 501 800		
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Email Address	info@chaseacademy.com		
Principal	Mr Mark Ellse		
Proprietor	Mr Mark Ellse		
Age Range	3 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	209		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (100 boys; 109 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	16	5-11: 63
	11-18:	130	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	201	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 0
Number of Boarders	Total:	8	
	Full:	8	Weekly: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Mr Ian Sterling		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	15 Feb 2011 to 16 Feb 2011 16 Mar 2011 to 18 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 March 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 boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection of Chase Academy International Study Centre in October 2008 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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 Chase Academy was founded in Cannock in 1979 as a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 3 to 18. The present proprietor is the principal not only of Chase Academy but also Chase Academy International Study Centre, which shares the same site. This ISI inspection is only of Chase Academy.
- 1.2 The school aims to develop all aspects of good character; to inspire academic success; to encourage extra-curricular involvement and achievement; and to provide an international setting that promotes the appreciation of other cultures.
- 1.3 There are 209 pupils in the school, of whom 16 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 63 in the prep school and 130 in the senior school. Most pupils come from Cannock and the surrounding area. A few are foreign nationals, the majority of whom are from the Far East. There are 8 boarders, who share accommodation with the 90 Chase Academy International Study Centre boarders. In some classes, especially in the sixth form, Chase Academy pupils and Chase Academy International Study Centre pupils are taught together. Chase Academy has identified 43 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD); of these 10 receive specialist learning support from the school. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). No pupils for whom English is an additional language require extra help with their English.
- 1.4 Entry to the school is academically non-selective. The ability profile of the school to GCSE is above the national average, with over half the pupils demonstrating ability that is at least above average. It is difficult to determine the overall ability profile of the sixth form because the school does not use standardised tests of ability at this stage.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection the proprietor has taken over the role of principal. There has been extensive development of the buildings and the site boundaries.
- 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 overall quality of the pupils' learning and achievement is good, as are attainment and progress in relation to the ages, abilities and circumstances of the pupils at each stage of the school. Pupils reach good and sometimes outstanding levels of success in academic work and activities. Across the age range a positive attitude to study contributes to purposeful learning. The pupils' good progress and success in public examinations are promoted by teaching which is good overall and sometimes excellent. Children in the EYFS enjoy their learning and achieve high standards. Varied extra-curricular activities and opportunities enrich the pupils' educational experience and enable them to achieve personal fulfilment.
- 2.2 Chase Academy is a small, lively community with a strong sense of belonging, and attention to the individual at its heart. Excellent pastoral care, thorough welfare arrangements and robust safeguarding, health and safety procedures make a highly effective contribution to the excellent personal development of the pupils, who conduct themselves considerately and with respect for each other's differences. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils develop a clear moral code and benefit from the opportunities for leadership and service.
- 2.3 The school's aims are being successfully realised, a strong testimony to the clear direction given by leadership and management. The school is efficiently run, with the academic prospects and the well-being of all pupils, who are well known as individuals, central to the senior management team's concerns. In response to recommendations made in the 2005 inspection report, very worthwhile use is now made of assessment data, and the school has met the welfare requirements indicated at that time. Library provision, however, remains unsatisfactory and the potential of information and communication technology (ICT) as a resource for teaching and learning is inadequately exploited. Staff appraisal lacks consistency and completeness. The school maintains excellent links with parents, who expressed great satisfaction with the education provided by the school.

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. Improve the library facilities for the senior school and the prep school.
 2. Expand the provision of ICT as a resource for teaching and learning.
 3. Adopt a comprehensive system of professional development and appraisal for all staff and implement it consistently.
 4. Provide parents of children in the EYFS with more opportunities to be involved in their children's learning.
 5. Further develop the outdoor learning area in the EYFS.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievements is good, and reflects the school's stated aims to inspire academic success and to encourage extra-curricular achievement. There is a particularly strong focus on literacy and numeracy in the prep school, where the standard in both disciplines is good, as it is, for the most part, in the senior school. The majority of pupils are confident and competent users of ICT. Most pupils display secure knowledge, skills and understanding of the material being covered in their lessons and some achieve extremely high standards. Most sixth-form leavers are successful in securing their choice of university degree courses. Notable extra-curricular achievements include individual county and district representative honours in various sports and success in local music and art competitions, as well as the display of considerable acting talent in drama productions. Hockey is a strength, and in recent years both the under-14 and the under-16 teams have been the schools' association national boys' 7-a-side champions.
- 3.2 The following analysis uses the national data for 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. GCSE performance has been similar to the national average for maintained schools, with performance in 2007 and 2009 being above the national average. Results at A level have been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools and above the average for maintained selective schools overall, though performance of cohorts varies from year to year. Overall, the 2010 GCSE and A-level results were statistically similar to those of the previous three years. Unusually distinguished results at GCSE and A level have been achieved by a few pupils who have sat the examinations in a very large number of subjects, achieving high grades in all of them.
- 3.3 The prep school does not enter pupils for national tests at the ages of seven or eleven. Evidence, however, from observed lessons and the pupils' written work indicates that their attainment, as judged, is high in relation to that of pupils of similar ability. This indicates that the pupils' progress is consistently good throughout their time in the prep school. Results at GCSE indicate that their progress in Years 7 to 11 is similar to the norm for pupils of similar ability. Academic progress in the sixth form, again gauged largely from inspection evidence, as well as from A-level performance, is mainly good, and in some cases exceptional. Pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they felt they were making good academic progress.
- 3.4 Throughout the school, pupils have a positive attitude to learning. Keen in class, they contribute willingly and, for the most part, apply themselves industriously. Overall, their behaviour in lessons is very good, though some pupils at the younger end of the senior school become restless if they are not kept focused on the work in hand. Pupils collaborate well in group work and listen attentively to others' opinions. At all levels they produce at least an appropriate volume of work, and in the case of many senior pupils, a substantial volume. Presentation is generally smart, but some senior school pupils' work is untidy.

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

- 3.5 Appropriate to all ages, abilities and needs, the academic curriculum is good, supporting the school's aim to inspire academic success and covering all the requisite areas of learning. Nonetheless, the emphasis in the prep school timetable on the study of mathematics and English means that its curriculum is somewhat unbalanced, at the cost of teaching time for science and the humanities. The arrangement whereby prep school pupils in two year groups are taught together allows the ablest to follow an accelerated programme and the less able to have extra time for consolidation. Academic continuity between the prep school and the senior school is very good. The senior school curriculum contains a good range of subjects considering the size of the school. Latin is now an option and all GCSE candidates take all three separate sciences. The programme of personal, social and health education is well devised and wide-ranging. Pupils are able to use ICT for standard procedures, but its limited provision restricts opportunities for them to use it for research. A particular feature of the curriculum is its flexibility over when pupils sit public examinations. Some take a significant number of GCSEs in Year 10, and all pupils take mathematics in Year 9, enabling the ablest to be extended by advanced study at a relatively early age.
- 3.6 In the 2005 report, library provision was described as unsatisfactory, and it continues to be so. The library lacks the resources necessary to provide a useful academic or recreational resource, and the senior school book stock in particular is limited and tired.
- 3.7 Provision for pupils with LDD is very good. They are given specialist help as required, and excellent individual education plans concisely tell teachers what they need to know and do. Pupils receive carefully considered careers advice and guidance from experienced senior staff.
- 3.8 The range of extra-curricular activities is good, with participants displaying enthusiasm and commitment. Senior school levels of participation are uneven, with some pupils heavily involved and others doing little or nothing. There is something for everyone, in accordance with the school's aim to encourage extra-curricular participation and achievement. Particular strengths are sport, music and drama. The school uses high-quality sports facilities in the neighbourhood, where excellent games coaching was observed. With the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) scheme well established in the school, pupils are advancing from bronze to silver and now gold awards. Of special note among the activities observed were the popular prep school construction club and a bold, spirited production of *Romeo and Juliet*, which involved a third of the school and in which all the production team were pupils. Developing skills and teamwork, these activities also add to the liveliness of the community. The curriculum and the pupils' experience are broadened by trips for all age groups, in this country and abroad.
- 3.9 Beneficial links with the community enrich the pupils' personal and educational development. Outside specialists assist with aspects of the life skills programme. Work experience placements and D of E service activities take pupils out into the community. The school maintains a close connection with a local church. Among the school's charitable activities is an annual fund-raising campaign for a cause associated with children, such as for teenagers with cancer. Pupils also participate in the biennial charity sponsored walk on Cannock Chase.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 The quality of teaching in both sections of the school is good overall and some of it is excellent. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects. Almost all lessons are well planned, and they are conducted in an orderly atmosphere conducive to profitable study. Question and answer sessions produce lively, willing responses. On a few occasions in the senior school, pupils who finished assignments ahead of the others became restless and unfocused. In the great majority of lessons teaching is well paced and employs a good variety of teaching methods, though little use of ICT was observed. The 2005 report remarked on the limitations of the ICT facilities. The continued limited provision of up-to-date technology restricts opportunities in teaching to use a range of inspiring resources. A few examples of less successful teaching were characterised by passivity induced in the pupils and therefore slow progress; sometimes outdated worksheets were used, which did not engage the pupils' interest. Nearly all the class sizes are small, and in some cases in the senior school so small as for lessons to be almost like tutorials: consequently teachers give all pupils plenty of opportunity to participate and, knowing their individual strengths and weaknesses, tailor challenges accordingly. Throughout the school, careful attention is paid to pupils with LDD, who are often given specific tasks appropriate to their needs. Pupils at all levels find their teachers helpful and appreciate their willingness to help them with their work outside the timetabled lessons.
- 3.11 On the whole, teaching demonstrates high expectations of the pupils, leading to good and sometimes rapid progress. Teaching in the prep school is effective and engages the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Senior school teaching in preparation for forthcoming examinations is purposeful and sharply focused. In the best teaching, pupils are enthused by the evident passion for the subject displayed and produce animated responses. A spirit of mutual respect and trust exists between staff and pupils, which facilitates highly effective learning.
- 3.12 The school has significantly developed its use of assessment and, for the most part, marking systems, since the previous inspection. The school uses a range of national standardised tests which provide data for monitoring and tracking. These data are thoroughly analysed and interpreted in both the prep school and the senior school for evaluating the pupils' progress and for setting targets. At a weekly senior school meeting, the progress of every member of a particular year group is discussed by its teachers: this form of review is excellently conducted, with staff looking back at past performance and forward to proposed improvements. This close, systematic monitoring makes an important contribution to pupils' good progress and success in public examinations.
- 3.13 The pupils' work is marked regularly. The best marking is excellent in its detail, helpfulness and encouragement, with incisive specific advice to those preparing for public examinations. A small proportion of marking, however, is sketchy and does not address weaknesses in presentation, punctuation, spelling and grammar.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils develop excellent personal qualities fulfilling the school's stated aims. They flourish within a community which pupils of all ages commend for the consequences of its small size: the assurance that they are valued, well known and given close individual attention. They grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. This is frequently apparent: pupils make assured presentations at assemblies, they perform with verve on stage, and in conducting tours for visitors they are personable, articulate and keen to point out the merits of the school. Enriching and uplifting experiences include the creative and the performing arts, and visits out of school in this country and abroad; a moving assembly during the inspection made a strong impression on everyone present and widened pupils' understanding of others' burdensome circumstances.
- 4.2 The pupils' moral awareness is acute, and consonant with a school established and run on Christian principles. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, which is reinforced by a straightforward system of rewards and punishments. Moral issues are raised and discussed in lessons, particularly in the extensive and interesting life skills programme. Assembly themes point pupils towards worthwhile values and strengthen their moral development.
- 4.3 The pupils' social development is excellent. Around the school, they conduct themselves in a lively, but civilised and considerate, manner. Pupils organise charitable fund-raising, and also assume positions of responsibility and service as prefects, team captains, members of the school council, as 'buddies' to younger pupils, and even in the production of plays. They take their responsibilities seriously and learn the importance of looking after the well-being of other members of the community. A distinctive feature of life at the school is the high number of instances of pupils from various age groups collaborating congenially and co-operatively in a joint venture.
- 4.4 Pupils develop a sympathetic awareness of other cultures. Because Chase Academy and the International Study Centre share the same site, pupils of different nationalities are constantly in each other's company. They co-exist entirely harmoniously. The celebration of the Chinese New Year brings that cultural landmark into colourful focus. Trips abroad and fund-raising for worldwide causes widen the pupils' horizons. Their appreciation of Western cultural traditions is strengthened not only in lessons but in activities such as music and drama.

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

- 4.5 The staff offer excellent guidance and support to pupils, effectively ensuring their welfare and making a central contribution to the high quality of their personal development. In this small school, staff are always on hand, with form tutors meeting their tutees frequently in formal and informal contexts. Pupils warmly acknowledge all that is done for them by the staff, in terms of giving personal help when it is needed and showing concern for them as individuals. Parents, too, are very appreciative of the quality of pastoral care which their children receive. Pupils in both the prep school and the senior school used the word "family" when describing the school, and there is a strong sense of it being a place where "everyone knows everyone else."

- 4.6 Relationships amongst pupils are excellent. The school has effective procedures for promoting good behaviour. Few pupils recalled any occurrence of bullying in the school, but they said that differences between pupils were resolved swiftly and successfully, and records show that instances of bullying are very rare.
- 4.7 Arrangements to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety are effective. The safeguarding policy is robust and implemented successfully. The school has appropriate procedures for dealing with any child protection issues and all staff receive regular child protection training. A reliable system is in place whereby staff are apprised of any personal issues relating to pupils which should be brought to their attention. Appropriate measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards, and thorough risk assessments are carried out before school trips. There are appropriate medical facilities for pupils who are unwell. All prep school staff receive paediatric first aid training. The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. Admission and attendance records are properly maintained and correctly stored.
- 4.8 The programme of sports and games provides plenty of opportunity for pupils to keep fit and healthy. Mealtimes are orderly, civilised occasions. The pupils are offered a nutritious diet, although choice on the lunchtime menus is limited.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.9 The good quality of boarding contributes much to the pupils' education and social development. The few Chase Academy boarders share their accommodation with the many International Study Centre boarders: consequently there is a well-populated boarding community and they can draw their friends from a large number of their contemporaries.
- 4.10 The atmosphere in the boarding accommodation is friendly and companionable. Relationships amongst the boarders are excellent and they enjoy a very good rapport with the boarding staff. The standard of pastoral care is high, with staff displaying kindness and thoughtfulness towards boarders living far from their own countries. Suggestion boxes and the boarding council allow the pupils to propose improvements. In questionnaires and interviews, the boarders affirmed that they were well looked after and happy. Pupils of different nationalities mix successfully, thus helping to fulfil the school's aim to promote a sympathetic appreciation of different cultures. Pupils benefit from being able to use the school facilities, such as the art and music departments, out of hours and they are, with justification, trusted to respect these opportunities. Some boarders would like more encouragement to speak English in the evenings and weekends, in order that their fluency in English should advance more swiftly.
- 4.11 The standard of boarding accommodation ranges from satisfactory to good. Boarders are accommodated in a number of locations on or adjacent to the main campus. Some have study bedrooms in the main boarding block, while others reside in small groups in free-standing houses which have been purchased by the school over the years. Most of the boarders personalise their spaces and make them homely with adornments and collages of photographs, while some are content to leave their rooms in a more spartan state. Pupils maintain regular contact with home through their phones and the internet. At weekends there is a good balance of compulsory and voluntary outings to places of recreational or cultural interest. All the parents who replied to the questionnaire expressed satisfaction with the boarding provision.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 The proprietor of the school is also its principal, and so he is responsible not only for leadership and management but also for what would otherwise be the remit of a governing body. Effective oversight of educational standards; financial planning; investment in staff, accommodation and resources, apart from library and ICT provision; and child protection, safeguarding, health and safety are exercised. His vision is succinctly encapsulated in the school's stated aims. An advisory board lends its professional expertise, as required, to various aspects of school life. The development plan for the forthcoming year is practical and realistic. As to longer-term strategy, the proprietor's intentions for the development of the school, while not contained in a formal document, are shared with senior colleagues. There is a clear sense that high standards are expected in all aspects of school life, with a special emphasis on academic performance and pastoral care.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

5.2 The overall quality of leadership and management is good, with a number of excellent features. As the school is small and the proprietor is also the principal, lines of communication from senior management down are direct and uncomplicated. Priorities and expectations are clearly communicated to all staff, some of whom would like to have a greater input before decisions are taken. Senior staff are approachable and accessible: they have a highly visible presence around the school. The day-to-day administration of the senior school is efficient and effective. The prep school is run with a considerable degree of autonomy. It is strongly and energetically led, with clarity of vision.

5.3 Meetings of the senior management team focus strongly on the general well-being and academic prospects of individual pupils, with staff displaying a close knowledge of, and a lively concern for, their charges. Senior school curriculum planning is kept under review, as is the teaching timetable, which is flexible enough to be altered according to the pupils' needs. Senior management also keeps policies under regular scrutiny, paying special attention to those which pertain to child protection, safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. At middle management level, the academic and pastoral interests of the pupils are extremely well catered for through frequent formal and informal meetings, with supportive action being taken as appropriate.

5.4 The school monitors staff performance in varied ways, including lesson observation by senior colleagues; a review of examination results; and annual questionnaires completed by the pupils, the outcomes of which are discussed with the teachers to whom they apply. The programme of staff professional development is not, however, consistently applied to all staff and it lacks a holistic element, bringing all the threads together. Staff in-service training covers the requisite areas of responsibility and the school fully complies with the regulations regarding checking the suitability of staff. In this intimate community, non-teaching staff have a very good relationship with the pupils, who find them sympathetic and supportive.

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

- 5.5 The school enjoys an excellent relationship with the parents, who are very pleased with the progress made by their children and are satisfied with the information which they are given about it. They receive not only detailed and constructive termly reports, but also briefer interim reports which are timed to form the basis for discussion at parents' evenings: these are held at least annually for all year groups. It is made clear to parents that they are welcome to discuss matters of concern, academic or otherwise, at any time.
- 5.6 Information for parents of prospective, new and current pupils is thorough and helpful. The parents' handbook, the boarders' parents' handbook and the prep school curriculum handbook are usefully informative, as is the school website. The colourful termly newsletter and the more frequent prep school newsletter are complemented by the principal's letter at the beginning and end of every term. Most parents are well known to senior staff, who make it their business to be available when parents come to the school at the beginning and end of the day. Prep school parents collecting their children were full of praise for the education which their sons and daughters receive.
- 5.7 A significant minority of the parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school did not encourage them to be involved in its life and work, but this was not borne out by inspection evidence in the senior school and the prep school. They are actively encouraged to join the parents' association and to come to school events, and indeed attendance at plays and concerts has increased in recent years. The parents' association supports the school in various ways, organising social events and fund-raising activities, such as the Christmas and summer fairs and theatre trips. Monies raised by the association are split between chosen charities and the purchase of 'extras' for the school. Prep school coffee mornings afford parents the opportunity to socialise with staff.
- 5.8 Parents feel that they can communicate easily with the school, that concerns are handled well and that they receive timely responses to questions. They are overwhelmingly positive about the education that their children receive.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good. A high adult/child ratio ensures that the children's needs are well met, and staff promote a happy, secure environment. Children thrive and flourish within a family atmosphere because they are well supported by the caring adults. Staff have recently re-evaluated and reorganised the provision and their planning to allow for free-flow activity between Reception and Nursery children.

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

6.2 Good leadership and management of the setting ensure a secure environment where safeguarding procedures are effective. The well-qualified staff give each child an equal opportunity to succeed. Policies to promote equality and eliminate discrimination are strongly implemented. Resources are used well and accessible to children. Links with parents are good and they are very happy with the education their children receive, although opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning are limited. Strong links with the local authority provide many opportunities for training and assist staff in evaluating their setting and moving it forward. A consistent staff appraisal system throughout the setting is not in place.

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

6.3 Provision is good with outstanding elements. A welcoming and stimulating indoor environment incorporates every area of learning, although provision in the outdoor environment is limited. The setting now operates as one unit where nursery and reception children interact and choose their own activities. Staff plan together and careful organisation ensures that children are suitably challenged in each area of learning, but written planning for individuals is not routine. Staff give children many opportunities to develop their thinking, imagination and creativity and to talk about what they have done. Adult-led and child-initiated learning are appropriately balanced. Children also benefit from specialist teaching in physical education, music and dance. There are limited opportunities for children to use ICT. Teaching is always good and sometimes outstanding. Staff promote the health and welfare of children effectively at all times. Risk assessment is thorough and ongoing. Children are well supervised at lunchtimes and encouraged to have good table manners.

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

6.4 Outcomes for children are good with outstanding features, in particular their behaviour, their independence, and their interaction. They are enthusiastic, happy and independent learners who progress well in relation to their starting points and begin to develop skills for the future. They speak confidently and articulately and develop reasoning skills. They respect and help each other. Reception children write their own sentences and attempt to spell words independently; they can count to ten and write their numerals correctly. They use language such as 'half-full' and 'half-empty' when experimenting with their water tray. Nursery children can order

things according to size in their 'Three Bears' role play and use language such as 'bigger than' and 'smaller than'. When sharing a book they take turns in being the storyteller. During an impromptu performance of a 'Three Bears' puppet show, those in the audience listened attentively to their puppeteer peers. Their understanding of the wider world is clearly demonstrated through their role play and activities and enhanced by the visitors they have. They make choices and decisions throughout their day. Behaviour is excellent because children know what is expected of them. They understand the importance of keeping safe, eating healthily and maintaining good hygiene. Lunchtimes demonstrate their growing independence and their good manners.

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 and other members of staff and with the principal, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding accommodation and 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 Paul Spillane	Reporting Inspector
Mr Neil Boulton	Director of Academic Administration, HMC school
Mr John Connor	Head, ISA school
Dr Pam Hillier	Head of Department, GSA school
Mr Ian McDonough	Senior Teacher, SHMIS school
Mrs Bridget Forrest	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector