

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

RICHMOND HOUSE SCHOOL

By the

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

(ISI)

On

2nd – 5th June 2008

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Richmond House School

Full Name of the School	Richmond House School
DCSF Number	383/6004
Registered Charity Number	505630
Address	168-172 Otley Road, Far Headingley, Leeds LS16 5LG.
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Headmistress	Mrs Jane Disley
Chair of Governors	Mr Darren Stubbs
Age Range	3 to 11
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	2nd – 5th June 2008

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

1.1 Richmond House School was founded in 1935 for boys and girls from three to eleven years of age. Originally privately owned, the school has been administered by a limited company and charitable trust since 1989 and has been managed by a governing body since that time. The governors are trustees of the school. The school's mission is to foster pupils' academic and personal development in a challenging, caring and happy environment that enables all to achieve their full potential. The school believes that it is every child's right to experience a childhood in which they are happy to learn, play, care and achieve.

1.2 The school is situated in the Headingley area of Leeds, in a varied suite of buildings. The ten acre site includes seven acres of sports facilities adjacent to the main buildings. The school has a Christian foundation but welcomes pupils from other faiths and a range of cultures. Almost all pupils live within a radius of eight miles of the school.

1.3 Significant changes have taken place in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. Members of the senior team, comprising the headmistress, the deputy head, the assistant head and the bursar, have been appointed since that time. The deputy head and assistant head joined the school at the beginning of the 2007-2008 academic year. The headmistress joined the school at the beginning of the Summer Term, 2008.

1.4 The school roll totals 257 pupils. In the Nursery and Reception classes there are 34 boys and 29 girls; 46 of these pupils attend full time and 17 on a part-time basis. Within the Lower School (Years 1 and 2) are 63 pupils, of whom 32 are boys and 31 girls. The Upper School (Years 3 to 6) has 131 pupils on roll, comprising 81 boys and 50 girls.

1.5 The main point of pupils' entry to the school is the Nursery. Pupils are admitted to later year groups if places are available. Prior to Nursery admission, children visit the school with their parents and spend a short time with the other children in the unit. Pupils requesting admission to the Lower and Upper Schools spend either a half or a full day at the school, completing English and mathematics tasks in the classroom and meeting other pupils. Offer of a place is dependent upon the results of this day, discussions with the headmistress and reports from previous schools.

1.6 The school caters for a wide range of ability. The results of standardised tests administered throughout the Lower and Upper Schools indicate that the overall ability profile of the school is above the national average. The school has identified fifteen pupils as requiring assistance for learning difficulties. One pupil, who is funded by the local authority, has a statement of special educational need. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are fluent in English.

1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

2.1 The educational opportunities provided by the school are consistent with its philosophy and support the rapid progress it is making in its desire to foster academic and personal development in a challenging, caring, happy environment that enables all pupils to achieve their potential. The high quality of provision identified at the last inspection has been maintained. The variety of experiences offered suits the needs, interests and aptitudes of almost all pupils. Modern languages provision is in the process of revision in order to make it accessible to a wider age range of pupils. A new programme is being implemented to ensure that all the most able pupils and all those with learning difficulties have work adapted to their specific needs.

2.2 The school has progressed suitably since the last inspection. Improved provision for Nursery and Reception children has extended their outdoor activities. The expansion of the curriculum and increased resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have widened opportunities for pupils' learning. A new personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme effectively supports the school's aim that pupils understand and respect each other's views. Increasing the range of class visits has further enriched learning and the effective use of the enlarged physical education (PE) facilities has enhanced games provision.

2.3 Pupils' learning is supported effectively by a well-planned curriculum, which covers all areas of educational experience and incorporates elements of the National Curriculum. In particular, the high quality physical, creative and aesthetic education opportunities significantly contribute to pupils' acquisition and application of these skills. Senior managers are aware that the high proportion of time allocated to sport restricts the possibility of further developing subjects such as ICT. A review of curriculum coverage is contained in the school plan.

2.4 The considerable emphasis placed upon the importance of effective literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum results in articulate and competent pupils who discuss their work confidently and write fluently about the subjects they study. Throughout the school, pupils are provided with opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge. For example, pupils are encouraged to use their knowledge of constructing various types of graphs to record the results of science experiments at levels appropriate to their ages. The expanding use of technology enables pupils to increase and apply their skills. In many lessons pupils are encouraged to present their findings using the interactive whiteboards, which they handle competently.

2.5 The well-planned PSHE programme, established since the last inspection, underpins school aims, extends pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles, increases their knowledge of what citizenship means and raises their awareness of personal safety. In support of its aim to raise pupils' awareness of healthy living, the school provides opportunities for them to be involved in personal fitness sessions at a university sports centre. Through the school council, pupils monitor school menus and have recently had their ideas for a pasta bar included on the daily menu. General discussions on health are linked to the British Heart Foundation 'Jump Rope for Heart' fitness appeal, which is strongly supported by the school. Since the last inspection, the school has achieved the 'Gold Active' status in the 'Sport England' award for its commitment to PE, and for promoting a healthy lifestyle.

2.6 Through discussion at levels appropriate to their ages, pupils are supported well as they establish successful personal relationships. The wide range of charities pupils choose to support helps them appreciate the needs of the community and the work of those who care for others.

2.7 Pupils are very well prepared for each stage of their education. Their transfer from one section of the school to another is handled sensitively. The well-established procedures, which include daily links and detailed discussion among staff concerning pupils' progress, ensure that each transition is smooth. Year 6 pupils are prepared thoroughly, both academically and socially, for entrance to senior schools and speak confidently about the next stage of their learning.

2.8 Throughout the school, detailed curriculum planning for the short, medium and long term demonstrates the wide range of activities that enrich learning across all ages. In order to fully meet its aim that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum, the school is implementing measures to ensure that all pupils who leave lessons for specialist tuition have the opportunity to go over the work missed.

2.9 The excellent variety of curriculum visits and workshops for pupils of all ages, and the interesting talks and demonstrations by visitors to the school, add exciting extensions to classroom learning. They expand pupils' knowledge and enable them to apply their learning. For example, watching a theatrical performance about Florence Nightingale helped pupils in Year 2 to increase their understanding of her work and life. The historical skills and knowledge of Year 4 pupils were expanded when they became Anglo-Saxons for the day. Whilst visiting the local water plant, Year 5 extended their understanding of how water and sewage are treated. Scientific learning came to life for older pupils during a visit to the science museum where they experimented with models and tested various processes.

2.10 A range of after-school activities such as the Mandarin, computer and chess clubs challenge pupils intellectually. Pupils' creative talents are nurtured in the environmental club, the choirs, the orchestra, ensembles and bands, and the art club. Provision for drama is thoroughly enjoyed by pupils who talked animatedly of their contributions to annual performances in acting roles, creating scenery, managing lighting, designing costumes and helping with front of house roles. Pupils' physical development is extremely well catered for in the wide range of activities available both during and outside lesson time.

2.11 Pupils who require significant learning support receive individual specialist tuition which is matched well to their individual needs. The quality of support varies for pupils who require assistance during class lessons. When the detailed guidance provided by learning support teachers is applied well, pupils are challenged at levels appropriate to their needs, as in a Year 6 ICT lesson. As a result, all pupils solved a problem concerning spreadsheets and the application of formulas and all made rapid progress. When such guidance is not used as effectively, the progress pupils make, although satisfactory, is slower. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are fluent and require little assistance. Requirements for any pupils with a statement of special educational needs are met suitably and with great sensitivity.

2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

2.13 Pupils are well educated and, as at the last inspection, continue to achieve high standards in many areas, especially music, art, design technology (DT) and PE. Pupils apply their learning effectively and are, overall, thoroughly grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects studied. A strong emphasis is given to encouraging pupils to organise their work, especially in creative subjects. Pupils are attentive: they work steadily and concentrate well, contribute positively during lessons and listen carefully to each other's views. As a result, the school achieves its aim to balance academic standards with developing in pupils a responsible, independent attitude towards work and a respect for each other's views.

2.14 Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in increasing pupils' ability to use ICT skills effectively. The expanding activities programme has significantly enhanced opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and learning in a wide-range of situations.

2.15 Pupils of all ages are highly articulate. Nursery children chatter animatedly to each other and to adults, increasing their grasp of sentence structure and vocabulary. Contributing confidently to a discussion on diary writing in relation to their study of Samuel Pepys, pupils in Year 2 demonstrated the breadth of their knowledge, their growing vocabularies and their ability to explain their thoughts clearly. Upper School pupils read aloud fluently and with expression in a range of subjects and situations. Pupils are effective listeners and follow instructions carefully. Over time pupils' written work progresses well, from the clear, neat, correctly sequenced text and imaginative nature poetry of Year 2 pupils, to the varied work of Year 5 pupils, especially their persuasive and well-structured letters to the local council concerning recycling. In each section of the school, solid foundations are laid for pupils' future needs.

2.16 Pupils of all ages enjoy using information technology. They research information competently using the internet. A recent Year 6 project involving control technology resulted in the design of alarms for a model house. When asked how they could apply this learning, a pupil described accurately how he would use his skill and knowledge to devise an alarm to prevent his sister entering his bedroom. Older pupils applied a range of skills to prepare a presentation for their class and used the interactive whiteboard to present their finished project.

2.17 Across the school, pupils use their mathematical knowledge to support their learning. For example, the detailed graphs and tables constructed by Year 5 pupils to record world climates demonstrate their ability to transfer their mathematical knowledge competently to a different subject. The work pupils complete over time shows few examples of the use and application of investigative and problem-solving skills in mathematics and science, particularly in the Upper School. Subject co-ordinators are aware these skills require improvement.

2.18 Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and evaluate their work. Year 2 pupils spoke authoritatively about their castle models. They described where they had succeeded, the problems they encountered and how they would improve the models if they undertook the task a second time. Year 5 pupils, whilst involved with their DT project, worked independently and sustained their concentration as they applied their knowledge of creating circuits, soldering and sawing to produce computer generated graphics. They evaluated their progress competently.

2.19 As at the time of the previous inspection, no significant differences in attainment are evident between groups of pupils or subjects across the school. The pupils for whom English is a second language are fluent and able, and progress according to their ability. The Foundation Stage profiles indicate that the children make rapid progress in attaining the goals required to successfully complete this stage of learning. Year 6 pupils are extremely well prepared and very successful in gaining places at senior schools of their choice, many of which are selective.

2.20 An extensive range of team and individual achievements by the girls Under 11 netball team includes first place in the Leeds netball tournament and runners up for two consecutive years in their school's association national finals. Upper School pupils represent Yorkshire at cricket, athletics and badminton, and a number of pupils play for Leeds City Boys football team.

2.21 During the inspection, three pupils learned that they had been selected from 15,000 entries in a national competition to find the best book reviews and that their work had been published.

2.22 An annual musical production is eagerly anticipated by pupils. Pupils at all levels of expertise work extremely well together in the orchestra to create an exciting, living sound. A good number of older pupils are chosen annually to appear in major productions by Opera North, some being performed locally and others that tour the North of England. Individual proficiency in instrumental and vocal skills has increased since the last inspection, with pupils achieving many examination successes.

2.23 Pupils of all ages manage themselves well. Nursery children collect and return their toys to the appropriate place. Lower School pupils plan and present their work and follow their teachers' directions accurately. Upper School pupils perform their tasks competently. For example, Year 5 pupils gathered the materials they required, drafted and re-drafted their ideas, settled to their tasks and completed their story-writing quickly and quietly. Pupils contribute effectively in group situations. When playing in groups, Nursery children share fairly and take turns appropriately. Whilst working in pairs, Year 3 pupils noted their findings, organised them into the correct order and shared them confidently with the group. Upper School pupils listen to each other's contributions respectfully. During the many team sport activities, pupils excel individually but also acknowledge the need to work as a team, sharing skills and planning moves together. Throughout the school the pupils clearly enjoy their work.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

2.24 The high quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, maintained since the last inspection, reflects the happy yet respectful relationships and the strong sense of community that are prevalent throughout the school. The school achieves its aim to build a caring and social community of happy, hard-working young people, and to cultivate friendly, self-reliant and self-confident pupils who appreciate and understand the needs of others and are aware of the effect their own actions have on those around them.

2.25 Pupils develop well spiritually. They speak clearly about what they and others hold important in their lives. Pupils respect and understand different faith systems at levels appropriate to their ages. Their growing knowledge and insight are assisted by visits to places of worship, such as the mosque, synagogue and local churches, through visits to the school by representatives of local faiths and through their religious education studies. Whilst comparing synagogues with Baptist churches, Year 4 pupils asked questions that were focussed and sensitive in relation to the importance of different artefacts to each religion.

2.26 Pupils share personal ideas and insights confidently and reflect carefully on their values and the values of others. In discussion and in quiet times, especially when exploring themes in assembly, pupils learn to understand what lies beneath their actions. Pupils explore their responses to music and art. This stimulates total involvement in their studies and develops their appreciation of the different levels of their response in each subject. Pupils of all ages are at ease as they discuss personal values confidently, due to the caring encouragement of their teachers and because they feel valued members of the school community.

2.27 Pupils' moral awareness is high. Pupils of all ages distinguish clearly between right and wrong. Senior pupils speak articulately and with pride about the sense of trust, responsibility, independence and confidence they have gained as school officers. A recent debate on homework, led by Year 6 pupils, demonstrated their understanding of its purpose and of how important it was for them to achieve a good balance between work and recreation whilst at home.

2.28 Pupils' growing sense of moral responsibility expands during their charitable work. Following a visit to a shelter for the homeless to deliver provisions, the head boy and girl explained to the school how the shelter worked and what the needs were of those who used it. Pupils' growing understanding of world need is reflected in their strong support for a school and an orphanage in Africa. School council members organised the recent successful charitable challenge day to raise funds for each of these institutions.

2.29 Pupils' effective contributions to debates on carbon foot printing, recycling, climate change and personal relationships reflect their depth of understanding of these issues. Pupils have a sound understanding of the contributions community personnel make to the locality. Older pupils have a growing sense of justice, and an understanding of how the wider community functions and the part they can play in it.

2.30 The high quality of pupils' social development is evident in their happy and relaxed relationships, their tolerance, patience and respect for views different from their own, and the extensive friendships between pupils of all ages. The older pupils display their well-developed social skills in a sensitive manner toward their younger counterparts in the playground when they act as friendship monitors, and during lunchtime when they help anyone in difficulty. They encourage others to resolve their differences amicably before referring intractable matters to a member of staff.

2.31 Across the school, relationships between pupils of all ages are good. Members of the school council, elected by their peers, perform their duties well, voice pupil concerns effectively and feel their views are respected. House captains, sports captains, monitors, the head boy and the head girl discuss their roles eloquently. Pupils are proud of their school, and the many monitors of all ages perform their duties competently. Pupils co-operate effectively within the popular house system. The rewards for good work and behaviour are eagerly sought and pupils are pleased for those in their house who achieve success.

2.32 Pupils apply their highly developed social skills effectively. Their grasp of social courtesies is evident when they host match teas, welcome visitors to the school or act as hosts at concerts and performances. The Year 3 residential visit to Hadrian's Wall and the Year 4 and 5 outdoor activity visits to Winmarleigh Hall and to Edale offer pupils the opportunity to contribute to a larger group, sharing and completing tasks together.

2.33 Pupils' cultural awareness is extremely well developed. Pupils of all ages have knowledge of, and respect for, their own and other cultures within their locality and the wider world. Nursery children's colourful and imaginative work on Chinese New Year was enhanced by their celebration of the festival which enabled them to experience Chinese art and music at first hand. When experiencing and exploring a range of African art and cultures with a visiting artist, pupils of all ages extended and enriched their knowledge of African traditions. Pupils developed their culinary tastes, extended their musical repertoire and increased their awareness of South American fashion during a Mexican morning, in which Mexican cooking was extremely popular.

2.34 Pupils' growing understanding of, and positive attitudes toward, the differences and similarities between lifestyles and traditions within their communities are enriched through participation in a range of 'Culture Days'. During a recent 'India Day' parents shared their knowledge of India, its customs and lifestyles. Pupils and visitors made Indian sweets, took part in basket weaving and block printing, and learnt how to wear a sari.

2.35 Throughout the school, pupils have extensive knowledge of their local cultures across different historical periods, inspired by the exciting workshops and visits they undertake, such as the Tudor workshop and the Victorian school, as part of their studies.

2.36 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

2.37 As at the last inspection, teaching makes a major contribution to pupils' achievement and progress. In line with school aims, teachers encourage pupils to develop responsible attitudes towards work and to be tolerant and understanding of others. Teaching is predominantly of a high quality. Variations exist across the school in the recording and use of assessment and in the quality of marking in pupils' books. Senior managers have identified these inconsistencies and a review of this area is underway. Since the last inspection the quality of lesson planning has significantly improved and, following specific training, teachers make more effective use of ICT, especially of the new interactive whiteboards.

2.38 Teaching enables pupils to increase their knowledge and make progress. In the best, fast-moving, lessons teachers expect and receive high standards and concentrated input from pupils. Pupils are challenged to solve problems at levels appropriate to their ability, which stimulates them to achieve. Due to the challenging demands made in PE, music and ICT lessons, all pupils, especially the more able, rapidly increase their skills and capacity to reason. In less challenging lessons, all pupils are presented with the same tasks, which do not sufficiently challenge the most able. When the detailed advice of learning support staff is used effectively, teachers ensure pupils with learning difficulties achieve and make progress. On the occasions when such guidance is not used as effectively, pupils' acquisition of knowledge and progress is slower. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are fluent in English; however teachers are careful to ensure they understand idiomatic English and any unfamiliar vocabulary.

2.39 High quality and dynamic teaching fosters in pupils considerable intellectual, creative and physical effort. As a result an extremely large number of pupils clearly enjoy participating in literacy competitions, musical performances, dramatic productions, art exhibitions and sporting challenges. Such teaching captures pupils' interest and successfully challenges them to improve their techniques and apply their learning.

2.40 The detail and format of lesson planning have significantly improved since the last inspection. Nursery and Reception plans demonstrate provision of a wide range of experiences to interest and engage children. In the Lower and Upper Schools, planning identifies the skills and knowledge to be covered, the activities to be used and how pupils' progress is to be assessed. Lesson plans show clearly how to ensure the time allocated is appropriate to the task. In a few less successful lessons, teachers do not follow their planning accurately and, because they talk for too long, pupils have insufficient time to complete their tasks.

2.41 Teachers' planning shows application of a range of approaches to engage pupils in their learning. The ever-changing Nursery and Reception activities, together with the constant praise, encouragement and good humour of staff, result in thriving, well-behaved pupils who love learning and enjoy everything they do. Rewards and house points, that acknowledge responsible behaviour as well as good work, are used well to motivate pupils in the Lower and Upper Schools to constantly improve work and behaviour. Excellent use is made of visits and workshops in all areas of the curriculum to expand and enrich pupils' learning. Extremely good use is made of highly competent classroom assistants whose plans show the effectiveness of their contribution to class life.

2.42 The constant interaction between Nursery children and staff shows clearly how well the staff know, understand and adapt their approach to each child's needs. In PE lessons, teachers' extensive knowledge of their pupils is used to prepare tasks that build upon skills and techniques mastered previously. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils' prior knowledge of tables was used effectively as a foundation for more challenging questions. During a Year 3 lesson, the teacher's knowledge of pupils' personalities led to persuasive encouragement that enabled all to participate and enjoy their discussion. When presented with individual challenges that built upon previous knowledge, Year 6 pupils' critical and creative responses raised the standard of their singing.

2.43 The extensive knowledge Nursery and Reception staff have of this stage of development contributes to the rapid progress the children make. Teachers in the Lower and Upper Schools have a comprehensive knowledge of the subjects taught. Specialist staff have an especially strong grasp of their subject. They transmit their enthusiasm for their subject to pupils, who, as a result, also love the subject and are keen to expand their knowledge both inside and outside of the classroom. Resources are adequate in quality and quantity and used effectively by staff to support learning.

2.44 Inconsistencies exist in the quality and use of assessment. Nursery and Reception assessments are recorded well and used effectively to plan co-operatively and adapt provision to meet children's needs. Assessments in the Lower and Upper Schools grade pupils, measure attainment and monitor progress in the subjects studied and, in some areas, adapt learning as required. Assessment results are filed appropriately but use of the information varies. Senior staff analyse the results of standardised tests throughout the school and, should a pupil's results raise concerns, they are referred to specialist support staff. In subjects such as PE detailed assessment information, and the use made of this to plan learning, are recorded well. In areas such as DT, art and music, teachers explain clearly how they use assessment information to adapt learning to meet pupils' needs; however they do not record this information.

2.45 Teachers partially achieve the school aim to offer constructive and positive comments when marking work. When work is marked alongside pupils, as in the Lower School, helpful comments assist pupils to improve. In the Upper School fewer examples are evident of detailed marking that promotes progress and identifies strengths in pupils' work. Senior managers are preparing new procedures to improve the quality and use of assessment systems, including marking.

2.46 The school utilises a range of standardised tests to measure attainment in mathematics and English. Plans are in place to make increased use of such systems in order to evaluate pupils' performance and progress over time.

2.47 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

3.1 The extremely high standard of pastoral care, noted at the last inspection, has been maintained. Throughout the school, happy pupils are cared for effectively by staff who are supported by clear management structures and comprehensive guidance and direction, much of which has recently been revised. The quality of academic and personal assistance given to pupils enables the school to achieve its aim to provide a caring, friendly and safe environment for them all, so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Comprehensive arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are of a high quality.

3.2 Considerable progress has taken place since the last inspection. The introduction of new pastoral systems and of a well-constructed PSHE programme, as well as development of the school council have significantly improved the opportunities for pupils to discuss a range of issues pertinent to them.

3.3 Throughout the school, the teachers use their extensive knowledge of the pupils in their care to offer specific personal guidance as and when required and to alert other staff to the pastoral needs of individual pupils. The sense of security and confidence displayed by Nursery and Reception children is evidence of the high quality of individualised care they receive from staff who know and understand them very well. Pupils use a new 'worry box' effectively to record any matters of immediate concern, knowing they will receive support. The efficient use of the home-school diary in the Lower and Upper Schools alerts parents and staff to issues of immediate concern, enabling each to react speedily to pupils' needs and ensure they receive maximum support.

3.4 Teachers are guided well in the provision of high quality pastoral care by new structures that enable pastoral concerns of all types to be dealt with swiftly and efficiently. Daily concerns are shared during morning staff briefings. All staff meetings include a section on pastoral care for updating and reviewing the effectiveness of provision. This informs all staff as to which pupils require help, what form the help will take and how they can contribute. Senior managers are introducing methods by which the valuable and ongoing daily guidance offered to pupils by form teachers can be recorded and monitored.

3.5 Pupil files contain helpful information on academic performance, assessment results and, if relevant, specific needs. Centrally stored files contain information on medical needs which is shared with the relevant staff. During a recent analysis of pastoral structures, senior managers decided to include pastoral information and information about non-academic achievement, as well as assessment results, in pupils' files.

3.6 The family atmosphere of the school contributes effectively to the strong relationships and mutual respect between members young and old. Pupils realise that their teachers want the best for them so they respond positively. The effectiveness of provision is underscored by the comments of pupils that this is a very happy school.

3.7 A new range of procedures, appropriate to the ages of pupils, effectively promotes good discipline and behaviour. As a result pupils remain, as at the last inspection, polite and well behaved. In conversation, pupils of all ages say that little unacceptable behaviour or bullying occurs. They know what bullying is and what to do should they experience bullying of any sort.

They are confident that, should it occur, matters would be dealt with speedily. Throughout the school, pupils understand and approve of the new sanctions policy, which they say is administered fairly. Pupils understand the systems that reward their academic success and contributions to school life. They are keen to achieve certificates, merits and house points.

3.8 The thorough documentation and procedures for child protection, in accordance with local procedures and understood by staff, are agreed by governors who place a high priority on the training of all personnel, including themselves, in safeguarding children. Productive working relationships exist between the school and local area agencies. Suitable measures are taken regarding the appointment of staff.

3.9 Appropriate measures are in place to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. They are suitably implemented and regularly monitored. Comprehensive risk assessments, conducted annually, alert the school to areas requiring attention. This advice is recorded accurately and dealt with in order of priority.

3.10 The school has due regard for health and safety statutory obligations. Provision is monitored regularly. Any routine health and safety issues are dealt with efficiently. The risk assessments and health and safety requirements for school visits are thorough and recorded appropriately. An extensive sports programme and healthy living activities extend pupils' knowledge of personal fitness, good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. The school council meet with catering staff to decide upon healthy choices on the daily menu.

3.11 Pupils are cared for well when ill in designated medical accommodation, and the administration of medicines is extremely well supervised. Accident books are up-to-date and accessible. A number of staff have suitable first-aid qualifications. Accessibility strategies show how the school plans to increase provision for pupils with varying disability requirements.

3.12 Electronic attendance registers are accurate. Absences are followed up quickly and records kept of each conversation with parents regarding these. Attendance is good and pupils arrive on time each morning. New admissions to the school are recorded correctly using electronic systems and copies of the register are kept for the required period of time.

3.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

3.14 The school has maintained the well-established, effective links with parents identified at the last inspection. The productive relationships between school and home have a positive impact on the work and progress of pupils and contribute towards the school's success in achieving its aim to work in partnership with parents. The growing links between the school and wider community successfully increase pupils' awareness of their locality and their world. The highly encouraging responses of parents to the questionnaire, completed prior to the inspection, indicate their satisfaction with the school. The parents' appreciation of staff and the range of activities offered by the school demonstrate the strength of their support. A large number of parents commented on the school being a "happy" place and praised the high quality of pastoral care, facts supported by inspection findings. Also mentioned with approval were the new behaviour policies and the accessibility of teachers. Parents who were fairly new to the school made specific comments about the rapid progress their children made since joining.

3.15 A number of parents expressed the view that the annual parents' meeting was insufficient to inform them of their child's progress. Inspection findings do not support these views, as the school welcomes parents making individual appointments with teachers, to discuss their child's progress, as required. A number of parents commented on the limited information they received if their child was experiencing learning difficulties. The inspection found that, in support of parental comments and in accordance with past policy, parents were not informed when their child was found to have a learning difficulty. New procedures now involve informing parents as soon as their child experiences a difficulty that is affecting progress.

3.16 The opportunities for parents to be involved in school activities are good and have increased since the last inspection. The regular contact between parents and teachers of Nursery and Reception children ensures they share information daily. Parents of younger pupils assist them with reading and spelling activities at home in support of their school work. Effective use of the home-school diary by older pupils offers useful contact between home and school. Parents have little involvement during the school day; however their extensive contribution to school outings, visits to places of interest, concerts and to special days, enriches the provision for pupils of all ages and is valued by staff. Links between home and school are further strengthened by the presence of parents on school residential visits. Pupils have benefited from talks by parents in professions such as dentistry and from illustrated talks about cultures other than their own.

3.17 The active parents' association is highly supportive of the school. Its successful activities foster good relations between parents and staff. The considerable fund-raising undertaken by parents is used to purchase equipment that adds different dimensions to pupils' learning and pupils' chosen charities.

3.18 Parents of present and prospective pupils are guided by useful information that provides a comprehensive view of school life. The prospectus inserts are constantly updated. The revised parent handbook assists parents to understand how the school functions, whom to contact for various matters and what is expected of them and their children. The weekly, informative newsletter reminds parents of diary dates and offers news of recent events and successes. The school website, currently under revision, includes details of the curriculum pupils cover each term, thus assisting parents in guiding their child with research.

3.19 When pupils move between different stages of education, such as Nursery to Reception or from Year 6 to senior school, the good quality guidance received by parents enables them to understand the standards and needs of each stage. The quality of academic reports to parents is good overall. Comprehensive Nursery and Reception class reports contain the information parents require for their children at this stage of learning. Almost all reports in the Lower and Upper Schools state clearly what a pupil knows and can do, and most offer clear targets to help pupils improve their performance. A few reports do not provide the same quality of information. The school is presently working on ensuring all reports are of a high quality.

3.20 The school handles parental concerns with due care and the complaints procedure is available to parents on request. Parents indicated that the school deals with minor matters speedily. Should concerns require further discussion, the school procedures are followed correctly.

3.21 The positive links with the wider community have increased since the last inspection. The school is devising plans to further extend such links. Sharing facilities such as the bowling green and sports fields with local organisations has considerably enhanced community relationships.

Children in the locality benefit from the facilities offered by Summer holiday clubs and Richmond House pupils extend their contacts in the area when attending the clubs.

3.22 Through active participation in a wide range of local and national charities, music, speech and sports events, the neighbourhood horticultural show and, further afield, a range of national competitions, pupils' skills and talents are widely showcased. Pupils increase their understanding of the global need to share through their links with the wider world, such as their strong support of an orphanage and of a school named after Richmond House in Africa.

3.23 The school is working hard to extend its links with a local university. Pupils benefit from the skills of students who visit regularly. During 'Health Week', pupils participate in a range of activities in the university sports facility. The growing links with local public services expand pupils' understanding of citizenship. Following a Year 6 parliamentary style debate, attended by the local Member of Parliament, pupils' knowledge and understanding of parliamentary procedures and affairs grew. Their local Member of Parliament explained to pupils how the House of Commons works. Nursery and Reception staff established useful contacts with local authority personnel for this stage of learning and share in local training provision.

3.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

4.1 As at the last inspection, the school is well governed. The governors seek all round excellence and, in consultation with senior managers, set appropriate aims. The governors advise, guide, support and work alongside senior managers, promoting their shared vision for the future growth of the school. Governors achieve their desire to maintain a prudent financial policy and ensure the school fosters academic and personal development in a caring environment. Since the last inspection, significant changes in the composition and structure of the governing body have considerably increased their role in school life. Governors oversee the school effectively; they know what is successful and what requires development.

4.2 Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities, guided by a detailed and informative handbook. They effectively link the school plan with their business plan. The productive working relationships between governors and bursar support efficient financial planning. As a result, specialist teaching, Nursery provision and resources throughout the school have increased since the last inspection.

4.3 Effective communication channels and productive interaction with senior managers, in addition to regular school visits and conversations with staff and pupils, ensure the governors' view of school life is broad and well informed. Governors use their skills suitably to support the school, particularly in areas such as health and safety, education, finance, law and buildings. Governors strongly support staff training throughout the school.

4.4 Designated governors are vigilant in their oversight of health and safety provision and child protection, ensuring training and documentation are updated as required.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

4.5 The school has undergone significant leadership and management changes since the previous inspection. In the last year a bursar, two deputy heads and, just prior to the inspection, a new headmistress, have been appointed. The dynamic, skilled and well-informed leadership of the headmistress, strongly supported by the senior team, is motivating all to aim high. The senior team's clear direction and high expectations, reflected by staff, have established a renewed stability and a strong desire to achieve. As a result the school is making swift progress toward accomplishing its mission to enable all pupils to achieve their potential. The proficient management of the senior team ensures the school functions efficiently, pupils are well educated and cared for, and staff are encouraged to develop their expertise. Leadership of the Nursery and Lower School offers clear educational direction and, with the Upper School, ensures the effective care of pupils.

4.6 Variable success has been achieved in meeting the recommendations of the previous inspection. Consistency in coverage of the curriculum has significantly improved due to better planning. Inconsistencies in the quality of subject leadership and management remain, and the monitoring aspect of co-ordinators' roles is still under-developed.

4.7 New school policies promote school aims and are relevant to school needs. An astute and rigorous analysis of school practice informed the senior team of areas of strength and where further development is required. The clear, detailed school plan lists priorities, and decisions regarding implementation are made efficiently.

Nursery and Lower School leaders manage effectively, analyse needs carefully, consult with staff on implementing plans, and document their work. A recent review of learning support systems has resulted in the implementation of new structures to improve provision in this area across the school. The quality of subject leadership and management varies. When efficient, as in PE and ICT, coordinators develop their subjects, produce high-quality documentation, understand their roles, monitor their subjects, offer strong leadership and manage effectively. In many subjects the lack of monitoring by co-ordinators leads to inconsistencies in the quality of subject documentation, teachers' planning, standards and marking. The senior team know that the skills of some co-ordinators and the monitoring aspect of subject management require development.

4.8 A range of well-qualified, capable, experienced and committed staff extend their skills through a programme of staff development. The staff handbook contains comprehensive guidance for staff. All staff and governors undergo appropriate checks prior to appointment. The school subscribes to the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers but none are employed at present.

4.9 Efficient financial management has improved facilities for the educational and personal benefit of pupils. Subject co-ordinators manage resources suitably and ensure teaching and learning needs are met. Imaginative use is made of buildings and the updating of many facilities since the last inspection has enhanced pupils' learning.

4.10 The extremely efficient administration of the school ensures systems run smoothly throughout. The contributions of catering and maintenance staff are invaluable in ensuring pupils are provided for extremely well throughout the school day.

4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Within a flourishing, happy and extremely caring community, well-educated pupils achieve high standards. The dynamic and strong school leadership, supported by efficient senior management, active and informed governance and well-organised section managers, is moving this school forward. Swift progress is being made toward meeting the school aim that all pupils achieve their potential in relation to their ability. High-quality teaching and a purposeful working atmosphere in lessons nurture competent, confident and independent learners. An excellent range of activities enables pupils to apply their learning in exciting and challenging ways. Confident and secure pupils are well prepared as they move forward on their educational journeys. Pupils' growing commitment to the community, their highly developed sense of justice, their friendly and courteous relationships and their care for others reflect their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Effective relationships between home and school and the highly supportive parent body confirm that the school achieves its aim to work in partnership with parents.

5.2 The school has made variable progress in meeting the recommendations of the last inspection. Curriculum planning has significantly improved; however strategies to develop co-ordinators' roles have not been fully implemented. Considerable progress has been made in other areas since the last inspection. The contribution of governors has increased significantly. They participate more widely in school life, contribute to and review the school plan, and link academic with strategic planning. Careful financial planning has enabled resources to be increased to enhance pupils' learning, especially in ICT. The recent rigorous and perceptive audits across all aspects of school life, undertaken by the senior team, have correctly identified areas where present practice can be further improved, especially assessment and curriculum management. School documentation and planning have been revised and updated. New, improved strategies for managing provision for pupils with learning difficulties are being implemented.

The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

5.4 To improve further upon the high quality of education provided, the school should take the following action.

Implement recently completed plans to improve consistency within the area of assessment to ensure that:

full records of assessment information and its use are kept by all teachers, with specific reference to its application in meeting the needs of more able pupils and those who require support with their learning.

Develop the roles of curriculum co-ordinators in order to:

remove inconsistencies in the quality of curriculum leadership and management;

ensure all subject documentation is up-to-date and of a high quality;

ensure they monitor, record and discuss with staff pupil standards, subject planning, the marking of work and teaching in their area of responsibility.

5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspection was carried out from 2nd to 5th June 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Sandra Gordon	Reporting Inspector
Mr Michael Crossley	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Paul Easterbrook	Head, IAPS/ISA school
Mrs Glenys Henry	Former Head, ISA school
Mr Richard Lynn	Deputy Head, IAPS school