



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
THE ORATORY PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

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## The Oratory Preparatory School

The Oratory School was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	<b>The Oratory Preparatory School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>931/6055</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>309112</b>		
Address	<b>The Oratory Preparatory School Goring Heath Reading Oxfordshire RG8 7SF</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01189 844511</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01189 844806</b>		
Email Address	<b>office@oratoryprep.co.uk</b>		
Headmaster	<b>Mr Joseph Smith</b>		
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Michael Hasslacher</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>380</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (266 boys; 114 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>37</b>	11-13: <b>88</b>
	5-11:	<b>255</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>317</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>63</b>	
	Full:	<b>22</b>	Weekly: <b>12</b>
	Flexi:	<b>29</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Gill Smith</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection Dates	<b>26 Nov 2013 to 29 Nov 2013</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI**

**descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade. Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with 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, assemblies and a Mass. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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 David Bunkell	Reporting Inspector
Mr Pete Brooks	Team Inspector (headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Dominic Crehan	Team Inspector (headmaster, IAPS school)
Miss Angela Rawlinson	Team Inspector (headmistress, IAPS school)
Mrs Anne Longton	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Miss Mary Regan	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Oratory Preparatory School is a day and boarding co-educational school for pupils aged from three to thirteen, situated in a rural setting at Goring Heath, near the Oxfordshire-Berkshire border. Founded in 1859 by Blessed John Henry Newman as part of The Oratory School in Birmingham, the preparatory school became a separate entity in 1925. Following various moves, it has been located at its current site since 1969, a few miles away from The Oratory School. The school is part of The Oratory Schools Association, whose governing body manages both The Oratory Preparatory School and The Oratory School (for boys aged from eleven to eighteen). As a charitable trust, the governors are also the trustees. The two schools share some administrative and support staff, but otherwise function as entirely separate entities.
- 1.2 The aims of the school are to respect each child as an individual and to give each one the confidence and self-esteem to develop his or her talents to the full. The school strives to develop the whole child intellectually, morally, socially, spiritually, aesthetically and physically, and to develop an effective three-way partnership between children, parents and school. As a Catholic school, the intention is to offer the experience of living in a Christian community and to encourage a personal relationship with God through prayer and participation in worship, while also welcoming those of other faiths or none.
- 1.3 Currently 380 pupils attend the school. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of 37 children in Kindergarten and Reception classes. Their classrooms are alongside those for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and have access to their own outdoor learning areas. Boarding is available for pupils in Years 4 to 8. The boarding accommodation is on an upper floor of the main house, and has eleven dormitories (seven for boys and four for girls), with 50 beds in total. In addition to 22 full boarders, currently 12 pupils board throughout each week, and a further 29 board occasionally, usually for one, two or three nights at a time.
- 1.4 Admission to the school is not selective on grounds of academic ability, but informal assessment takes place to ensure that the school will be able to meet each child's needs. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. Most pupils are of above average or average ability, with few having ability that is below average. On leaving the school, the majority of pupils proceed to academically selective day or boarding senior schools, most at age thirteen, although a few leave at age eleven. The school has identified 55 pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), 38 of whom receive support as necessary. No pupils have statements of special educational need. For 32 pupils, English is not their first language (EAL), and support for English is provided for 17 of these. The majority of pupils are white British but a few are from other ethnic backgrounds. Most come from professional families, and live within ten miles of the school, with the exception of various boarders, some of whom come from Spain and France and may stay at the school for only a short time.
- 1.5 There have been no major changes since the previous inspection, but construction of a new Nursery building with provision for two year olds in addition to the existing Kindergarten class was formally completed during the inspection visit, and was due to open at the start of the following term.
- 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 achievement of the pupils is excellent, due in large part to their highly positive attitudes to learning, as they approach every task with enthusiasm. Pupils with SEND and EAL show equal determination. The pupils go on from The Oratory Preparatory School to a number of selective independent senior schools, often achieving scholarships or exhibitions. Pupils who are able, gifted or talented are encouraged to make the most of their abilities in many ways, but in some lessons they were seen to undertake the same work as other pupils. Good teaching also contributes to this success, although some marking includes much well-deserved praise, but insufficient advice for improvement. The curriculum is excellent, and many pupils are successful beyond the classroom, with significant successes in sport, music and drama. An excellent programme of activities contributes much to school life, scheduled at various times during the day. Enhancements to the curriculum by trips and visitors also add to the success of the school.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. Many pupils show great maturity in the way in which they care for each other. Relationships within the school are exemplary, as all adults are excellent role models, providing first-rate pastoral care for the pupils. Older pupils have taken on responsibilities within the school, and are respected by their peers. Arrangements for health and safety are excellent. Safeguarding the welfare of the pupils is of vital concern to all staff. The availability of excellent quality boarding is appreciated by older pupils and their parents, and provides useful preparation for those who may consider boarding at senior school, as well as giving pupils from overseas a flavour of English education.
- 2.3 The governors provide excellent oversight of the school. They discharge their statutory duties carefully, and they have clear vision for the school's future development. Excellent leadership and management at all levels enables day-to-day school life to proceed smoothly, as senior staff are fully aware of any measures that may be required to enable further improvements. In their pre-inspection questionnaire the majority of parents were appreciative of all that the school does for their children. Although a small minority of pupils considered that their views were not sought sufficiently and that sanctions are sometimes unfair, no evidence was found to support these views. All regulatory failings at the time of previous ISI and Ofsted inspections have been rectified, with regard to attendance registers, safeguarding arrangements including entries in the single central register of staff appointments, medical records in the boarding house, and compliance with EYFS requirements for child-staff ratios and reporting to parents. Nearly all the recommendations of the inspection reports have been met in their entirety, regarding development planning and EYFS hygiene and outdoor resources, but work remains to be done on consistency of the quality of marking pupils' work.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Improve the consistency of the quality of marking of pupils' work, to enable all pupils to know how to make the best possible progress.
  2. Develop processes to enable the most able pupils to make best use of their time throughout every lesson.
  3. In the EYFS, observe and record examples of children's learning more regularly as part of ongoing assessment.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 This fulfils the school's aim to respect each child as an individual and to give each child the confidence and self-esteem to develop his or her talents to the full. Pupils successfully make links across the curriculum, using their skills in a wide variety of learning circumstances and are able to recall facts skilfully, employing these successfully in a range of different contexts. For example, pupils identified a symmetrical rhythm in a class music lesson. They confidently articulate opinions during lessons and listen very attentively to each other and to their teachers. They read and write fluently, and show themselves capable of logical and independent thought. The pupils apply mathematical principles successfully and show enthusiasm and skill in physical activities. They show high levels of creative skills. They are adept when creating artefacts and performing musically or dramatically on stage. Pupils are competent in the use of information and communication technology (ICT), as observed when a series of films made entirely by pupils was watched as part of an assembly.
- 3.3 The range of significant achievements is broad. In the EYFS, many children are confident copying words and sentences, while the more able have developed good independent writing skills. They have a very good understanding of numbers to 15, and many can add and subtract two digit numbers. By the end of the Reception year many children reach standards beyond national expectations. Pupils achieve excellent results in Common Entrance and other entrance tests to independent senior schools, and often gain scholarships or exhibitions to their chosen schools. They enjoy success in local and national competitions, for example in the Shakespeare Schools Festival, and achieve a notable range of individual academic, musical, drama and sporting awards or examination successes. Sporting accomplishments include football, hockey, cricket, tennis, netball, athletics, rugby and swimming. The art displayed around the entire school is of an extremely high standard, and recently several pupils displayed work in a local art and craft exhibition. As they progress through the school, pupils with EAL were judged to have achievements at least in line with their peers, as effective support is provided. Pupils with SEND are at no disadvantage as the support they receive enables them to be confident and to persevere.
- 3.4 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. The pupils follow a suitably demanding curriculum and, on leaving the school, all gain entrance to their chosen, academically selective, senior schools. This level of attainment as judged indicates that the pupils make a high rate of progress overall compared with others of similar ability nationally, as evaluated in lesson observation, pupils' written work and curricular interviews with them. Pupils with SEND often make rapid progress, as observed in their participation in lessons and in discussion, largely due to the effective use of short-term targets and careful tracking of progress. Pupils who have particular gifts and talents make good progress and, while some effective strategies make sure that they have opportunities to extend their capabilities, on occasions they are asked to undertake the same work as their peers, temporarily restricting their rate of progress. Pupils with EAL make good progress, although for those attending the school for only one term it is not possible to evaluate long-term

progress. In the EYFS, all children including those with SEND and EAL make rapid progress in relation to their starting points, while the more able children exceed expectations for their age.

- 3.5 The pupils are extremely interested and highly-motivated learners, who apply themselves enthusiastically to every aspect of their education. They are confident in their individual abilities and gain satisfaction from what they do, as illustrated by their eagerness to receive merits and other awards. They work successfully both alone and with others, taking initiative for their learning, and they organise their work well. In the EYFS, the children are highly motivated and participate enthusiastically in all learning experiences. The youngest children were observed excitedly building models with construction sets. They counted accurately the number of points thrown on a dice and showed developing mathematics vocabulary demonstrating good understanding of 'one more than' and 'one less than'. They can trace their names confidently and display a real joy of learning. They enjoy role play, and were observed using their stick puppets in a spontaneous improvisation of the Christmas story.

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

- 3.6 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 The school fulfils its aim of developing the whole child, intellectually, morally, socially, spiritually, aesthetically and physically. In the EYFS, the broad and exciting educational programmes that children encounter give them many opportunities to express their ideas confidently and with enjoyment. The school's very well constructed curriculum has regard to the National Curriculum, and also meets the needs of Common Entrance and other school entrance requirements at age 11 and 13. This broad and stimulating curriculum ensures that all pupils receive a range of experiences across all the requisite areas of learning. It provides very well for pupils' social development and their literacy and numeracy skills. A suitable balance of science, humanities, and physical and aesthetic subjects is achieved. Curriculum planning is thorough, and lessons are suitably timetabled.
- 3.8 Curricular provision for pupils with EAL and for those with SEND is excellent. This includes a thorough system for identification and referral, in-class support and, where required, learning support outside the classroom. In addition, the challenging and demanding scholarship programme for the most able pupils shows creativity and flair.
- 3.9 Strong cross-curricular links and the use of specialist teaching enhance the school's provision very well. In addition, the school emphasises particular subjects for whole days, such as religious education (RE) focus days and French themed days, which are held annually. Such days raise the profile of these subjects throughout the school and engender further links across the curriculum. They also promote high levels of knowledge, skill and understanding in each subject and allow these to be developed further. The library is a welcoming facility, housing a wide variety of resources to enable pupils to develop their own learning.
- 3.10 The comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme strongly supports pupils' personal development. The class teachers each teach this subject to their own class, allowing a wide range of topics to be covered that are well suited to the relevant age and stage of development of pupils. Many outside visits and trips, such as an annual Year 6 trip to Paris, the Year 4 visit to Wales and the

jazz band's visit to Torquay every two years, extend the pupils' understanding and help to bring the curriculum to life.

- 3.11 Following recent changes to the organisation of the activities programme, the school now offers an impressive choice for pupils. These activities are integrated into the school day and include pursuits such as beekeeping, archery, philosophy, touch typing, and Australian rules football. A grandmaster visits the school to lead chess activities, and an extensive sports programme provides opportunities for all to represent the school. These activities allow an even greater number of pupils to participate and share in many new learning experiences.
- 3.12 Pupils perform in a wide variety of local events. As well as participating in services in the school's chapel, the choristers also sing with the tenors and basses of the Oratory School in their chapel. The senior choir have performed with Young Voices in London and at a local festival. Visits are arranged to many places of interest such as Dorchester Abbey, Littlemore (the International Centre of Newman Friends) and an activity centre on the Isle of Wight. There are also visits to local galleries, museums and to places of worship for other faiths. Residential visits provide excellent opportunities for further development and also serve to enhance social skills.
- 3.13 The school engages in well-planned fund-raising activities for chosen local, national or world charities. The pupils further benefit greatly from strong links with local parishes and other community groups.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.14 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.15 This supports the school's aims to respect each child as an individual, to give each child the confidence and self-esteem to develop his or her talents to the full, and to develop the whole child. Teachers know their pupils extremely well, and the very strong relationships which exist between teachers and pupils promote a harmonious and purposeful working environment. Teachers successfully encourage the pupils to behave responsibly and to enjoy learning. Progress has been made towards meeting the recommendation of the last inspection to raise the quality of all teaching to that of the best, so that pupils are engaged more in their learning. The quality of teaching in many of the lessons observed was excellent.
- 3.16 In the EYFS, all teachers, including the specialist teachers for dance, physical education and swimming, demonstrate high expectations of children and engage them in very well-planned activities. However, on occasions, children's special learning experiences are not photographed or otherwise captured, and there are inconsistencies in the practice of creating learning journey records.
- 3.17 Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent across the curriculum. Specialist teaching, for example in French, English and music, offers a high standard of knowledge to enable pupils to acquire advanced skills. Lessons are well planned to make good use of the time available, and most are conducted with brisk pace, thereby engaging and maintaining the pupils' interest and effort. Lessons include thorough subject coverage and have clear objectives.
- 3.18 Teaching successfully fosters skills in both independent and collaborative working. In the best lessons, a variety of suitably challenging work is set for children of different abilities, allowing all to progress at their own best pace. However, tasks are

not always well matched to the needs of all, with higher achieving pupils sometimes undertaking work which does not provide sufficient levels of challenge. Very able pupils take part in an enrichment programme and a variety of competitions, and their learning is thereby promoted. Educational support for pupils, including those with SEND, is excellent. The excellent teaching and guidance provided for pupils with EAL very effectively promote their English language development.

- 3.19 The school is very well resourced, and teachers make very good use of the excellent equipment available, particularly in practical subjects, for example in art, physical education and science. ICT is incorporated effectively across the curriculum and good use is made of the resources provided, including two well-equipped ICT rooms, a music technology room, and interactive whiteboards in every classroom. A variety of attractive, colourful displays demonstrate the range and depth of teaching throughout the curriculum. Teachers make an excellent contribution to pupils' experience through the activities programme. The enthusiasm with which teachers share their own interests is commendable, and is greatly appreciated by the pupils.
- 3.20 Regular assessment takes place, informally by teachers and more formally using tests, and the progress of pupils is monitored very closely. This enables teachers to modify their planning to match the needs of the pupils. The best marking provides clear guidance on how pupils can further improve their work, in accordance with the recommendation of the last inspection for marking to be consistent and constructively useful, but variation in the quality of written marking reduces the opportunities for some pupils to review their work and understand for themselves how they can improve in future. On some occasions, marking is cursory, only indicating whether an answer is right or wrong. Many teachers give excellent verbal feedback, during or after lessons, successfully guiding pupils to improve future tasks. During interviews, pupils expressed their appreciation for this assistance.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' personal qualities are exceptionally well developed. This is in accordance with the aim of the school to offer the experience of living in a Christian community and to encourage a personal relationship with God. Pupils are extremely well-behaved, and exhibit excellent social skills. They have a strong sense of community and well-developed morals, both of which are underpinned by the school's mission statement.
- 4.3 The pupils have excellent spiritual development, supported by a clear commitment by all to the spiritual life of the school. Pupils prepare for and attend Mass, reflect in assemblies on a wide range of issues such as Advent, and study a range of faiths in religious education. Staff provide a strong lead, and the regular prayerful Masses give pupils and staff time to pray, sing and reflect. Pupils may prepare for first communion at school, and pupils of all faiths and none join willingly in collective acts of worship. Mature appreciation of some of the non-material aspects of life was evident throughout the inspection visit. Pupils had used the autumnal natural environment to create artwork, for example pinning down leaves with thorns, and a group of pupils commented how lucky they were to be at school in this beautiful rural setting, and how exquisite the colours of the trees are in November.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is excellent. Positive moral values are established through high expectations, assemblies, class targets and the PSHE curriculum. All staff are excellent role models. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Throughout the inspection, pupils were invariably polite, friendly and well mannered. Pupils in the pre-prep (Years 1 and 2) play harmoniously, and the children in EYFS are self-assured and confident. They trust adults at school and feel secure and happy. They share their experiences with peers and adults and develop sensitivity to the needs of others. As they move through the school, pupils continue to build on this excellent foundation. The school fosters an excellent work ethic and nurtures the self-esteem of pupils very well.
- 4.5 The pupils' social development is excellent, and opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in pairs or groups are plentiful. Pupils take their extra roles and tasks very seriously. Responsibilities are given to all pupils in Year 8 and this serves further to encourage a sense of belonging and community awareness. Those who have been elected to the school council are keen to canvass their peers for their views about ways to improve the school even further. The agenda for these meetings show that this role is taken very seriously and discussions focus on school events, celebrations and the balance of lessons. Pupils are much aware of those less fortunate than themselves, and well-planned fund-raising and charity work is a key feature of the school. Pupils take responsibility for each other and help each other selflessly. Doors are held open on every occasion, not just for adults but for peers, and thanks are given by all for such actions.
- 4.6 The pupils' excellent cultural development raises awareness of their own and other ways of life through subjects such as art, music, RE, modern languages and PSHE. School trips and excursions to local, national and international destinations, such as the trips to Africa, encourage pupils to be aware of their own community and the

world beyond. Pupils learn about different religions in RE, and visits, for example to a synagogue, play an important part in teaching respect for other faiths and cultures. Pupils were seen to respect the backgrounds of each other, and to value differing contributions. All pupils have achieved exceptional standards of personal development on leaving the school and are excellent ambassadors for the school on all occasions.

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

- 4.7 The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.8 The school successfully meets its aim to respect each child as an individual, and to promote confidence and self-esteem so that his or her talents are fully developed. It succeeds in providing a happy family environment treating all pupils with care, courtesy and consideration. Staff are very supportive of their pupils and relationships between adults and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are extremely positive. Pupils feel valued as individuals, safe and secure, and they trust all the adults in the school community. All staff demonstrate excellent standards of care for pupils. The mixed-age tutor groups for older pupils are particularly valued by staff and the pupils themselves.
- 4.9 In the EYFS, teachers and support staff ensure that all children, including the youngest and those in need of additional support, enjoy very positive relationships with adults and form secure emotional attachments. Children trust all the adults in school and enjoy being with them. A high priority is placed on children's happiness and the development of self-esteem. Nursery children are extremely well prepared for their transition to Reception, and children in Reception for the next stage of their education.
- 4.10 Pupils are actively encouraged through aspects of PSHE to keep fit and well. They fully understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle, drink water throughout the day, and eat nutritious snacks and excellent school lunches which offer a vegetarian option, salad and fruit. Inspectors ate with pupils and were told on many occasions by them how much they enjoyed school food. The extensive school grounds and excellent specialist facilities are put to very good use, for example for cross country running, dance, games, gymnastics and swimming. The youngest children also enjoy their play times when they ride their wheeled toy vehicles or climb on the large outdoor apparatus.
- 4.11 An effective framework fosters and promotes good behaviour, and measures to guard against harassment and bullying are effective. Rewards, including merits and achievement certificates, as well as sanctions, are used effectively. A small number of pupils indicated in their questionnaire responses that they felt sanctions were sometimes unfair, but the inspection findings showed no evidence to support this. Older pupils take responsibility for their actions and are praised for their honesty when admitting to a misdemeanour. Events such as the recent anti-bullying week equip pupils with the skills to take action in the unlikely event they feel they are being bullied. Any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with promptly and justly, taking due account of any related difficulty or disability. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.12 Effective methods seek the views of pupils. The school council provides them with a very good opportunity to raise their concerns by contributing items for discussion to the agenda. In addition pupils freely speak to their teachers, senior staff with

responsibility for pastoral care, form tutors, the school chaplain or the headmaster if they have any concerns. In the questionnaire, a small number of pupils said that the school did not canvass or respond sufficiently to their views. Inspection evidence refuted this, finding that the staff provide a myriad of opportunities to listen to pupils, and that action is then taken when appropriate.

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

- 4.13 The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.14 Safeguarding arrangements are in accord with all official guidance. All staff have been trained in child protection matters within the last three years, and staff who oversee arrangements have been trained within the last two years in multi-agency working.
- 4.15 Health and safety policies, records and systems are effective and monitored regularly. Comprehensive risk assessments have been made, and these are maintained and developed, regarding buildings, events and outings, and trips abroad. Pupils know where they are allowed to play in their free time. A suitable number of staff supervise break-times and monitor the whereabouts of the pupils. At the end of the day, all pupils have to be collected by a parent or another named adult that the parents have notified. In the EYFS, the specific requirements needed for the safeguarding and welfare of children have been met. Children wash their hands regularly and always before eating, fulfilling a recommendation from the previous inspection. They are becoming increasingly independent, and confidently manage their own personal hygiene.
- 4.16 All appropriate precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Fire drill and maintenance logs are up to date and carefully maintained. Fire awareness is included during staff training days. The school was awarded the highest grade for kitchen hygiene standards in its most recent annual inspection. A comprehensive first aid policy ensures all measures are taken to provide adequate care and provision for ill or injured pupils, or those with specific health needs. In addition to the well-equipped sanatorium, pitch-side first aid is available during fixtures. A register of pupils' medical needs raises awareness for staff when planning school trips. Parents of pupils who are prone to allergic reactions and may need emergency medication provide the school with this, clearly labelled, and stored centrally for easy access. Many staff have been trained in first aid, and first aid boxes are placed throughout the school. The admission and attendance registers are accurately completed, correcting a regulatory failing at the time of the previous inspection, and they are correctly archived.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.17 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.18 Boarders integrate positively with each other between differing nationalities, ages and genders, enabling them to become confident, independent and communicative young people. Tutor time during the school day ensures that the boarders mix fully with the pupils in the wider school community, and allows them to express their views regarding their own experience of school or to raise any concerns they may have. The boarding staff and boarders meet on a regular basis to discuss any ideas or suggestions they have for the boarding house, whilst also being beneficial in assisting them to develop positive relationships, feel comfortable with members of staff and able to approach them if they should require further advice or support.
- 4.19 The boarders are cared for extremely well, and the boarders' emotional and physical well-being are maintained and developed. The provision of the sanatorium and its staff ensure that documentation, policies and systems are all correct, and these staff liaise regularly with those with responsibilities for pastoral care and welfare, health and safety. The sanatorium is situated centrally in the boarding house, allowing easy access for all boarders during the day or night. Care for any boarders who have become unwell is provided by suitably trained staff at all times. In the event of a boarder needing medical advice or treatment, a local doctor visits weekly or boarders are taken to see relevant health professionals. The local NHS nursing team visit as necessary to provide such services as vaccinations. All systems to reduce the risk of fire, logs of fire drills, and fire-fighting equipment are well maintained in the boarding house, and emergency signage is clear. The boarders are fully aware of fire exit routes and procedures.
- 4.20 In discussion, the boarders said that they enjoy the food that is provided, that it is of a high standard, and that they like the three-weekly rolling menu. The food served provides the boarders with a nutritious, varied diet. Boarders with particular dietary requirements are catered for, and any necessary liaison regarding food between staff, boarders and their parents takes place. On Sundays, the full boarders have a relaxed, later breakfast. If not going on an outing away from the school, a roast dinner is freshly cooked for all boarders and several staff eat with them. Drinking water is easily accessible in the boarding house from a water dispenser. Fruit is freely available at all times, and other snacks on request at suitable times.
- 4.21 All laundry in the boarding house is washed on the premises, overseen by the matrons and domestic staff. The boarders place clothing in a laundry basket outside their dormitory, and when laundered, items are returned to a central room in the boarding house for individual boarders to collect. If any boarders require specific stationery or personal items that the school cannot provide, either staff will purchase them for the boarder, or they can buy them themselves on a weekend trip to a local supermarket or a nearby town.
- 4.22 The boarders enjoy participating in regular evening recreational activities, including games in the sports hall, swimming and less formal entertainment, such as the dancing competition that occurred during the inspection visit. Often these activities are organised by gap-year students, but experienced staff are always present. Weekend activities often include a Sunday outing. The boarders said that they had particularly enjoyed ice-skating, bowling, a trip to the theatre, and go-karting.

- 4.23 The boarding accommodation is within the main school but entirely separate from day-time facilities, except for day pupils requiring first aid. Visitors to the boarding house are always supervised. The area has spacious, well-equipped common rooms and adequate dormitories and washroom facilities. Some boarders have chosen to personalise a space near their own bed, and they may supply their own favourite bed linen. They can easily access a member of staff during the night, should this become necessary.
- 4.24 The boarders have the opportunity to use their own mobile telephones or other electronic devices during the evening, in a communal supervised area. At all other times these items are kept in locked cupboards. Computers with internet access are available to use in the boarding house and may be used to keep in touch with family and friends by email or computer-based telephony. A landline telephone is also provided, in a private booth.
- 4.25 Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding of the boarders are excellent. The school has all necessary systems and robust policies in place to provide a safe, secure environment for the boarders. Good behaviour is reinforced by the use of a merit point system, and the boarders said that any incidence of bullying is very rare. Should a bullying issue arise, they said that it is dealt with promptly and effectively. A recent anti-bullying week was thought by them to have been beneficial. The school has a suitable complaints policy and procedure.
- 4.26 Management of the boarding house by senior boarding staff is highly efficient, and accords with the school's boarding principles and practice, which are clear and concise and published on the school website. Staff with overall responsibility for boarding oversee the duty tutors, matrons and gap-year students. All boarding staff receive suitable induction and ongoing training. Clear duty rotas are displayed in the boarding house, together with the name of the duty member of staff for the current evening, so the boarders are aware of this when they return to the boarding house at the end of the school day. All information regarding any daily occurrences in the boarding house are recorded in a communication book, accessed and updated by the duty staff. Through this, close links are maintained with the staff with responsibilities for pastoral care during the day.
- 4.27 A large majority of the boarders responded very positively to all statements regarding boarding in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Similarly, parents of boarders were overwhelmingly supportive of the school's provision for boarding. Recommendations from the previous Ofsted boarding inspection in 2009 including establishing a more robust system for monitoring accidents, treatment and first aid and the need to develop a stock control system for over the counter remedies, have all been met.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governing body provides highly effective oversight of all sections of the school in line with the aim to respect each child as an individual and to give each child the confidence and self-esteem to develop his or her talents to the full. Responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources are discharged very effectively, as seen in the active interest taken by governors in the EYFS, facilitating the substantial new Nursery and Kindergarten building that reached completion during the inspection visit.
- 5.3 The governing body has a thorough insight into the working of the school, and is effective in exercising a monitoring role, providing support, challenge and stimulus for growth and improvement, with perceptive long-term strategic plans. Governors are passionate about the future success of the school. They understand fully the distinction between their strategic role and their delegation to the headmaster of the day-to-day running of the school, but by careful liaison with senior staff they remain entirely aware of current management priorities at all times. Governors are carefully selected from a variety of professional backgrounds, and their experience is put to very good use, as an effective source of advice and support to senior staff.
- 5.4 The governing body is effective in discharging its responsibilities for statutory requirements, including a thorough annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school. A day-long visit to the school held each year helps ensure that all governors are up to date with any changes, and that they understand fully their responsibilities. All governors attended a training session two years ago, and individual governors have attended training events more recently, for example in child protection issues. An efficient system of committees ensures that governance is equally effective between the main meetings, and includes a recently-formed academic sub-committee, the work of which is much appreciated by staff.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.6 Those with leadership and management responsibilities provide effective educational direction, in full accordance with the aims and ethos of the school to develop the whole child, intellectually, morally, socially, spiritually, aesthetically and physically. The senior management team and heads of department work together highly effectively, and along with all staff, understand the school's strengths and identify areas for improvement. Effective management contributes to the pupils' high level of personal development by the excellent quality of pastoral care, and also the pupils' high levels of achievement. Thorough self-evaluation in all departments has occurred directly as a result of a recommendation at the previous inspection. Detailed development plans for each academic department now follow similar formats, and are bound together into one document. In addition, an overall strategic development plan is carefully monitored and updated when necessary.

- 5.7 The monitoring of learning and teaching is well structured, and takes place through a variety of processes including formal lesson observations by senior staff, peer observation and sharing of good practice, and scrutiny of work. A very recent examination of pupils' work by members of the senior management team had identified that action is necessary to bring all marking up to the standard of the best, and individual teachers were already receiving guidance in this matter at the time of the inspection. Senior staff were also already taking measures to ensure that the most able pupils always receive sufficient challenge throughout each lesson, in addition to other specific provision already made for this group of pupils.
- 5.8 The formal process of staff appraisal has recently been reviewed, and now provides opportunities for professional development in pastoral and academic areas for all staff, including those in EYFS. These appraisals are well planned, and are rooted in the relevant subject development plans. Staff are deployed effectively throughout the school, with very effective use of support staff, teaching assistants and gap-year students. Senior managers have undertaken all required checks on all staff appointments. Teaching and non-teaching staff are correctly trained in welfare, health and safety and safeguarding, and the induction programme for new staff is rigorous. The safeguarding of pupils is of paramount importance, and the single central register of staff appointments is now completed correctly, as required by a regulatory failing at the time of the previous inspection.
- 5.9 In the EYFS, those with responsibility for leadership and management ensure that the setting is welcoming, safe and stimulating and that the specific EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. All members of EYFS staff have received full child protection training and fully understand health and safety procedures. The nursing staff and teachers trained in paediatric first aid see to children's medical needs, as well as effectively dealing with any playground accidents. EYFS policies are regularly reviewed and updated, and staff meet weekly to discuss timetabled events and children's progress. A detailed EYFS development plan is the key to self-evaluation within the setting, highlighting priorities and helping to determine action necessary for improvement. In response to a recommendation made in the previous inspection, outdoor learning areas have been developed, giving children many more opportunities for independent exploration and learning. Staffing ratios are now correct, as required by a regulatory failing at that time. The EYFS setting demonstrates a commitment to evaluating practice and securing continuous improvement.
- 5.10 The school has established excellent links with parents. In their pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents were very positive about all that the school provides, particularly with regard to the range of areas of experience and activities, the happiness and safety of their children at school, and the high standards of behaviour achieved. The school values the strength of this connection with parents, in line with its aim to create a three-way partnership. Parents, pupils and staff appreciate the open-door attitude, and the availability and approachability of senior staff. Parents are warmly welcomed into the school on many occasions, such as the informal coffee morning during the inspection, and any concerns are dealt with sensitively and promptly. Correct arrangements are used to handle complaints, which are all properly recorded.
- 5.11 Emails are used by the school to communicate with parents. Parents can contact any individual member of staff by this means, and social networking websites are used to enhance channels of communication. This is all supplemented by messages from the class representatives of the Friends of the Oratory Preparatory

School. This group organises a number of social and fundraising events for pupils, parents and staff throughout the year, and during the inspection, industrious preparations were underway for the Christmas Fair, taking place the following day.

- 5.12 Parents receive regular and detailed news and information about their children's achievements through the school's website, an informative weekly newsletter, comprehensive annual magazines and a very good range of formal and informal meetings. Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children. Throughout the school, information about pupils' academic achievement and progress is clearly set out in well-written and detailed reports. These written reports are supplemented by regular parents' evenings. Parents receive all the required information.
- 5.13 In the EYFS, teachers work very closely with parents to keep them informed about their child's learning journey. A new format for written reports has been introduced measuring children's attainment against the early learning goals, ensuring parents receive more detailed information about their child's learning and progress, fulfilling a regulatory requirement from the previous inspection. A positive and effective relationship has been established with parents, the local authority and other external agencies to ensure that all children receive the support that they need. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed very strong support for the work of the setting.

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