

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

**INSPECTION OF
NORMANHURST SCHOOL**

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Normanhurst School

Full Name of the School	Normanhurst School
DCSF Number	320/6059
Early Years Number	EY 240417
Registered Charity Number	N/A
Address	68-74 Station Road, North Chingford, London E4 7BA.
Telephone Number	020 8529 4307
Fax Number	020 8524 7737
Email Address	info@normanhurstschool.co.uk
Head	Ms Helen Kacouris
Proprietors	Mr N Hagger, Mrs A Hagger, Mr M Hagger
Age Range	2½ to 16
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	2nd to 5th March 2009

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, May 2007 and February 2009.

The statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage were not inspected as part of this inspection.

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 Founded in 1923, Normanhurst School is an independent co-educational school for pupils between the ages of two and a half years and sixteen years. It is a proprietorial school which is part of the Oak-Tree Group of Schools, the administrative arrangements of which are common to all of the three schools. The group is family owned, one of its members being the managing principal.
- 1.2 Almost since its foundation, the school has been on its present prominent site, very close to Chingford main-line railway and bus stations and its surrounding public amenities, businesses, shops and restaurants. The core of the school comprises four large and attractive Edwardian houses which also incorporate two information and communication technology (ICT) suites. The houses have been supplemented and developed by some purpose-built classrooms, a music room, an art studio, laboratories, two libraries and changing facilities. The site is extensive. The school is seeking to further expand its facilities and is currently exploring the provision of a new school hall, a drama studio and additional classrooms and offices.
- 1.3 The school's mission states its commitment to providing a balanced and fulfilling learning experience in a secure and caring environment that nurtures academic, creative, sporting and personal skills. The school's goal is to encourage an appreciation of lifelong learning and a desire to participate in and contribute to the community so that pupils become fulfilled and responsible citizens. Its aims are: to build a happy family school that is of pride to pupils; to create a secure and stimulating environment in which all pupils learn and flourish; to help each pupil develop to the maximum potential; to cultivate courtesy, respect and responsibility; to provide opportunities for all pupils to develop the confidence to celebrate their individual talents and to foster all pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school views itself as an inclusive school and is proud to celebrate its ethnic and religious diversity.
- 1.4 The school was last inspected by the ISI in May 2003 and the Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected by the Ofsted in June 2008.
- 1.5 Two hundred and ten pupils attend the school. Currently, there are 40 pupils in the Nursery and Reception (aged from two and a half to five years) of which some are part-time in the Nursery. There are 59 pupils in the junior school (17 girls, 42 boys) and 111 pupils in the senior school (43 girls, 68 boys). The majority of pupils live locally and the convenient transport facilities and good road links also enable pupils to come from local London boroughs as well as neighbouring rural parts of Essex.
- 1.6 There are nineteen children in the Nursery funded through the government's nursery scheme and up to five pupils are in receipt of scholarships which are awarded following an examination for entry into Year 7. The results of entrance examinations are also used to facilitate the provision of any specific requirements to support a pupil's learning needs.
- 1.7 The school has three pupils identified as having English as an additional language, a much smaller number than at the previous inspection. Currently, the school has 57 pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and who are listed on the special educational needs (SEN) register, five of whom have statements of SEN, and there are seventeen pupils on the gifted and talented register.

- 1.8 The school has a broad ability range. Standardised tests indicate that the ability profile in both the junior and the senior school is at the national average with some pupils significantly both above and below the average. Thus where junior and senior pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results in national tests are expected to be at least in line with those at maintained schools and where older senior pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results in public examinations are expected to be at least in line with those at maintained secondary schools.
- 1.9 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 school provides a good range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities that are appropriate for the interests, aptitudes and needs of its pupils and the expectations of parents. It accomplishes successfully its aim of providing a balanced and fulfilling education in a secure and caring environment that nurtures academic, creative, sporting and personal skills. The curricular provision has been modified and improved since the last inspection and now meets all the concerns expressed at that time. The coordination of the curriculum has also been improved by the appointment of an assistant head for teaching and learning in the senior school.
- 2.2 The academic curriculum is broad and well balanced and offers a stimulating range of opportunities. It contributes effectively to the linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic, and creative development of the pupils and enables them to acquire appropriate skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The improvements include provision throughout the senior school for religious studies, for citizenship, personal, social and health education (CPSHE), and for design and technology (DT). The CPSHE programme meets the school's aims and is supported well by supplementary activities. Parents are extremely happy with the range of subjects that are offered.
- 2.3 Pupils are involved in a wide range of activities outside the classroom, laboratory and physical education settings. There are frequent school visits, ranging from fun days out to academically focused departmental outings.
- 2.4 There is a new work experience programme in Year 10 which provides opportunities for all pupils in that year to experience life in a work place in a chosen industry or profession. The school has established a range of links with the wider community which also afford the opportunity to enlarge pupils' experiences. There is scope for the school to capitalise on these links and to use them to provide pupils with the opportunity of voluntary service or to reactivate activities such as participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- 2.5 The provision for advice for those planning to pursue vocational careers after the age of sixteen is good. Some pupils who do not have a full timetable of ordinary lessons are assisted into vocational courses and placements in local companies as a useful part of their timetabled week. More than half the Year 11 pupils go on to study A levels in a variety of local schools and colleges. The preparation for this, beyond ordinary GCSE teaching, is somewhat informal, and does not always take sufficient opportunity to offer the more able a stepping stone to the next stage of their education in the form of the teaching of bridging material or otherwise.
- 2.6 Those pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) benefit from very good provision. The curriculum has recently been extended to allow pupils for whom GCSE is not easily attainable to follow the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network programmes. The appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator has had a positive impact on the LDD and SEN provision and coordination throughout the school. A fully detailed register, regularly updated, is now available to all staff and specialist dyslexia teaching meets the specific needs of identified pupils. The review of the use of individual educational plans for all 57 registered pupils is underway and is supported by staff in-service training. Teaching assistants are used to good effect to support these pupils' learning.

- 2.7 The planning of the curriculum is secure and provides for the systematic development of each subject over time. The school draws on published planning documents as necessary. Not all that appears in the documentation is given the same weight in practice. For example, the requirements of pupils whose needs are different from the average in the class are mentioned in schemes but such provision is not always evident in lessons.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.9 In both the junior and the senior school, achievements are good in a wide range of accomplishments. At an academic level, pupils at all stages are securely and appropriately grounded in knowledge and understanding of the subjects provided by the school and this reflects the school's aim for all pupils to learn and flourish. Taken broadly, achievement is similar to that reported at the last inspection. The school has recognised through its own self-evaluation that there is room for improvement in the performance of the most able.
- 2.10 In the Early Years Foundation Stage, achievement is outstanding and observation confirmed the excellent provision and performance noted at the time of last year's Ofsted inspection. Pupils have taken verified national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2006 and 2007. Their attainment in these tests is good in relation to their abilities. The results have been above the national average for maintained schools. By the end of the junior school, observations, supported by data, indicate that pupils are achieving standards in literacy and numeracy which are also above expectations for pupils of their range of ability.
- 2.11 Senior pupils have taken national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9. Their attainment in these tests is good in relation to their abilities. The results for the last three years to 2007 have been above the national average for maintained schools. Pupils' attainment in GCSE in relation to their abilities has varied from year to year and subject to subject and is at least satisfactory. At GCSE, the results over the last three years to 2007 have been in line with the national average for maintained schools. In 2008 the school met its own target for GCSE results (five or more A*-C grades, including mathematics and English) and this was above the national average. Boys tend to outperform girls, a feature which goes against the national pattern. Study skills have been integrated into the subject range and the use of mentoring in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to consolidate their learning effectively, reinforced by the introduction of the Easter Academy programme.
- 2.12 The attainment and progress of different groups of pupils throughout the school is mostly good and always at least satisfactory. Pupils with LDD make as much progress as their peers.
- 2.13 Achievement in activities is inclusive, being enjoyed by pupils of all abilities, including statemented pupils and those designated as gifted and talented. The school is also successful in promoting both individual and group participation. In netball for example, both the Under-9 and Under-12 girls' teams have achieved great success in borough tournaments and all the pupils in the Year 4/5 class were presented with a Golden Book award for their work in an assembly. Individual successes and achievements are numerous and include a notable award to a senior school pupil for work experience achievement in the community.
- 2.14 Pupils achieve awards and celebrate success in all areas of the curriculum, including music, sport, art, DT, speech and drama, public speaking, librarianship, leadership skills and personal growth. To this end, the school is successful in meeting its aim to provide all

pupils with the opportunities to celebrate their individual talents in a range of pursuits and endeavours.

- 2.15 Junior pupils are willing, compliant learners who are able to work well independently. When opportunities are given for them to work co-operatively, either in pairs or in groups, learning objectives are often successfully achieved, showing an enhancement of both understanding and interaction. Good examples of this were seen in a Year 2 physical education (PE) lesson and a Year 4/5 CPSHE lesson. Year 6 pupils showed good evidence of employing skills in ICT when they carried out research for a themed assembly on Martin Luther King. In the lessons observed the use of ICT by other years was, however, rarely seen. Very few junior lessons observed showed pupils working creatively or engaging in practical, investigative activities. Scrutiny of samples of pupils' work, however, showed that creative work, while limited, has started to broaden the scope of their learning. Junior pupils from Year 3 and above are able to make notes to help in the planning of their work. Pupils in a Year 4 and 5 class were seen using portable whiteboards to draft out ideas in the form of bullet points. Year 6 pupils made effective use of drafting to refine and enhance ideas and written presentation.
- 2.16 Senior pupils develop the capacity for independent study as they move through Years 10 and 11, and this was particularly effective in some English, science and drama lessons. A Year 10 mathematics lesson showed pupils applying deductive, logical reasoning to the task set.
- 2.17 Pupils in both phases are generally articulate in their responses and they interact well with their teachers in a purposeful, constructive manner. Where teaching makes use of a good range of challenging questions, pupils are able to structure and deliver solid, thoughtful responses that employ a wide vocabulary range. A good proportion of lessons observed showed a genuine enjoyment in the work being undertaken and pupils were not afraid to ask for clarification or guidance. Tasks are undertaken promptly and with due regard for conventions of style, layout and clarity.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.18 The school is effective in helping its pupils to develop as young people, especially in relation to their moral, social and cultural development, which is good. This is partly as a result of the planned curriculum but also because of the relationships that prevail in the school's inclusive environment. A sense of community is evident throughout the school with a supportive quality of relationships at all levels. In consequence the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils reflects the aims of the school. These outcomes represent an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection.
- 2.19 Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and is fostered effectively through some assemblies and a well-planned curriculum in religious studies. The assemblies provide opportunities for collective worship and reflection and the curriculum overtly fosters development in elements such as the GCSE module entitled 'Truth and Spirituality'. However, other curriculum features, such as those in poetry writing where pupils write about personal experiences which have moved them, also promote this aspect. The school has a Christian basis, but pupils learn about world faiths and about their importance to believers.
- 2.20 Pupils have a well-developed moral sense and from an early age are able to distinguish clearly between right and wrong. Pupils understand and accept school rules and sanctions for poor behaviour, and consider these to be fair. Many opportunities are provided for moral development. For example, in CPSHE lessons, pupils are challenged to discuss moral

dilemmas within topics such as the rights of children, teenage pregnancy and the issue of abortion.

- 2.21 Pupils' social development is good and reflects several of the school's aims simultaneously. Responsibilities are eagerly accepted by pupils from a young age, whether it is by collecting in books for a teacher or being elected to represent their peers on the school council. The prefects and the head boy and the head girl demonstrate, through these roles, good leadership skills. A prominent house system fosters team spirit. Pupils are polite and helpful and display a caring and sensitive attitude towards one another. They show a high level of courtesy to visitors. Participation in charity fund-raising strengthens pupils' consciousness of other people's needs. Such experiences help prepare them satisfactorily for their future economic well-being and adult lives.
- 2.22 Mainly through the CPSHE programme, pupils learn about various public institutions and public services in England whilst the school council provides opportunities to raise issues about the life of the school and to have some early exposure to the democratic process.
- 2.23 Pupils have many formal opportunities to learn about and appreciate cultural traditions from their own and others' backgrounds, so that they become culturally aware. Significantly, a driver of their awareness of cultural diversity is also the way the ethnic mix of the school couples with the caring family atmosphere. Pupils say that this fosters the understanding of different cultures and traditions and enables them to form friendships with those of different ages and backgrounds. Tolerance and respect are the norm among pupils at every stage of the school.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.25 The overall quality of teaching is good, as it was at the last inspection, when, as now, the teaching in half the lessons seen was good or outstanding. There are strengths in the teaching of the oldest pupils. Progress is assessed regularly and increasing use is made of the results. This contributes to improvement in pupils' achievement. Teaching enables pupils of all abilities to acquire new knowledge, make good progress, increase their understanding and develop their skills well, and this concurs with the school's aims. Among the key issues facing the school identified by the last inspection were assessment and recording. These features have since improved significantly.
- 2.26 Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire believe that the teaching helps their child to make progress, and pupils who took part in their own pre-inspection questionnaire were positive about the fact that teachers help them to learn.
- 2.27 Enjoyment was evident in most lessons observed and teaching encourages responsible behaviour. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent, and in the lessons behaviour was nearly always good with pupils displaying cooperative attitudes. Some younger pupils were not always fully engaged. In most lessons pupils enjoy learning and remain fully engaged and devoted to the work they are doing. Effective use of praise and encouragement are features of all lessons. For example, in a Year 10 music lesson house points were awarded for good answers, and in a Year 6 literacy lesson praise was used to encourage pupils to use parts of speech.

- 2.28 Teaching is generally well planned with objectives that are clear and helpful. The planning derives from the schemes of work. In the best cases planning is also clearly drawn from an analysis of pupils' immediate prior learning as well as consideration of success in previous tests. Although teachers are aware of those needing additional support, work is not always matched to ability levels. In a number of lessons seen the more able were not consistently provided with challenging work to stimulate intellectual curiosity. There is an over-reliance on work sheets in some lessons. Over-directed teaching means that there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their own ideas and to think critically and creatively. Teaching encourages pupils to apply themselves purposefully to their work and in some lessons independent learning is promoted overtly, most evidently in some senior classes. In the best lessons in the senior school teachers elicit truly reflective responses from individual pupils. An example was the skilled teaching of a Year 11 English lesson on 'Of Mice and Men'.
- 2.29 Teachers' subject knowledge is good but some pedagogical weaknesses which teachers acknowledged were evident in a small number of lessons observed. With some notable exceptions in some lessons of science, geography, drama, PE and English, teachers generally tended to be safe and cautious in their teaching approaches with the consequence that lessons lacked spark and imagination. In the junior school specialist teaching enhances pupils' learning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution in lessons they support.
- 2.30 Pupils' learning is supported by a suitable quality and quantity of resources and these are generally used effectively. Specialist rooms support pupils' learning experiences successfully. There are displays of pupils' work, an extensive amount in some classrooms, which acknowledge good work and achievement.
- 2.31 In most subjects pupils' work is marked regularly and consistently, according to the school's marking policy. The suggestions for improvements are not always clear. There is not a complete understanding on the part of pupils of the codes used to indicate achievement and this undermines the extent to which they understand their progress and what they need to do to improve.
- 2.32 The school has systems in place for pupils' performance to be evaluated both against its own objectives and national norms. Suitable arrangements are used to monitor and evaluate performance through standardised tests, for example at the end of Year 6 and in the senior school and every half-term in English and mathematics. Since the last inspection the school has moved forward significantly in this aspect to identify achievement and to set learning targets for pupils. A good example was seen in a group of lower ability pupils in mathematics, where as a result of close tracking pupils had moved to tailored individual work and were consequently making faster progress. Teachers' use of these systems, however, is not sufficiently robust.
- 2.33 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 care that staff devote to the well-being of pupils is an outstanding feature of the school's provision and is an aspect which has been strengthened since the last inspection. The caring and supportive ethos of the school is very evident and the school's pastoral aims are met. The pupil and parent responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires were very positive about the quality of pastoral care. In interview parents expressed their strong appreciation for the way the school looks after their children. These opinions were corroborated by inspectors.
- 3.2 The staff provide excellent support and guidance for all pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well. Pupils feel they can turn to staff with problems and know that they will be listened to and helped. In discussions with pupils, they said they could talk to teachers, they were not alone in any way and there was someone there for them.
- 3.3 The staff are assisted by very effective pastoral arrangements. The assistant head, heads of house and form teachers work together. Excellent communication, both written and verbal, aids effectiveness. Priorities are the welfare and happiness of the pupils. House assemblies celebrate success and encourage competition.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils is excellent. Pupils have a strong sense of community and help and support each other. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. Prefects are seen very positively and are attached to different year groups. The school council is highly regarded. The strong family feel is emphasised by genuine connections and affiliations across different year groups. Pupils feel that they are listened to and this is a feature of the school that they note and appreciate.
- 3.5 School policies and procedures are effective in promoting good discipline and behaviour. The behaviour seen around the school in its public places was excellent. It is promoted by praise, house points, pupil of the week and a trip for top house point achievers. A clear anti-bullying policy is in place and pupils spoken to were unaware of any bullying. They said that this was because 'nothing gets past teachers and teachers are very observant'.
- 3.6 The school has effective policies for dealing with any child protection issues and they are clearly understood by all staff. The management and the staff are aware of their responsibilities and regular training takes place. Admission and attendance registers are carefully maintained and kept up-to-date.
- 3.7 All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. Regular fire drills take place. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and acted upon including those for trips.
- 3.8 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective and the school has due regard for the health and safety requirements. The sick room arrangements provide a pleasant ambience for those who are sick or distressed.
- 3.9 School meals are of good quality, prepared on site and eaten in suitable accommodation. Lunches provide a range of healthy food, as does the tuck shop at breaktimes. The school travel policy includes targets to reduce car usage and promotes cycling and walking to school. The school encourages regular exercise through its curriculum arrangements.

- 3.10 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

- 3.11 The school has, overall, developed a strong partnership with parents and some positive links with the local community, including contacts with the other two schools within the Oak-Tree Group of Schools. The issues of reporting raised in the previous inspection have been addressed. The performance in these aspects goes some considerable way to meet the school's aims of developing pupils' desire to participate in and contribute to the community as well as its aim of building a happy family school. Pupils' experience of education is enriched by the school's efforts to forge a valuable partnership with both parents and the community in which they live.
- 3.12 Of the total number of questionnaires returned before the inspection, more than half expressed general satisfaction with the broad education provided by the school and a smaller but significant proportion was very pleased with the educational experience provided.
- 3.13 Arrangements for reporting to parents have significantly improved. The school has addressed the issue of report content for both senior and junior pupils and current reports are now both comprehensive and detailed in scope, including National Curriculum assessment levels, the results of standardised tests, target-setting, involvement and citizenship. Parents now have the opportunity to respond to these reports through a parental reply slip. There are also settling-in reports for children in Nursery and Reception as well for any pupil in their first term. Settling-in meetings are also held for parents of Years 6 and 7 pupils. The arrangements for parents' evenings are efficient and promote good dialogue between staff, parents and their children.
- 3.14 The school's grievance procedure policy provides an effective vehicle through which parents can express and resolve issues arising. Parents are actively welcomed in school and are able to approach staff freely to discuss pastoral or academic matters. Parent expertise is employed to promote CPSHE education in the senior school and, as an illustration of parental linkage, one parent is currently enjoying work experience at the school in order to gain a vocational qualification in child care.
- 3.15 Communications to parents are generally good. A school website has been introduced since the last inspection and this is regularly updated to keep parents up to speed with the work of the school. Newsletters from the school are given to parents both electronically and via hard copy. An active and well-organised parental association meets regularly and plays an active role in promoting good relations and organising social events and fund-raising activities.
- 3.16 The school has created some useful links with the wider community. Visits are made by local police officers, members of the fire service, the Transport for London officer, and representatives of local faith communities, to mention but a few. Inspectors attended an assembly on ways of linking with preparations for the Olympic Games, an event which will be local to the school. The school is aware that in order to meet its own aim in this area, it needs to increase pupils' opportunities for more direct involvement in community activity.
- 3.17 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 The governance of the school is good and has improved since the last inspection. One of the proprietors acts as managing principal for all three schools in the Oak-Tree Group of Schools. As such he is actively involved in aspects of management and in setting the school's aims and direction and ensuring that the school meets them to a high standard.
- 4.2 The school, as part of the Oak-Tree Group of Schools is family owned. Effectively the management of the school in non-educational matters is carried out by the principal and the bursar, and educational matters are managed by the headmistress. The delineation of responsibilities resides in the clear job specification of the headmistress. The arrangements allow the principal to have effective oversight of the school whilst allowing the headmistress to exercise her role and responsibilities appropriately and effectively. Regular meetings between the principal, the headmistress and the bursar give the principal the information necessary to be fully conversant with the activities, needs and opportunities facing the school. An evident feature of the structure is the ability to respond rapidly to issues as well as its success in securing improvements since the last inspection. The Oak-Tree Group of Schools relies on the regular inspection of its schools for the external quality assurance of its educational provision.
- 4.3 The principal helps to set and secure appropriate aims and values for the school and provides effective oversight and guidance. He takes all necessary steps to fulfil his responsibilities in maintaining the quality and the development of the school. He takes professional advice on how best to fulfil his legal responsibilities and on how to ensure compliance with regulatory and legal requirements. His involvement in the preparation and review of policies allows him to put in place structures and procedures that provide a framework for the daily work of the school. The professional advice enables him, with the bursar, to very effectively oversee policies such as those of child protection and of health and safety. He and the bursar also draw upon external advice in financial and legal matters.
- 4.4 The principal is appropriately involved in educational development and in financial planning. The good state of repair of the school and the addition of specialist teaching areas, and, in particular, the plans for the replacement of the dining hall are examples of the proprietors' financial commitment to the continuous improvement of educational opportunities for pupils.
- 4.5 Regular and frequent visits to the school as well as formal meetings with the headmistress and the bursar give the principal good insights into the working of the school so that he can effectively support and uphold its aims and ethos and is able to consider the best ways of moving forward. The principal works closely with the headmistress in the appointment of staff and is involved in staff development and so is in a good position to offer advice, support and stimulus for growth and improvement.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The quality of leadership and management is good at all levels of the school, fully supporting its stated ethos, aims and expectations. This represents an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. In part, the substantial progress made by the school on a number of fronts is a consequence of the inspirational and energetic leadership of the headmistress.

- 4.7 Good quality leadership and educational direction are provided by the school's senior staff. The headmistress in particular displays strong leadership and management qualities combined with clear vision, the ability to motivate others and the determination to move the school forward. This is reflected in the quality of the education, the care of the pupils and the fulfilment of the school's aims and ethos. Considerable steps have been taken by the management to improve very important aspects of provision, such as the tracking of pupils' progress, but it is too soon to judge the final impact.
- 4.8 The school's senior staff are effective in analysing its needs, setting priorities, planning to meet those priorities and putting decisions into practice. The school's three-year development plan summarises their strategic thinking. It sets clear and relevant priorities with dates and success criteria.
- 4.9 Management at all levels is effective in drawing up appropriate procedures and policies. All staff have had the opportunity to contribute to new policies such as marking and assessment. Lessons are observed as part of the curriculum development. Performance management is supported by first meetings with line managers to set constructive targets and then further meetings monitoring progress in meeting targets together with audits of pupils' books. Regular relevant weekly in-service training sessions take place for all staff and in addition staff attend training appropriate to their subject and responsibilities.
- 4.10 At all levels the school has been effective in securing good quality staff. Staffing levels help to ensure that support and guidance are given to all pupils, particularly those requiring additional help with LDD. The school is rigorous in what it does to check the identity and qualifications of those it invites to interview. Full checks take place to establish the suitability of all staff to work with children, and these checks are recorded centrally as required. A full support programme is offered for the induction of newly qualified teachers within that organised for independent schools. At the time of the inspection there was one newly qualified teacher on the staff. This is done effectively and thoroughly. The school is also in a teacher training partnership with Middlesex University. New staff are given an induction pack, support and tea with the headmistress.
- 4.11 Financial management is the responsibility of the bursar. Financial resources are well managed in a sensible, conservative manner and have enabled a good husbanding of resources and new buildings. ICT provision has been improved with new computers and some interactive whiteboards. The high quality support and assistance provided by the administrative and other support staff ensures that the school is run efficiently. The school is a settled and orderly community which runs smoothly, despite the complexities of a wide age range on a relatively restricted site.
- 4.12 The committed support staff ensure that the work of the school is supported and is generally administered effectively. Secretarial staff provide a warm welcome to the school and maintenance staff ensure that the buildings and playground are adequately maintained, within resources.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 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 The school meets its aims and aspirations by ensuring that its pupils have a balanced and fulfilling learning experience in a safe and caring environment that nurtures academic, creative, sporting and personal skills. In line with its intentions the school is a family school that is of pride to pupils. The governance of the school by the principal is of high quality, assuring its direction. Coupled with the good leadership and management at all levels, and in particular the clear vision of the headmistress, the school is successfully meeting its own aims. Achievement levels, throughout the school, are high not only on the academic side but in extra-curricular activities. The school is effective in helping its pupils develop as young people and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is generally good. Teaching is good and the teachers go the extra mile in supporting pupils outside the classroom. The teaching provision has been improved by developments in pupil assessment and reporting and improved tracking and support. As at the last inspection a major factor underpinning the success of the school is the school's ethos and in particular the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils. The care, guidance and support of pupils constitute an outstanding feature of the provision.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection the school has made improvements across a wide range. All the issues to which its attention was drawn at the last inspection have been addressed and there have also been improvements in the quality of links with parents and in governance, leadership and management. The school has a robust system of self-evaluation and recognises that it has further work to do in raising the level of challenge for the most able pupils.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 4 In order to improve its provision further the school should take the following steps.
1. Provide more opportunity within lessons for:
 - pupils to be creative
 - pupils to work independently and in groups and/or pairs.
 2. Refine the teaching so that there is more effective provision in lessons for pupils' differences in ability, and especially for the more able.
 3. Allow sufficient time and emphasis for new policies and procedures to become embedded and reviewed.

No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 2nd to 5th March 2009. 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 an assembly. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Dr Stephen Grounds	Reporting Inspector
Mr Lance Andrews	Head of Year and Department, IAPS school
Mrs Judith Scotcher	Head of Junior School, GSA school
Mr Sean Hamill	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Ruth Mann	Headmistress, GSA school