



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE MOUNT SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Mount School

Full Name of School	The Mount School		
DfE Number	302/6010		
Registered Charity Number	312593		
Address	The Mount School Milespit Hill London NW7 2RX		
Telephone Number	020 8959 3403		
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Email Address	admin@mountschool.com		
Headteacher	Ms Catherine Cozens		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Stephanie Williamson		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	243		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 78
	3-5 (EYFS)	10	11-18: 155
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	243	
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	18 Jan 2011 to 19 Jan 2011		
	16 Feb 2011 to 18 Feb 2011		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2007.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Mount School, a day school for girls aged from four to eighteen, was established in 1925 and moved to its present location in a suburb of north London in 1935. It aims to provide high quality pastoral care and education, preparing girls for adult life in a school atmosphere within which they are valued and supported. It seeks to encourage each girl's academic ability and talents as well as her involvement in the wider school community. The school is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The governing body meets six times a year. The current headteacher has been in post since 2009. There have been no significant changes in the nature of the school since the last inspection.
- 1.2 There are currently 243 girls enrolled. There are ten girls in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); the setting is located in one of the Junior School buildings and has its own dedicated outdoor play area. There are currently 22 girls in the sixth form, which is to be closed in 2012. The ability profile of girls in the Junior School is broadly in line with the national average. In the Senior School, the ability range varies between year groups, with the majority of older pupils being of above average ability. The limited amount of data available for the sixth form suggests that pupils' ability is slightly above the national average. Sixth-form leavers go on to university or colleges of higher education. Four pupils are identified with statements of special educational needs (SEN); three are funded by the local authority. There are thirty-six girls who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and thirteen receive specialist support within the school.
- 1.3 Pupils come predominantly from business families. The catchment area is relatively small, most pupils living relatively close to the school. Pupils have a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, including many whose families are from Japan or Kenya. The school identifies 93 girls for whom English is an additional language (EAL), of whom 50 receive support within school.
- 1.4 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 Mount School provides a good quality of education for pupils, in line with its aims. The girls in the EYFS make good progress in all six areas of learning. Results in national tests at the age of eleven indicate that Junior School girls achieve well and make good progress. Senior girls' progress and their attainment at GCSE and A level are above the average for those in maintained schools. The girls are literate and all, including those with EAL or LDD, are able to express themselves well. New pupils from overseas swiftly gain confidence in English with the support of the school's English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) department. Pupils' numerical skills are sound and girls show a satisfactory understanding of scientific concepts. They use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently for research and presentation. Pupils' creative development is good and they achieve success in local music and drama festivals. They enjoy sports, competing with some success locally. The girls are cheerfully compliant learners who work co-operatively. When encouraged to do so, they can think for themselves, although they are often content to remain passive and teachers do not always provide them with sufficient challenge. Teachers do not use standardised assessment data effectively to support their planning.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy the limited opportunities the school offers for extra-curricular activities. Throughout the school the girls are courteous, cheerful and open in their dealings with adults and each other. There is a marked sense of a harmonious, happy school community. Pupils treat each other and their teachers with respect. Their behaviour is usually very good. The school's pastoral structures are strong, ensuring that all pupils are safeguarded and cared for as individuals and know they can turn to their teachers for help. The school's practical arrangements ensure that it provides a safe, secure environment for all pupils.
- 2.3 Governance is satisfactory overall and has ensured that regulatory failures previously identified are now being addressed. Governors have a good relationship with the headteacher which is enabling sound planning for the future. Leadership and management are good at senior level and satisfactory elsewhere. The senior management team (SMT) is formalising assessment and monitoring procedures. Much has been achieved in the time since the current headteacher's appointment. In the few responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, the overall majority of parents were strongly supportive of the school. A small number expressed concerns about the degree of challenge given to pupils and the narrow range of extra-curricular opportunities available. Inspectors felt that there is some justice in these concerns.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it was required to:
- ensure that the admission register contains all the required information, and that daily attendance registers are correctly completed [Part 3, paragraph 17., under Welfare, health and safety];
 - ensure that references are received and checked before staff take up an appointment [Part 3, paragraph 7.(b), under Welfare, health and safety, and, for the same reason, Part 4, paragraphs 19.(2)(b) and 19.(3), under Suitability of staff and proprietors];
 - ensure that there are separate washrooms for staff and pupils throughout the school, and that showers are available for pupils over the age of eleven after physical exercise [Part 5, paragraph 23.(j), under Premises and accommodation].
- 2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified almost all of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report. However, the following requirement remains unresolved, and therefore the school must:
- ensure that showers are available for pupils over the age of eleven after physical exercise [Part 5, paragraph 23.(j), under Premises and accommodation].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Develop the role of middle managers to ensure consistency of standards, expectations and the use of standardised assessment data.
 2. Provide training in a range of teaching strategies to ensure greater challenge and opportunities for independent thinking for all pupils.
 3. Expand the provision of clubs and activities available for pupils.
 4. In the EYFS, develop outdoor provision in order to provide a better balance between indoor and outdoor activities across all six areas of learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The school meets its aims of encouraging academic ability, talent and involvement in the school community. Pupils at all levels demonstrate competent speaking and listening skills. They read aloud fluently and with expression. They write confidently; at the time of inspection, Year 7 pupils were creating lively eerie stories and using ICT for research and presentation. Good use of ICT was also seen in a Year 6 class. Pupils handle numbers competently. When provided with the opportunity, pupils demonstrate logical and independent thought. For example, in a lesson on fractions Year 4 pupils showed good deductive powers and in a Year 7 history lesson pupils wrote letters providing a range of advice to Richard II on how to deal with the Peasants' Revolt. The pupils enjoy physical activity, both in team games, where those in Year 3 were seen developing throwing and catching skills, and in lessons for older girls focused on health and personal fitness. Pupils also enjoy some success in local fixtures, with teams from Years 7 to 11 entering the borough's schools netball league and the Year 9 team becoming borough champions. The pupils' level of achievement in art, music and drama is good, with a number of passes in graded music, speech and drama examinations. Some have entered and succeeded in local arts festivals, both as individuals and as teams. Girls achieve success in ESOL examinations. Girls are proud that the school displays their art work in local venues. In 2010, ten pupils achieved the silver level and eight the bronze level of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- 3.2 Pupils' attainment is good. For the years 2007 to 2009, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available, results in national tests at the age of eleven have been good in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. GCSE results have been good in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools. In 2010, more than half the grades achieved at GCSE were at A* or A. International GCSE (IGCSE) results have been higher than international norms but lower than UK norms, where the benchmark is higher. Results at A level have been slightly above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Data from national tests and other evidence seen during the inspection indicate that progress at the age of eleven is good when compared with the average for pupils of similar ability. GCSE and A-level results indicate that senior pupils' progress is above the average for pupils of similar ability.
- 3.3 Pupils are conscientious learners. They are well behaved, settle to work quickly, waste little time and take notes assiduously, although not all take pride in the presentation of their work. They work well in pairs and small groups. They tend, however, to be rather passive learners, and there was limited evidence of them exercising independent thinking, conducting their own research or posing their own questions. They enjoy being involved in house activities and a house bonding day was especially popular, allowing pupils of all ages to work together.

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

- 3.4 The curricular provision throughout the school is good and extra-curricular provision satisfactory. The provision is suitable for all ages, abilities and needs, and supports the school's aims of encouraging each girl's academic ability and talents as well as her involvement with the wider school community.
- 3.5 The school's curriculum is extended beyond the National Curriculum. All pupils learn French from Reception to Year 9 and study Spanish in Years 8 and 9. Both languages are offered at GCSE level. Japanese is taught to all girls in Years 4 to 6 and taken as an extra GCSE and at A level by some older pupils. Latin and classical civilisation are part of the curriculum for all girls in the Senior School until the end of Year 9, with some choosing to continue to A level. The science department has introduced the IGCSE, which increases the range of curricular opportunities available. The ESOL department is a particular strength of the school. The very good support it provides enables pupils with EAL to access the mainstream curriculum quickly. Girls with statements of SEN or with LDD can receive helpful weekly individual tuition in the learning support department.
- 3.6 Since the last inspection, the time allocated to science, personal, social and health education (PSHE), design and technology, and ICT in the Junior School has been increased. Some imbalances in the timetable still continue, compounded by the uneven length of lessons. The provision of PSHE has been improved, and it is now taught as a discrete subject up to Year 10 and in tutor time in Year 11. Solutions have been found to ensure that Year 11 have physical education (PE) provision and there are plans to ensure that this is more smoothly integrated into the curriculum in the future. There is no provision for PE in the sixth form.
- 3.7 The school arranges many curriculum related trips to enrich the girls' experiences and learning, ranging from biology and geography field trips to art trips for Years 8 and 11, and a visit to a safety awareness centre for Year 4. Cultural visits to Spain and France take place annually and at the time of the inspection, pupils were about to leave for a ski trip to Spain.
- 3.8 The guidance given to sixth-form pupils as they consider university choices is good and much appreciated. Younger girls feel well supported by their teachers when choosing GCSE subjects. Careers guidance otherwise relies on annual units in PSHE lessons and access to an external careers guidance service. The school recognises the need for more precise guidance for pupils in Years 10 and 11 with the forthcoming closure of the sixth form.
- 3.9 The range of extra-curricular activities provided is limited, many clubs being in reality opportunities for further tuition, but is judged to be satisfactory given the small size of the school. No enrichment or extra-curricular provision is available for girls in the sixth form. The girls enjoy occasional lunch time house quizzes and competitions. Sports clubs available at different times of the year include netball, fencing, athletics and football, and other clubs include gardening, chess and art. Musical activities include an orchestra and four choirs. Involvement in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award gives girls the opportunity to participate in some local community service.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 The overall standard of teaching is satisfactory and often good. It supports the aims of the school in encouraging each girl to achieve her academic potential.
- 3.11 Teachers know their pupils well. They ensure that pupils with EAL are given the extra attention they need to become involved in lessons and quickly integrated into the mainstream curriculum. Sensitivity to these pupils' needs was seen when a teacher discreetly provided translations of the lesson's key terms. At times, as in a Year 9 French class, teachers show acute awareness of individuals' lack of understanding as a lesson progresses. Overall, however, there was little evidence of teachers ensuring that the work was appropriate to the varying needs and abilities of all pupils. Teachers usually maintain good classroom control with a light touch. They create an atmosphere in which pupils know that they are expected to work hard and do so. Teaching is less successful in creating a culture that encourages independent thinking and intellectual curiosity. In many cases the teaching is heavily reliant on worksheets and an approach that limits the opportunity for pupils to formulate their own opinions; teachers are swift to provide answers and to tell the girls what to write down rather than encouraging them to work things out for themselves.
- 3.12 Lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge. The best lessons are characterised by a lively pace, appropriate challenge and enthusiastic delivery, which encourages good progress; this was seen in a Year 11 mathematics class and in demanding art and music lessons. The pupils' enjoyment of such challenges was palpable. In some lessons, the teacher's focus is on completing a topic without allowing time to ensure the pupils' understanding. In others, the pace is so leisurely that the volume of work covered is insufficient. In some cases, teachers make a conscious effort to share the lesson's objectives with the class which helps pupils form a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn and to make good progress.
- 3.13 A few teachers make good use of ICT, using the interactive white boards effectively. Some encourage the girls to research on the internet, for example for a Year 6 history project. In some subjects, teaching encourages the use of word processing or publishing packages and photographic software programs. A number of teachers are less confident in the use of technology and are not exploiting the potential of the school's facilities.
- 3.14 The standard of teachers' marking is inconsistent within and across subjects; this was mentioned in the last report. The best marking shows the teacher's good understanding of an individual, gives praise and encouragement, and makes helpful comments. Some marking is little more than a tick or cross, with comments reduced to a cursory 'good' or 'incomplete'. Teachers set assessment tests and half-yearly examinations to help the girls' awareness of their progress. However, the routine use of standardised assessment data to support teachers' planning and to ensure that appropriate progress is being made by all pupils is in its infancy; a number of teachers lack confidence in using this to monitor girls' progress during the term.

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 pupils' personal development is good. Pupils approach others' faiths with respect and grow in a sensitive appreciation of a range of beliefs, helped by the school's commitment to drawing on a broad range of religious traditions. Pupils listen thoughtfully to presentations in assembly. A meditation from the writings of Pope John XXIII clearly struck a chord with girls as they reflected on the way they approach the pressures of their daily lives. They develop self-confidence and are encouraged to believe in their own potential; they joined enthusiastically in a song with the chorus: 'I can do anything I want if I just believe in me.' Consequently, pupils develop a strong sense of self-belief and by the time they reach the sixth form are articulate, assured young women.
- 4.2 Pupils have a good awareness of moral issues. In Year 4 tutor time, pupils talked to their teacher about the dilemmas created when they saw a friend doing something which they knew was wrong and were reassured in their belief to have the courage to speak out. All pupils are very clear that bullying behaviour is unacceptable and show a good understanding of the need to treat others with courtesy and respect. Their understanding is furthered by discussions in lessons on ethical issues. Their behaviour generally is good and they understand and respect the school's behavioural expectations. They are swift to step in with offers of help when they see someone else struggling.
- 4.3 Pupils are socially adept, relaxed and articulate in conversation. Sixth-form girls are welcoming guides and speakers at open days. Pupils are courteous and helpful to visitors. They enjoy and value others' company; many girls spontaneously described the school community as 'like a big family' where each member cares for the others. Those with responsibilities discharge these sensibly. Girls elected to be representatives on the school council, known as the 'school parliament', take responsibility for expressing their peers' views to the school leadership. The pupils appreciate the parliament as an effective platform for them to raise issues and contribute to the development of the school community.
- 4.4 The girls are responsive to the needs of others less fortunate than themselves. They have supported a continuing link with a school in Ghana and have raised considerable amounts to help, for example paying for a new roof. Other local and national charities are supported, the decisions about the ones on which to focus being made in houses or the school parliament. Pupils raise money through enjoyable activities, some of which they initiate and organise, such as a very popular doughnut sale organised by the sixth form.
- 4.5 Pupils grow in a natural understanding of, and respect for, cultural diversity as a result of the many nationalities represented. New girls, many from Japan or Kenya, commented on how swiftly they came to feel a part of the school. The Junior School pupils enjoy their opportunity to learn Japanese and something of their Japanese classmates' culture. Some striking art work on display shows an intriguing combination of eastern and western traditions. Pupils and staff live and work alongside each other cheerfully and harmoniously, the vibrant mix of cultures enhancing these relationships.

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

- 4.6 Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good, and the school meets its aims of ensuring that girls are educated in an atmosphere in which they feel valued and supported. The pastoral care given by the school is a strength; teachers know their pupils well and relationships throughout the school are warm, friendly and relaxed. The care given to pupils with specific physical needs is exemplary. Pupils respect and like their teachers. They trust them and feel confident that they can turn to them for help with their work or with personal concerns. The regenerated house system is strongly encouraging a good sense of school community and allowing pupils to get to know each other better across the age range and to work together for charity. Pupils enjoy each other's company and help one another as a matter of course.
- 4.7 The school has highly effective measures in place to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and feel sure that they can approach teachers for swift help if they are unhappy. School rules are respected. Pupils' good behaviour and efforts are recognised by staff with house points and commendations; appropriate sanctions are in place when needed.
- 4.8 The school takes the safeguarding of its pupils very seriously. Before this inspection began, the headteacher had identified historic errors in procedures for carrying out the routine checks on staff before allowing them to take up their appointments and the school had done what it could to rectify the shortcomings, given the time elapsed. Procedures since 2007 have been thoroughly robust and inspectors concluded that safeguarding in the school is now good. The regulatory failures concerning the completion of daily attendance registers and the admission register reported at the time of the initial visit were corrected by the time of the inspectors' return and the school is now compliant in these respects.
- 4.9 Given the constraints of the school's site and buildings, some of which are listed, there is a good plan for increasing access for pupils with disabilities. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils who are ill or injured. A suitable number of staff are trained in first aid and are confident in providing initial care. There has been a useful report from the fire authority and the school has implemented its suggestions swiftly; all measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are in place. Risk assessments for activities in school and for trips are extremely thorough and most effective. School lunches provide appetising and healthy choices, with fresh fruits, salads and home-made yoghurts and breads available. Pupils are taught the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and those in Years 9 and 10 were seen thoroughly enjoying energetic aerobic sessions. Opportunities for physical exercise are limited for sixth-form pupils.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is satisfactory overall. Since the last inspection, the composition of the governing body has changed almost entirely and it has become more aware of and active in discharging the responsibilities of governorship in line with the school's aims. Relationships with the headteacher are very good. The headteacher has made great efforts to ensure that the governors are now given good insight into the challenges and opportunities for the school so that they are fully informed before taking strategic decisions. Governors have responded positively, supporting the headteacher vigorously in taking some difficult decisions to ensure the school's future success, including a recent decision to close the sixth form when the current Year 12 leave. Governors have been actively involved in formulating a realistic development plan. A clear vision of what the school is to be and what use is to be made of current facilities once the sixth form closes has yet to emerge.
- 5.2 Governors take their legal responsibilities seriously and responded swiftly to the emergence of historic regulatory failings. Governors are trained in safeguarding and child protection issues, and one has specific responsibility for the Junior School. Governors exercise a satisfactory oversight of educational standards and are formally linked to curriculum areas in order to enrich further their understanding of the school's daily life.
- 5.3 Many of the school buildings are attractive and well maintained, as are the school grounds, although the required provision for showers for pupils over the age of eleven has not yet been met. Governors are conscious of other areas that need further refurbishment and updating as finances allow. They have invested in improved ICT facilities which have helped to ensure that the pupils are prepared for life in an increasingly technological world.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the school are good at senior levels and satisfactory at middle management levels. Clear-sighted and thorough review of the school's structures and procedures has resulted in a restructuring of the staff and the SMT. SMT members now have clearly defined roles, which the leadership is keeping under review; this is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. The management of the school's daily routines is efficient. At times, however, this is achieved to the detriment of the time senior leaders have available for monitoring and strategic thinking.
- 5.5 Under the headteacher's strong leadership, there is a clear educational direction prioritising the aim of ensuring that all pupils achieve their full academic potential while maintaining the warm pastoral care that characterises the school. A clearly structured performance management procedure has been introduced to formalise the monitoring of standards of teaching and learning. Members of the SMT take responsibility for discussing with heads of department their departmental performance and this has had a clear impact in some subject areas. Oversight of how all staff progress in their agreed targets is not uniformly effective, however, and inconsistencies occur that are not dealt with by heads of department. There are no subject co-ordinators within the Junior School and clear procedures for ensuring consistency at this level are lacking.

- 5.6 Since the last inspection, effective procedures collect standardised data to benchmark and track pupils' progress. Some staff use these effectively, but others are less confident in the use of this data. Despite the encouragement of senior leaders, the potential of using data to help track pupils' progress and set appropriate targets is not yet exploited by middle management.
- 5.7 Staff are appropriately qualified and the school encourages their continuing professional development. Leadership has ensured that all staff have a thorough understanding of child protection issues and receive regular training. All required legal checks are carried out prior to staff appointments and inspectors were satisfied that the historic failures identified at the time of the initial visit have been addressed. There are now separate washrooms for pupils and staff throughout the school. Plans have been drawn up to install the required facilities for pupils over the age of eleven to shower after physical exercise. The leadership team has had the courage to make difficult decisions for the good of the school and open, honest leadership has ensured that staff understand the reasons for these.

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

- 5.8 The school has a satisfactory and constructive relationship with parents that supports the development of pupils, in accordance with its vision and aims. The Parents' Association, established two years ago, aims to enhance parental involvement with the school and encourages parents to be involved in fund-raising and social events.
- 5.9 Parents are satisfied with the quality of communication with the school. All the required statutory policies and information about the school are readily available to parents of existing or prospective pupils on the website or in printed communications sent to parents. A prize giving evening was introduced in September 2009 and appreciated by parents as an opportunity to allow them to share in their children's successes. Parents are welcomed into school to help in the classroom of the younger children, for example by listening to reading. During the inspection, some older family members visited the school to share their experiences of World War 2 with the girls.
- 5.10 Parents receive useful reports, grade sheets and progress sheets about their daughters at appropriate intervals in the school year. These are thorough and helpful, and recently much improved. There are regular opportunities to meet staff at formal parents' evenings; for most year groups these happen twice a year. The smart and professional newsletters are informative, ensuring that parents are kept up to date with the school's activities.
- 5.11 The school's complaints procedure is compliant and any concerns from parents are handled sensitively. The responses of parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire revealed a high degree of satisfaction with the education provided by the school. Parents were particularly appreciative of the range of subjects offered, pastoral care and behavioural expectations. A small number said that they felt the work set for their daughters is not sufficiently challenging and expressed discontent with the range of extra-curricular activities available. Inspectors agreed with these concerns.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. It is successful in meeting its aim of providing a setting that is inclusive and values each child as an individual. Good quality teaching, careful planning and high expectations help children to make good progress in their learning and development, and ensure that their individual needs are met. There is a broad range of activities that foster independence and a love of learning in a happy and safe environment. The staff promote good manners and helpfulness, with the result that the children are polite, well behaved and considerate towards others. Appropriate health and safety, and safeguarding procedures ensure children's welfare. There has been some improvement in outdoor provision since the last inspection. As there is no direct access to this from the classroom, however, the provision is still limited and does not serve as an extension of the indoor classroom. The setting has the capacity to continue to make good progress.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are good overall. One historic failure, now rectified, means that safeguarding is now secure. Staff are suitably trained and hold current paediatric first aid certificates. Inclusive practice is strongly promoted so that all children are cared for and achieve as well as they can, regardless of background or ability. There are clear priorities for improvement and development. Planning is thorough, ensuring breadth and balance across all areas of learning. Staff are supported by suitable policies and are well aware of their responsibilities. They work together as a happy, caring and effective team. Parents' comments indicate a high level of satisfaction.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is good. Children are well supported by the caring staff, so flourish and feel secure. Observation is used effectively to guide planning and to target the next steps for each child. Challenging, purposeful play provides a good balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated learning activities. Children's experiences are enriched by good specialist teaching for music, French and ballet. Daily routines run smoothly and the staff actively promote children's welfare by teaching them how to stay safe and healthy.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are good. Children achieve and develop well, making at least good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. By the end of the Reception year, most children are on course to achieve all the Early Learning Goals. They are happy, independent learners who respond well to activities and enjoy choosing their own tasks. They make good progress in numeracy and literacy, and demonstrate well-developed computer skills and a growing knowledge of the world. They are well behaved, and are learning to work co-operatively and take turns. They respond well to praise and encouragement, deriving great pleasure from their learning. Active participation in a variety of creative role play activities expands their understanding of the wider world. The children understand the importance of eating healthily, being safe and maintaining good hygiene.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Colette Culligan	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sylvia Chetwood	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mrs Sarah Evans	Head, GSA school
Mrs Kathryn Matthews	Head, GSA school
Mr Peter Rushforth	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Lynda Sharpe	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector