



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

## **NORTHBOURNE PARK SCHOOL STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Northbourne Park School

Full Name of School	<b>Northbourne Park School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>886/6004</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>280048</b>		
Address	<b>Northbourne Park School Betteshanger Deal Kent CT14 0NW</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01304 611215</b>		
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Email Address	<b>office@northbournepark.com</b>		
Head	<b>Mr Edward Balfour</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Professor Michael Wright CBE, DL</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>187</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (108 boys; 79 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>91</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>16</b>	11-18: <b>80</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>140</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding: <b>Yes</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>47</b>	
	Full:	<b>40</b>	Weekly: <b>7</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Julia Exley</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>12 Oct 2010 to 13 Oct 2010</b>		
	<b>08 Nov 2010 to 10 Nov 2010</b>		

## 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 November 2004.

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 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It 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 and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in October 2009 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit

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

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Northbourne Park School was formed from two schools in 1980. It is a co-educational school that offers day and boarding places for boys and girls aged from three to thirteen, set on the Betteshanger Estate between Canterbury and Deal. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. It aims to give children the best possible preparation for their next steps in life through a rich variety of academic, extra-curricular and pastoral experiences. Outdoor education and a leadership programme are important features of the curriculum, along with music, languages, sport and drama. Two parallel classes of French speaking pupils in the preparatory school run alongside Years 7 and 8, the sixième and cinquième.
- 1.2 There are 108 boys and 79 girls on roll, 16 of whom are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school is divided into two distinct sections. The Old Rectory consists of four classes, Nursery and Reception (EYFS) and Years 1 and 2. The preparatory school hosts Years 3 to 8 and sixième and cinquième. The latter two are taught by French staff in mathematics, French, history and geography, following the French national curriculum in these subjects, all other studies being taught in English. A total of 47 pupils board in two separate boys' and girls' boarding houses. Forty pupils are full-time boarders and seven are weekly boarders. Since the last inspection in 2004, developments have included a new girls' boarding house, sports changing rooms, a new science laboratory and refurbished music rooms. A new headmaster was appointed in September 2008 and a new chairman of governors in February 2010.
- 1.3 The majority of new pupils come from local day schools and a variety of backgrounds though most are white with UK heritage. Those in sixième and cinquième come mostly from France, Belgium or Spain. The pupils are assessed on entry by school report and interview and by spending a day in school with the appropriate class or subject teacher. Pupils joining French classes provide some evidence of their proficiency in English. The majority gain entry to a range of day and boarding schools when they leave at the age of thirteen. French children have to pass exams to qualify for the classe supérieure on return home.
- 1.4 The school monitors ability and progress using verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests. Results in national tests at age eleven have been above the national average for maintained primary schools. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. At the time of the inspection, 26 pupils had been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), though none have statements of special educational needs or receive support from public funds. All 40 sixième and cinquième pupils receive English as an additional language (EAL) support.

- 1.5 The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

***Early Years Foundation Stage Setting***

School	NC name
N	Nursery
R	Reception

***Pre-preparatory***

School	NC name
Class 1	Year 1
Class 2	Year 2

***Preparatory***

School	NC name
3P	Year 3
4H	Year 4
5R	Year 5
6S	Year 6
7C and 7R	Year 7
8T and 8W	Year 8
Sixième	Year 7
Cinquième	Year 8

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 Throughout the preparatory and pre-preparatory school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, all pupils are successful in their learning. The school is successful in its aims to provide its pupils with a wide range of academic, extra-curricular and pastoral opportunities, and accomplishments are noteworthy in music, languages, sport and outward bound activities. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education with strong links to schools in the locality. Good progress is supported by considerable application and perseverance. Teaching is good overall with the best lessons demonstrating variety, pace and challenge. A strong emphasis on extra-curricular activities and an extensive range of opportunities at school enables pupils to prosper.
- 2.2 Throughout the school, the personal development of pupils is exceptional, and is sustained by the excellent pastoral care, safeguarding and welfare arrangements and health and safety measures. Pupils are respectful and cooperate well with each other when working together. Throughout the preparatory school, older pupils develop supportive relationships with younger pupils, and there are good opportunities for all pupils to take on responsibility. In the questionnaire, pupils were generally very positive about the school and the way in which it cares for them. There is little mention of bullying amongst pupils and any instances are dealt with immediately. For those who board at the school, additional responsibilities promote self-reliance and independence. Pupils' positive awareness of those less fortunate than themselves promotes charitable giving.
- 2.3 Governors have a clear oversight of the school and, together with the headmaster, have responded positively to the recommendations from previous inspection reports, particularly those related to improving the quality of strategic planning, the complaints procedure and the quality and standards of care for pupils who board. All matters have now been fully rectified. Strong leadership and management promote effective policies and procedures that provide constructive support for pupils. The documentation for curriculum planning is detailed and comprehensive, generally matching work to pupils' differing abilities. The provision for pupils with LDD, including those requiring EAL, is good overall. Parents are most appreciative of the progress pupils make at school and the nurturing care and support their children receive. Links with parents, carers and guardians are strong. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all that the school achieves.

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

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

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

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

- 2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Allocate sufficient time to staff to enable regular monitoring of teaching and the sharing of identified good practice.
  2. Ensure that the different educational needs of all pupils in the preparatory school are met.
  3. Establish a suitable assessment scheme to be used across the whole school.
  4. Further develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by all children and staff, including those in the EYFS, and integrate its use across a broader range of subjects.

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

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

- 3.1 Throughout the school, including the EYFS, all pupils achieve good and sometimes excellent standards in academic work and activities, becoming well-rounded young people. The school's aims to provide all its pupils with high-quality learning across a wide range of academic, extra-curricular and pastoral experiences are met. Results in national tests at age eleven are above the national average for maintained primary schools. The evidence from lessons and from work scrutinised during the inspection supports this judgement, and suggests that pupils' progress is above the average for pupils of similar ability.
- 3.2 From an early age, pupils show good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill. Confident conversation and considerate listening were evident in pupil interviews and in lessons. Older pupils are capable of astute independent thought and are able to put together persuasive and coherent arguments in order to justify their point of view. The pupils write cohesively across a range of genres and, overall, presentation of written assignments is well organised and clearly focused. They work carefully and with perseverance to solve problems in mathematics and grasp well key ideas in subjects such as geography and history. They make sensible deductions from evidence in science, reflect carefully on social issues through personal, social and health education (PSHE) and assemblies and quickly learn and apply new skills in physical education (PE) and music. Pupils have good ICT skills, although the opportunities to develop these fully across a range of subjects are at an early stage of development. The diversity of art work shows a good level of imagination combined with equal skill in execution, though this quality is not consistently reflected in the way pupils' work is displayed in other subjects around the preparatory school. English speaking pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 8 have a good grasp of three languages and pupils from European countries speak English to a very high level of fluency.
- 3.3 Pupils with LDD make good progress and those with EAL achieve high standards of fluency in spoken and written English. French pupils achieve high standards of attainment in formal EAL examinations. The school's many team and individual successes reflect the quality of collaboration, instruction and direction. In particular, these qualities are developed through an excellent leadership programme of outward bound activities organised at weekends. A significant proportion of pupils taking music examinations obtain merits or distinctions, some in high grades. Pupils' achievements in local music festivals, concerts and events are considerable, and these indicate the high standard of practical music throughout the school. Pupils achieve a high level of success in sports, music and academic scholarships, as well as entrance examinations to senior schools. Overall, pupils of all ages have positive attitudes to learning, settling and applying themselves during lessons. They show enthusiasm and enjoyment in all that they do and these qualities support their good learning and achievement.

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

- 3.4 The school provides an outstanding curriculum and extra-curricular activities. This excellent provision for all the pupils, including those in the EYFS, ensures that it meets the aims of, 'blurring the boundaries between academic pursuits and other educational experiences whilst making the educational journey of each child fun and stimulating. The curriculum is broad and well balanced, and includes all the required areas of learning. An unusual addition is the leadership skills programme, which is based on problem solving and the development of initiative and self-reliance through outdoor education. Several staff speak French as a second language and the French and Spanish pupils in sixième and cinquième give the senior part of the school a distinctly European ambience. French is taught from the Nursery and Spanish and Latin from Year 5. Excellent use is made of the extensive grounds for environmental learning, scientific study and outward-bound activities, so that even the youngest children are keenly aware of seasonal differences and their impact on wildlife. The good quality of the facilities for sport enables the school to offer a wide-ranging programme.
- 3.5 Pupils are prepared thoroughly for tests to gain entry to their next schools. The needs of pupils of all abilities are met, with support for those experiencing difficulty being carefully considered. Individual education plans that have focused targets are prepared for these pupils and are reviewed regularly. Excellent EAL provision for the French pupils ensures that they are quickly integrated into the life of the school. Higher achieving pupils are encouraged to pursue lines of enquiry in independent research.
- 3.6 A broad range of timetabled, seasonal clubs is offered that captures the interest of all the pupils. During the day, activities include academic, sporting and creative opportunities, such as science, dancing, gardening, clay pigeon shooting and triathlon. In the evening a bi-lingual group meets each week along with a 'Sophists' group who debate pertinent literary issues. Drama enjoys a high profile in the school and parents comment favourably on the standard of productions. In addition, the pupils have many opportunities to demonstrate qualities of leadership through the organisation of their own activities. An outstanding programme of enrichment, in which pupils are taken on trips and visits, supports the curriculum extremely well. During term time, fortnightly Sunday morning sung communion services are arranged in the local church that the general public may attend, and the school organises weekly adult evening classes in French conversation. These and other similar activities foster strong links with the area enabling pupils to feel part of the local community. Pupils are keen to help those less fortunate than themselves as demonstrated by their concern when a group raised money for the Haiti earthquake appeal.

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

- 3.7 Teaching is good overall. It promotes the progress that results in pupils' good attainment in line with the school's aims. At its most successful, high quality teaching is characterised by well-prepared, interesting lessons and work that demands high standards from pupils of all abilities. Pupils benefit from some specialist-taught lessons in which teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subject. Teachers make good use of time, use a range of resources effectively, including the school grounds, and are well organised.
- 3.8 In Years 7 and 8, pupils are taught in ability groups and tasks are generally adapted to their needs and capabilities. The most successful lessons include challenging extension tasks that deepen understanding for the most able. The most successful teaching questions pupils skilfully and is characterised by a flexible approach that is adjusted according to the pupils' responses. Where lessons observed lacked sufficient variety, pace and challenge this led to pupils losing concentration and behaving less responsibly. Lesson preparation is effective and pupils understand what is expected of them. Varied teaching methods, employing group discussion, paired work and some independent research, hold pupils' attention, so that they achieve good levels of attainment. However, ICT is not being used consistently across the school to support subject teaching, although interactive whiteboards are beginning to be used effectively by teachers. The library is plentifully stocked and accessible to pupils for project and independent work. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes ensure that they benefit from the good teaching. Homework, which is set regularly, appropriately reinforces and extends work undertaken in class.
- 3.9 Since the last inspection, arrangements to assess and track pupils' performance have developed further. Results from standardised tests in reading, spelling, mathematics and English, as well as commercially available tests and the school's own internal exams, are available to staff. These provide a valuable means of identifying and checking pupils' abilities and progress throughout the school. The school has an effective system to identify and support pupils with LDD. Teachers are kept informed of the nature of pupils' difficulties and the implications for class teaching, and additional support is organised where necessary. In the preparatory school this wealth of information is not sufficiently used to meet the different needs of pupils or to help to inform the next phase of their education. Work is conscientiously marked, and generally follows the school's own marking scheme.

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

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

- 4.1 Pupils' personal development is excellent and the school achieves its aims extremely well. Pupils' refined spirituality is developed through chapel services and assemblies where the pupils are encouraged to consider and explore aspects of their lives by sharing Christian hymns and prayers. They learn to appreciate the wonders of the natural world outdoors through play in the school grounds and through the leadership programme. Younger pupils responded with astonishment and wonder when listening to Greek myths for the first time. The pupils are reflective and self-critical and show a clear awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils show an understanding of right and wrong with maturity for their respective ages and appreciate the benefits to their community of having rules that are respected by all. They fully accept these rules to be appropriate and generally feel certain that they are applied fairly by staff in a manner which protects them and which has their best interests at heart. Pupils have many opportunities to show their concern for others and they show initiative and enthusiasm in raising money for charities.
- 4.2 Pupils' social development is outstanding. They carry out responsibly the role of form representative in the school council; the recent installation of extra water fountains resulted from a suggestion made by pupils. Year 8 pupils are promoted to a range of leadership posts, such as head boy and head girl, which are undertaken conscientiously and with a sense of pride. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally very warm with a healthy balance between the formal and the relaxed, leading to an atmosphere of trust and happiness around the school. It is particularly noticeable how girls and boys of all ages socialise very easily with each other. Pupils have an excellent understanding of public institutions and services in England, for example through a recent visit by Year 8 pupils to the House of Lords. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education with instructive talks concerning sex, drugs and health. The leadership programme has a significant impact upon the pupils' social development and contributes to the high levels of teamwork, independence and initiative observed in the pupils. Pupils show an extremely mature awareness, tolerance and understanding of people from different faiths and backgrounds, exemplified by the very successful integration of so many French and other European pupils into the school. All this bodes well for their future adult lives and their economic well-being.

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

- 4.3 The staff provide excellent support and guidance for their pupils, valuing and celebrating the contributions they make to the school and the wider community. Children in the EYFS are cared for exceptionally well. In accordance with the school's aim, the staff successfully foster natural inquisitiveness, curiosity and a sense of awe in the pupils within the framework of a nurturing learning environment. The strong relationship between staff and pupils is based on mutual trust and respect. The pupils themselves interact with kindness and courtesy towards each other, regardless of age, gender or nationality.
- 4.4 The school has effective procedures for behaviour management, but pupils' behaviour is almost invariably good. On the very few occasions when it has been unacceptable matters have been dealt with constructively and appropriately. Surrounding woodland areas have been appropriately assessed for risk and are

supervised effectively by staff. There is little bullying and pupils are confident that, should there be any, staff will deal with it quickly and effectively. Claims by a very small number of pupils in the questionnaire that staff do not treat pupils equally were not substantiated by written comments or in conversation with them. All pupils, including those in the EYFS, are safeguarded by a robust policy that is implemented well, with all staff being trained in child protection at the correct levels for their responsibilities.

- 4.5 The admission and attendance registers are properly used and retained. Comprehensive measures are in place to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards, and all staff have received appropriate fire training. Electrical equipment is checked appropriately and all health and safety documentation is thorough. Information on accidents and on the administration of medicines is recorded accurately. Some staff have received training in first aid, and pupils who are ill are cared for by medical staff in well-equipped facilities. The school has a detailed plan to improve educational access for pupils with disabilities. The benefits of a healthy diet and the taking of regular exercise are promoted strongly in science and physical education lessons. Lunch is taken in the dining room and the school offers a good choice of food with salad provided as an alternative.

#### **4.(c) The quality of boarding education**

- 4.6 The quality of boarding is outstanding. The experience fully supports the school's aims to focus on developing skills of children to live harmoniously within a community whatever their individual strengths and weaknesses. Boarders present themselves as confident, courteous and articulate, and their parents are very supportive of provision. Boys and girls enjoy the experience and said it was like being part of an extended family. Relationships amongst boarders, and between the boarders and the staff who care for them, characterise the caring ethos of the school and are relaxed and respectful. New pupils, especially those who come from abroad, are quickly made welcome and included into boarding school life.
- 4.7 Pastoral and medical support for boarders is excellent and high-quality guidance is provided by staff to help pupils manage their relationships with each other. Boarding staff and Gap Year students play a full and active role under the direction of the resident head of boarding. There are appropriate induction procedures in place for new boarding staff and helpful advice is offered in the boarding handbook. Good communications are maintained with boarders' parents. Boarding pupils participate in a wide range of activities which enrich their educational experience, though staff also appreciate the need to allow the children to enjoy unstructured time in the evenings when they can relax. The school's excellent music, ICT, sporting and outward bound facilities are available for evening use. Overall, accommodation in the boarding houses is good. Recent major improvements, much appreciated by the pupils, include refurbished and redecorated washrooms, and improved medical facilities. Boarders are allowed to bring in posters and pictures to decorate the dormitory walls and to personalise their own spaces. All the recommendations from previous statutory boarding inspection reports have been met.

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

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

- 5.1 The overall quality of governance throughout the school is good, with excellent features, as recognised by parents in their pre-inspection questionnaires. The governing body contributes to the implementation of the school's aims to recruit and retain the best quality staff and provide and maintain the best possible facilities within the context of financial stability. The governors are thorough in undertaking their responsibilities for financial control and for the provision of resources and accommodation, including the construction of new buildings. However, although the condition of premises has improved considerably since the last inspection, the standard of maintenance and decoration in a number of respects is only satisfactory.
- 5.2 The governors are committed to the appointment of well-qualified teachers and managers to maintain and enhance standards and the quality of the pupils' learning. They are kept well informed through subject presentations at meetings, through their contacts with the school and by regular reports from the headmaster and are very supportive of a wide variety of social and formal events. The governors take seriously their responsibility for welfare, health and safety; their monitoring of the undertaking and recording of recruitment checks and the safeguarding of pupils at school is robust. They are at present researching appropriate training opportunities to enable them to improve the quality of governance still further.
- 5.3 Governors know the school very well and provide a suitable range of knowledgeable expertise and advice. They have assisted with the school's high-quality and perceptive evaluation of its effectiveness and are involved in drawing up and monitoring the school's excellent and highly detailed business plan. The chairman's experience in education is invaluable and he undertakes an annual appraisal of the headmaster. The governors preside over a successful school, which effectively secures its aims, promotes the academic and pastoral development of its pupils, and provides a rich environment in which pupils thrive.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 The school as a whole is strongly led. Leadership and management fulfil the school's aims very well and allow pupils to learn and attain successfully by developing positive attitudes to learning within the framework of friendly and supportive surroundings. A pride in the school's success is evident and is exemplified in the excellent quality of strategic planning which includes details of the curriculum, staffing and resources and indicates how viability can be sustained in the future. The headmaster gives clear direction for the good quality of education provided. The management of pastoral care is strong and highly successful across the school. It is a hallmark of the school, which motivates staff and pupils to contribute fully. Concern for the safety, welfare and health of pupils effectively supports their achievements and personal development.
- 5.5 The school has a well-defined management structure that constitutes an effective team. Weekly meetings take place with senior managers, including the head of the pre-preparatory school. Agendas include constructive self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness and ensure that prompt decisions affecting pupils and staff are made and understood. Regular formal and informal discussions take place enabling curriculum planning to be continuous and effective. Some monitoring of the quality

of teaching and learning takes place, although this is not regular enough to have fully identified inconsistencies in teaching that restrict some pupils' progress and it does not as yet enable the sharing of good practice. Staffing levels are adequate for the number of pupils to ensure that sufficient support is provided. Appropriate training and guidance are afforded in respect of fire, first aid and child protection and the annual formal appraisal of staff by the headmaster is implemented successfully. Overall, policies and procedures have been produced covering every area of school life; they include the required content and are applied successfully by staff.

- 5.6 Safeguarding procedures are firmly in place and are reviewed regularly. A central record of staff appointments and statutory checks are maintained for governors, teaching and non-teaching staff employed by the school. The organisation of admissions is well-managed. Administrative and secretarial staff are highly competent and supportive. The reception of visitors is welcoming and considerate, entirely in harmony with the overall character of the school. Maintenance and ground staff, caterers and cleaners all show a courtesy and a cheerful efficiency that meet well the expectations of the school.

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

- 5.7 The links with parents, carers and guardians are very strong with several outstanding features. They were a strength of the school at the time of the last inspection and remain so. The school is very successful in meeting its aim of working in close liaison with parents and encouraging them to be involved in the school. In the questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school and their children's education, in nearly all respects showing complete support for what the school is achieving. There were no issues of significant concern and the parents are very committed to the school's aims and to its unique ethos.
- 5.8 Parents are actively involved in the school and in their children's education. The Friends of Northbourne Park is very active and delivers a large number of different high-quality events each year. Parents attend matches and a wide variety of events including concerts and dramatic productions by pupils and church services. All parents, including those of prospective pupils, are provided with good quality information about the school which is readily available in paper or digital format, and which appears on the recently updated website. Parents receive reports twice a term that include effort and attainment grades, together with written comments from the form tutor and the headmaster. At the end of the summer term, a more detailed report is issued. The best reports provide useful information regarding achievement and clear guidance as to how pupils can improve.
- 5.9 Parents' concerns are given prompt attention and are handled well, although there have been no formal complaints in the past three years. The headmaster is readily available at the front door of the school each morning and in the evenings and may be contacted by email. Additional separate provision is in place to ensure that links with the parents of European boarders are maintained. They receive carefully adapted and translated versions of the communication that goes to parents living in England and benefit from having as their main point of contact the deputy head, a French national, who is always contactable by both email and mobile phone.

**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 effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding, as it meets children's needs well. The secure and welcoming environment and the exceptional opportunities for outdoor play and exploration promote the school's aim to inspire in every child the confidence to succeed. All staff know the children very well and use high quality assessments to plan each child's learning and monitor their progress towards achieving the Early Learning Goals. Effective partnerships between the school, parents and outside agencies help to provide the best start to children's education and ensure that they are safe. Since the last inspection, the buildings have been redecorated and the Reception classroom has been moved downstairs to give direct access to the garden.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Clear vision and rigorous self-evaluation successfully promote planning for continuous improvements. Regular review and effective implementation of policies and procedures by all staff ensure that children are safeguarded well, equality is promoted and diversity respected. Appointment checks ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. The cycle of appraisal and monitoring is well established and identifies areas for further training and development. A very wide range of good quality resources is used effectively to support the six areas of learning. Many valuable ideas are initiated at regular meetings of the children's forum, for example making popcorn at snack time was introduced as a consequence of one child's suggestion. Parents are well informed of their child's progress and engaged in school activities and pre-inspection questionnaires highlight their satisfaction with the setting.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. The staff have a secure knowledge of the requirements of EYFS, which assists appropriate planning and assessment. Detailed observations of the children's activities are used to inform the next steps for learning. Reception and Nursery both have very good access to outside spaces. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. The school grounds provide for purposeful and co-operative play and independent exploration. Currently there is no suitable covered outdoor space for activities in all weathers. Children visit events in the local community and a science week further increases the children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The hall provides facilities for lunch and for physical development such as yoga and dance and the swimming pool is used at the preparatory school. The library is well stocked and resources are carefully maintained. Relationships are excellent and the children's welfare and everyday needs are met effectively. Behaviour is managed well and children contribute to devising their class rules. Development plans have identified the need to adopt an assessment scheme for use across the whole school.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for the EYFS are outstanding. The children make excellent progress in achieving the Early Learning Goals and their skills in language and literacy, numeracy and ICT are outstanding. The children are encouraged to complete tasks independently and are active, curious learners who communicate exceedingly well with each other and enjoy learning. They respond well to the high expectations of behaviour; they listen carefully and confidently ask questions. They climb and balance skilfully on the outdoor equipment and close supervision ensures their awareness of how to stay safe and healthy. Nutritious and balanced lunches are served and the menu is displayed for parents. Water is always available and oral and visual reminders encourage good hygiene practices. The opportunities for exercise provided by PE and outdoor play all contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

**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 boarding houses 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 Horn	Reporting Inspector
Mr James Barnes	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mr Andrew Edwards	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)
Mrs Gillian Bilbo	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years