



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST TERESA'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Teresa's Preparatory School

Full Name of School	St Teresa's Preparatory School		
DfE Number	936/6571		
EYFS Number	EY371596		
Registered Charity Number	243995		
Address	Beech Avenue Effingham Hill Dorking Surrey RH5 6ST		
Telephone Number	01372 453456		
Fax Number	01372 451562		
Email Address	m.arnal@stteresas.surrey.sch		
Headmistress	Mrs Mary Arnal		
Chair of Governors	Reverend Ian Wells		
Age Range	2 to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	97		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (7 boys, 90 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	2	5-11: 67
	3-5 (EYFS):	28	11-18: 0
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	94	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 10
Number of Boarders	Total:	3	
	Full:	2	Weekly: 1
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Sarah Bryett		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	24 May 2011 to 25 May 2011		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in June 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to 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 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.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced in March 2010 by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at 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 St Teresa's Preparatory School is a day and boarding school for girls aged two to eleven, with boys also admitted into the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Nursery class. The school was founded in 1963 and in January 2009 it moved into new buildings on the site of its senior school in 48 acres of parkland and woodland, near the village of Effingham. The school is a charitable trust and shares the same governing body and bursar as the senior school. The present headmistress of the preparatory (prep) school was appointed in September 2010.
- 1.2 The main prep building includes a hall, library, science laboratory and information and communication technology (ICT) suite, and ten classrooms; the Reception classroom has direct access to a secure, outdoor area. The Nursery children are taught in an adjacent building. The school currently has 97 pupils, with 30 in the EYFS of whom 25 are part-time; three pupils board at the school. At present the Reception and Year 1 pupils are taught as one class; those in Year 5 are split into two classes and some setting by ability occurs for some subjects in Years 5 and 6.
- 1.3 Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds and most live locally. The intake into the Nursery is not selective, while admission into other years is subject to an assessment in English and mathematics, and interview with the headmistress, to ensure that each child will benefit from the education offered. Pupils may join the school at any age providing class numbers allow. At present, one pupil has English as their second language but does not require additional help. Eleven pupils with learning difficulties are receiving specialist help from the learning support co-ordinator; no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Standardised tests show the ability profile of the school is above the national average, with a fairly wide spread of abilities. The majority of pupils transfer to the senior school at the age of eleven after taking entrance examinations, and others gain places at other independent day and boarding schools.
- 1.4 The school's aim is to provide a broad education, based on sound Christian principles in a happy, caring atmosphere. It seeks as a priority to ensure that girls are challenged to realize their full potential and that they are thoroughly prepared for entry into the senior school.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 Pupils of all ages achieve well, reflecting the school's aims; they benefit from the attention they receive in small classes. The pupils read fluently and listen attentively; they write very well, composing interesting stories. They are competent mathematicians, and undertake investigations in science efficiently, with older pupils showing especially good understanding. Computer skills are highly developed and the use of the welcoming library, with its eye-catching displays and book reviews, is increasing. Many pupils excel in speech and drama, and in music, often gaining merits or distinctions in national examinations. Pupils sat externally marked national tests in the three years 2007 to 2009, allowing comparison with national data, but have not done so since. In those three years, the results of pupils in mathematics and science at age eleven were good in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools; in English, they were excellent. The majority of pupils move on to the senior school at age eleven, with a good number gaining academic and art scholarships each year. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability, as seen in lesson observations and pupils' written work. Pupils' attitudes towards their work are very positive. They are keen to learn, apply themselves conscientiously and take great pride in producing work that is of as high a standard as possible.
- 2.2 The wide-ranging curriculum, which includes all the required subjects, includes French and drama, and ballet for the four youngest years, with sufficient time for all subjects. The thirty minutes allowed for each lesson is sometimes insufficient for a topic to be covered properly; with no time allowed for moving between teaching rooms, lessons are often reduced to twenty-five minutes which inhibits pupils' learning. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good; these pupils receive expert specialist tuition and their individual education plans are reviewed regularly. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and provision for them is improving, by broadening their horizons, currently by producing a magazine and doing intellectual puzzles. Pupils enjoy the many activities on offer; academic, sporting, musical and other creative clubs are all provided. The education of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is enhanced by residential visits in this country and abroad.
- 2.3 Good teaching overall enables pupils to achieve high standards in academic work and activities. Lessons are usually planned thoroughly and sometimes include opportunities for extension work for the most able pupils. Lively and enthusiastic teaching characterises the best lessons, encourages pupils to think and helps them to make maximum progress. Sometimes, a lesson lacks real challenge or pace and is dominated too much by the input of the teacher. Teachers are well aware of the extra support the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities require in lessons. Thorough marking together with encouraging comments is the norm, but ideas for improvements are rarely added. Standardised tests are used well to measure the abilities of pupils and their attainment in the core subjects, but the tracking of the progress of each individual is not yet in place.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.4 Pupils' personal development is excellent; the school is highly successful in achieving its pastoral aims. The atmosphere of respect and care for others, together with the good relationships that the pupils have both with each other and with adults, is a notable feature of this happy school. Pupils said how much they look forward to each day. Morning assemblies are quiet, community times of sincere reflection and thanksgiving, with prayers said and hymns sung with conviction. Mass is celebrated on a number of occasions during the school year. Pupils delighted in observing the emergence of a butterfly from its chrysalis. The house system has been strengthened recently and all pupils are eager to gain merit points for their house. Pupils are courteous, thoughtful and articulate, and older pupils set a fine example to younger ones; some Year 6 pupils play with children in the Nursery during their breaks, and senior school pupils come to hear prep school pupils read. All Year 6 pupils have some responsibility and act as prefects, discussing issues with the headmistress at a weekly meeting. The pupils make significant use of the suggestions box, knowing their ideas will be considered seriously. Pupils raise large sums of money for local and international charities, and the link with an African school encourages their strong awareness of the needs of others. They have a deep respect for those from different cultural backgrounds, and visits to mosques, synagogues, museums and art galleries aid their understanding of their own and other cultures.
- 2.5 The quality of pastoral care, welfare, health and safety is excellent and makes a strong contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development. The form teacher oversees the academic and pastoral progress of the pupils in their class; pupils always feel safe and well cared for in the happy, family atmosphere. Pupils state that bullying is rarely an issue and is quickly resolved, sometimes without adult help, when it does occur. Child protection and safeguarding training of staff are comprehensive and regularly updated. Medical and health needs are met with great kindness and efficiency by appropriately qualified staff. Lunches are of a high quality with an abundance of choice, and pupils are well supervised and gently encouraged to eat a reasonable amount.
- 2.6 Prep school boarders are well provided for, sleeping in a spacious, well-furnished dormitory adjacent to the matron's office. They enjoy good relationships with, and the company of, senior school pupils aged eleven to fourteen, sharing a games room and a lounge with them. Their weekend programme is well organized and always includes a visit to an interesting and entertaining venue.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.7 The governance of the school is excellent. The governors' wide range of experience is valuable to the school, but does not include someone with direct experience of primary education. Three sub-committees meet each term; one of them specifically focuses on the needs of the prep school. The governors give generously of their time, and provide the headmistress with all the support she requires to uphold and raise current standards, and develop the prep school's links with the senior school. The governing body is fully involved in meeting its legal and statutory responsibilities, in addition to the oversight of child protection, safe recruitment, health and safety and the quality of education.
- 2.8 Excellent leadership provides a clear vision for the improvement of the prep school and every aspect of the school is being reviewed; most staff are fully supportive of the changes being introduced. The headmistress attends weekly meetings of the whole-school senior management team; she has regular meetings with the senior school acting head, and staff in the two schools have begun to liaise with one another. A prep school senior management team has been created this year to support the headmistress and help with the management of the school; the school is aware that this is an area to improve and that the role of middle managers is not yet developed sufficiently. A limited amount of monitoring of teaching and marking occurs, but does not yet have sufficient impact on achievement. The appraisal system has been strengthened and now includes self-evaluation, lesson observation, discussion with the headmistress and target setting; this help and recognition of individuals is beginning to encourage the staff to improve their effectiveness. The school has strong procedures for checking the suitability of staff and governors. Pupils enjoy an excellent environment: the new, purpose-built accommodation is of a high standard, and the pupils delight in the space provided for them and the availability of many fine senior school facilities.
- 2.9 The school has good links with parents. Parents are invited to a meeting each September to meet the class teacher and hear about the expectations for that academic year. Detailed reports each term, meetings to discuss children's progress, and a weekly newsletter, together with an improving website, keep parents thoroughly informed. Any parental complaints are dealt with professionally and all details are recorded carefully. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were especially positive about the curriculum, the standards of behaviour, the pastoral care and the ease of communication, and inspectors agree with these views. A significant minority overall, and especially parents of older pupils raised concerns about some aspects of the teaching; the inspectors found no evidence to confirm these views.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Strengthen the management of the school, and develop further the monitoring of teaching and marking.
 2. Utilise the assessment results to track the progress of each individual pupil.
 3. Review timetabling arrangements with a focus on the length of lessons.
 4. Extend the use of child-initiated activities in the EYFS for the monitoring of learning, ensuring systems for recording children's progress are implemented effectively.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

4.1 This outstanding setting meets children's needs extremely well, fulfilling the school's aim of providing a happy, caring atmosphere, and a varied curriculum for every child. Extremely knowledgeable adults recognize the uniqueness of each child, providing an excellent balance of challenge and support, ensuring no child is disadvantaged. Excellent partnerships with parents and local agencies, high-quality teaching and creative use of resources, ensure all children make outstanding progress. Excellent self-evaluation has enabled significant improvement since the previous inspection, particularly to the outside areas. The capacity for development is outstanding, with staff sharing an ambitious vision for continuous improvement.

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

4.2 Leadership and management are good overall, with some outstanding features. Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure the suitability of staff. Policies, including thorough risk assessments, are reviewed regularly, and implemented consistently to safeguard children. Inclusion and equality are effectively promoted, ensuring all children achieve well and their needs are met. Communication with parents, who express very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the setting, is excellent, and good relationships with local agencies provide valuable support. Senior staff monitor provision closely to identify areas for development, but systems for recording children's progress are not fully developed. Staff attend training regularly and are actively encouraged to gain further qualifications. Overall, resources are used very effectively to achieve high-quality provision and outcomes.

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

4.3 Provision in the EYFS is outstanding. Well-planned, richly resourced classrooms and outside areas promote independence and stimulate learning. Small groups and excellent staff deployment allow flexible planning ensuring every child is challenged, supported and able to achieve very well through a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Excellent links with the wider school community, and specialist teaching for Spanish, music, ballet, physical education (PE) and swimming, enhance the broad and varied curriculum. Observations are used extremely well to identify children's achievements, but child-initiated activities are under-used for assessment. Children's well-being is paramount and adults promote health, hygiene and safety through consistent routines, classroom activities and good role-modelling. Daily checks ensure premises and resources are safe, and any potential hazards are swiftly removed.

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

- 4.4 Outcomes in the EYFS are outstanding. Children make excellent progress in all areas, with most exceeding the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception year. Children are extremely enthusiastic, participating energetically in all activities. They are encouraged to reflect upon their learning, becoming creative, critical thinkers. Those under three develop excellent speaking and listening skills; Nursery children recognise letter sounds, and those in Reception make phonemically plausible attempts at writing complex words as they compose poems. Numeracy is strong with those under three counting up to five objects, and older children confidently subtract numbers up to ten. Children develop confidence in ICT, accessing age-appropriate software in the ICT suite and using programmable toys. Children form firm friendships as they play co-operatively, demonstrating good knowledge of the world around them. Children are independent, behave well and respond positively to the expectations of adults, with whom they develop close relationships. They know they must wash their hands to get rid of germs, they develop a very positive attitude to exercise during PE, and develop a good understanding about healthy eating through classroom activities and role-play.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 4.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Complaints since the last inspection

- 4.6 Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, the acting senior school head and 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 boarding accommodation 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 Defoe

Mr David Callender

Mr Christopher Manville

Reporting Inspector

Former Head, IAPS school

Early Years Lead Inspector