



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**THORPE HALL SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Thorpe Hall School

Full Name of School	<b>Thorpe Hall School</b>
DfE Number	<b>882/6001</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY371300</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>298155</b>
Address	<b>Thorpe Hall School Wakering Road Thorpe Bay Southend-on-Sea Essex SS1 3RD</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01702 582340</b>
Fax Number	<b>01702 587070</b>
Email Address	<b>sec@thorpehall.southend.sch.uk</b>
Head	<b>Mr Andrew Hampton</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Julie Turner</b>
Age Range	<b>2 to 16</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>307</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (167 boys; 140 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>2-3 (EYFS): 8    5-11: 99 3-5 (EYFS): 54    11-16: 146</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>Total: 307</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Cheryl Bertschi</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>25 Mar 2014 to 28 Mar 2014</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2008, and an intermediate EYFS inspection took place in February 2012.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities, including a school theatre production that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and an assembly. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Ruth McFarlane

Mrs Lynn Maggs-Wellings

Mr Stephen Jones

Mrs Sue Lucas,

Mrs Yvonne Parry

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Headmistress, ISA school)

Team Inspector (Head of Department, ISA school)

Team Inspector (Head of Department, ISA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Thorpe Hall School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged 2 to 16. It was founded as a preparatory school for boys in 1925, and admitted girls from 1940. In 1987, it became a charitable trust, and is overseen by a board of governors. It moved to its present purpose-built premises in Thorpe Bay, on the outskirts of Southend-on-Sea, in 1989. It is set in eleven acres of green belt land.
- 1.2 The school aims to give each pupil challenges and opportunities to prove themselves, in an atmosphere that is supportive and nurturing, through a broad and balanced curriculum and a wide and varied range of activities. It aims to guide young people to become rounded individuals, polite, courteous, respectful, happy in themselves and able to make a genuine contribution to society. It further aims to respect every pupil as a unique individual, gauging their needs and tailoring their education to meet those needs within a family atmosphere, so that, having built their self-esteem, they can achieve their potential.
- 1.3 In total, 307 pupils are on roll. There are 62 pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), of whom 8 attend part-time and are under the age of three, in the Pre-Nursery. Currently, 99 pupils (54 boys and 45 girls) are in Years 1 to 6, in the Lower School (where some EYFS classes are also accommodated). There are 146 pupils (82 boys and 64 girls) in the Upper School (Years 7 to 11). Most pupils come from professional and business families. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.4 Forty-nine pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom three have statements of special educational needs. The pupils' ability profile on entry is in line with the national average.
- 1.5 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 Throughout the school, pupils make good progress and achieve well. They enjoy success because the curriculum is exciting and innovative, and teaching is good. By the time they leave the school, they reach above average standards, fulfilling their potential in accordance with the school's academic aims. Not all teaching offers consistent, strong challenge to particularly able pupils, sometimes limiting their potential to develop independent, logical thinking. Extra-curricular provision is excellent in both Lower and Upper schools and pupils take full advantage of the wide range of opportunities available. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve equally well through the strong supportive guidance given to them by all the staff.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is of very high quality and amply fulfils the school's pastoral aims. From the EYFS onwards, pupils are cared for extremely well through excellent pastoral care and attention to their wellbeing. Consequently, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are strongly self-aware and confident. Polite and respectful, they speak with considerable maturity for their ages. There is a palpable happy, friendly, family feel throughout the school. Every individual is well-respected and treated with great courtesy and care. Welfare, health and safety matters contribute well to the pupils' personal development.
- 2.3 Leadership of the school is excellent and shows strong vision and deep understanding of the needs of the school's pupils, especially through the senior team. Governance is good. The governors' expertise in educational matters has recently been improved by new appointments. Governors offer increasingly effective support and challenge to the school but their understanding of the school's self-evaluation processes is less strong, including in the EYFS. Throughout the school, policies and detailed plans generally give strong support to staff. In response to recommendations in the previous inspection, significantly improved monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress is in place and there has been good progress on the other points. Links with parents are very strong. All those parents who expressed a view in the questionnaire are very pleased with all that is on offer, and wholeheartedly recommend the school to others.

**2.(b) Action points****(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

**(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure lessons in all subjects and year groups offer strong subject knowledge that provides good levels of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.
  2. Ensure governors are familiar with whole school self-evaluation so they can provide more knowledgeable support and challenge.
  3. In the EYFS, improve self-evaluation and development planning.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 Pupils throughout the school are well educated, maintaining the quality at the previous inspection. A key aspect of the pupils' success is their creativity, abundantly evident in eye-catching classroom and corridor displays, in excellent drama productions and in the lively variety of musical activities.
- 3.3 Pupils have well-developed literacy and numeracy skills. They are particularly articulate and confident, both with each other and when talking to adults or presenting their work. They listen exceptionally well, respecting the views of others, and they read enthusiastically, reaching high standards. Throughout the school, pupils write cogently. They absorb information well and ask sophisticated and well-considered questions. Just occasionally, the pupils' use of logical and independent thought is less evident, due to the style and pace of some teaching. Pupils solve mathematical problems with increasingly good fluency and accuracy, and apply their knowledge and understanding of number across other subjects effectively.
- 3.4 Good achievements in information and communication technology (ICT) are evident in the presentation of the pupils' work and through their use of varied media in presentations and displays. Pupils with SEND or EAL have good levels of achievement, in parallel with their peers. This is shown by their progress towards increasingly more challenging targets on their individual education plans (IEPs).
- 3.5 Pupils achieve good and sometimes high standards in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Fourth place in a national competition was recently gained by the school's construction game team. Pupils show skill in a variety of sports, in teams and individually. The under-11 and under-13 hockey teams are local champions, and the under-11 and under-14 table tennis teams are undefeated. Individual successes can be found in county cricket, and national champions in the school's association competitions in athletics and cross country. Pupils are successful in winning places at selective grammar schools at age 11, and maintained and independent sixth forms on leaving the school.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 to 2012 for pupils aged 11, and 2011 to 2013 for GCSE pupils. These are the most recent results for which comparable data are currently available. Results in national tests at age 11 have been above the national average for maintained primary schools. By the time they leave Year 11, the proportion achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, is above the national average for maintained schools; the variable size of cohorts makes more detailed comparison difficult. This level of attainment, especially given the proportion of pupils who have SEND, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar abilities. Pupils work in lessons, their books and in discussions show that, whatever their ability, they make good gains, especially in their reading, spelling and numeracy skills.
- 3.7 The more able and those with particular talents make rapid progress where the teaching provides high-level challenges but this approach and the opportunity for independent learning are not always consistently provided.

- 3.8 The pupils' extremely positive attitudes to learning are reflected in their approach to lessons and activities. They work well with each other and as individuals. They use their initiative, they are well organised and they persevere and think hard. As a result, they develop a good range of knowledge and skills.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The curriculum is highly imaginative and flexible and suits each pupil's needs. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It is teeming with opportunities which enable the school to fulfil its aims. Throughout the school, pupils with SEND or EAL are well served through small group work and special resources that meet well their specific requirements, outlined in IEPs.
- 3.11 All the required areas of learning are covered very thoroughly throughout the school. Breadth is added to the emphasis on literacy and numeracy to include humanities, linguistic and scientific education. The 'Competency-Based Curriculum' provides opportunities to create strongly independent learners who can apply their study skills to their work in all curriculum areas. This is most evident when teaching is at its strongest. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop technological skills. Well-resourced design and technology areas, including food technology, and dedicated ICT areas are provided. New, exciting and innovative developments since the previous inspection include 'The Hub', a comprehensive virtual learning environment which is greatly appreciated and well used by pupils of all ages to enable good achievement.
- 3.12 Provision for creative and aesthetic subjects is excellent with further new facilities used well to allow pupils to excel in music, theatre and dance. Productions for public performance are regular, and make good links with the community; the latest being a new production of 'Alice' including pupils of a variety of ages. Sports facilities are comprehensive and enhanced by use of off-site amenities, for instance, for swimming.
- 3.13 Significant improvements in monitoring and managing the curriculum since the previous inspection have resulted in excellent planning which allows for flexible and innovative use of the resources and a greater range of independent and investigative work that, when teaching is at its best, suits the needs of the more able particularly well. This is a successful response to the recommendation of the previous inspection. 'Flipped Learning' allows pupils of all ages to undertake research in a number of subjects and take on the teaching role for others. GCSE courses are varied to suit the pupils' needs.
- 3.14 A good range of careers education is offered, with input from outside agencies and opportunities. It forms part of a comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship education programme, taught across the curriculum in Lower School and through weekly sessions in the Upper School.
- 3.15 An extensive range of extra-curricular activities is offered. Sports and leisure and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme are joined by art, cookery and philosophy. The 'BE@T' scheme, open to all pupils, gives them the chance to develop entrepreneurial skills, and is a strong element in the school's good links with the local community. Pupils also benefit greatly from the 'School Plus' programme which offers extra tuition in a variety of subjects after school. This, along with the

weekly 'Choice Afternoon', ensures that pupils are offered a stimulating, varied and excellent range of experiences. The spacious and creatively developed eleven acres of outside area, including woodland and a trim-trail for physical exercise, is a resource used effectively by pupils of all ages to enhance their learning.

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

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.17 Teaching promotes the pupils' progress effectively, maintaining its quality noted at the previous inspection. Through the well planned and balanced programmes, thoughtfully constructed, pupils develop key skills and acquire knowledge readily and successfully. This helps towards fulfilling the school's aim to enable pupils to realise their potential.
- 3.18 Teaching offers a good range of methods and styles that help pupils learn. Skilled and varied questioning techniques guide pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding and to investigate and enquire collaboratively. Relationships are excellent and instil high levels of self-confidence.
- 3.19 In the best teaching, plans are readily adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. In some, there is too little challenge for pupils of high ability who find the tasks provided easy. Support for pupils with SEND is strong and effective use is often made of teaching assistants. These pupils benefit from the provisions outlined in IEPs and implemented in lessons. Close, careful monitoring enables pupils with SEND, including those with statements of special educational needs, to receive immediate individual support. This ensures that the requirements of the statements are met. For the few who need it, EAL support is good.
- 3.20 Assessment is regular and good use is made of the evidence of what pupils have learned to guide their next steps. Written marking is mostly regular and detailed, being responsive and specific in its advice. Targets are frequently set and further steps suggested. This often prompts dialogue between individual teachers and pupils. In interviews, pupils testified to the valuable contribution that marking makes to their understanding of their own progress. However, the school marking policy is not followed consistently in all teaching, so that target-setting is variable.
- 3.21 Most teaching demonstrates good management of time and good subject knowledge. The school has recently introduced schemes to ensure phonics work supports reading and writing in the Lower School, although these are not yet implemented to full effect. On occasion, teaching does not provide sufficient subject knowledge to challenge pupils, and as a result development of their logical and mathematical skills is slowed.
- 3.22 Good use is made of resources, with ICT used very well to support learning. One notably successful innovation is the facility known as 'WoW', or 'writing on the wall'. These sessions offer varied and exciting teaching and learning opportunities, both for teachers and pupils, to express thoughts and feelings and to express ideas and judgements, in a 'virtual' dimension.

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

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

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 It is through the pupils' excellent spiritual development that the school amply meets its pastoral aims and shows significant improvement since the previous inspection. High levels of spirituality are evident from the youngest pupils onwards. In response to the school's promotion of its values, pupils create the family atmosphere in which they flourish and develop. Their self-esteem builds and they move on with confidence and maturity to achieve their potential. The pupils' spirituality, creativity and imagination are frequently seen in all sections of the school. They take an interest in their work, whether practical or abstract in nature, and are able to reflect on the processes by which their education is developing. They are strongly self-aware and show a strongly developed emotional maturity for their ages. In response to the school's strong focus on developing these elements, pupils are happy and confident, and clearly proud of their school.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils are polite and courteous at all times. They clearly show great respect toward other pupils and adults and they display confidence without arrogance. Behaviour around the school is exemplary at all ages and allows pupils to feel secure and flourish. Pupils are keen to do what they consider to be right demonstrating full understanding of the concept of right and wrong. Pupils develop their moral understanding exceedingly well and take responsibility for the decisions they make for themselves or on behalf of others.
- 4.4 Pupils' excellent social development is a real strength of the school at all levels. Older pupils help younger ones through a range of activities and opportunities and they are keen to make a genuine contribution to the school community. The school council displays strong elements of democracy, providing valuable experience for those involved, who very ably represent their peers, and support for others within the school and beyond. Fund-raising for local and national charities enables economic awareness and political understanding which is deepened through a taught politics programme in the Upper School. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility and work well with others to achieve shared aims, making a genuine contribution to their school community.
- 4.5 The pupil's cultural development is excellent and they participate enthusiastically in the many opportunities provided for them, both within school time and on other occasions. Art, music and theatrical work leads to a wide appreciation of a range of aspects of cultural heritage. This was strongly evident in such experiences as the drama production which took place during the inspection, whether a pupil was a participant or in the audience. The pupils display an embedded respect for others from different cultures and accept diversity without question.
- 4.6 By the time they leave the school, in response to the school's special focus on developing the whole child, the pupils' overall personal development is excellent.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Pastoral care has improved significantly since the previous inspection and the school is very successful in meeting its pastoral aims. Staff provide highly effective guidance and support for pupils. Excellent communication and a clear structure ensure that the pupils' concerns can be quickly dealt with. Additional support is available from learning support staff and two designated counsellors. Parental questionnaires resoundingly acknowledge that pupils feel safe and are looked after very well. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are excellent. Through excellent care, staff ensure that pupils are ready to take on any new challenges.
- 4.9 Pupils value the contribution made to their health by participation in the many sporting activities offered. Healthy eating is encouraged. Lunches offer a variety of choice and are of good quality and quantity.
- 4.10 The school is extremely effective in promoting good behaviour and in guarding against harassment and bullying. Although a few pupils and parents indicated in the questionnaires that bullying is not dealt with effectively, discussion with pupils and records show that any rare instances are dealt with promptly and successfully. A powerful 'Girls on Board' scheme helps girls to resolve any conflict. In a small minority of questionnaire responses, pupils indicated that teachers are not fair in the way they give rewards and sanctions. Inspection evidence does not support this, and pupils with whom it was discussed all felt the system is fair.
- 4.11 The school has a suitable three-year plan to improve access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.12 A minority of pupils felt their views are not heard or considered by the school. A range of opportunities allows pupils to express their views. Upper School pupils spoke positively about the school council and were clear that suggestions they put forward are acted upon and clear responses given.

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

- 4.13 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.14 The safeguarding policy needed adjustment to ensure it follows statutory guidance and it now forms a suitable foundation for the effective procedures that are evident in the school. All staff, including those with lead responsibility, receive appropriate child protection training both on appointment and at the necessary prescribed times. Strong relationships and links are maintained with local welfare agencies.
- 4.15 Maintaining the standard noted at the previous inspection, proper measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Regular checks on fire safety and electrical appliances are carried out and recorded. Fire evacuation drills take place as required and detailed records are kept. Thorough risk assessments are conducted for all activities in school and offsite. Appropriate policies for health and safety and first aid are implemented effectively. A good number of staff are trained first aiders, including those with paediatric qualifications. Stocked and checked first aid boxes are strategically placed in all buildings. Suitable facilities are provided for pupils who are ill during the school day.

- 4.16 The health and safety committee meets regularly and reports to the board of governors. It audits all health and safety and welfare matters in the school and is responsible for overseeing the correction of deficiencies. Additionally it monitors and reviews the health and safety policy and oversees safety management and maintenance procedures. The admission and attendance registers are accurately completed and stored for the required period.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 All sections of the school benefit well from the interested and caring oversight provided by the governing body. Governors discharge their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources efficiently, with a clear and successful focus on meeting the school's aims. They monitor practice and procedures thoroughly. All procedures to recruit staff are meticulously carried out.
- 5.3 Governors are fully aware of the school's policies. Recent enrolments to the governing body have enhanced governor expertise in educational matters. Reports to governors provide them with information to ensure regulatory compliance. Regular and frequent visits made by the chair and other governors offer good levels of support and challenge to all sections of the school. However, as yet, involvement in the ongoing evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is limited and this restricts the rigour with which the governing body can hold the school to account.
- 5.4 Limited monitoring of the school's safeguarding policy, despite full annual review, allowed some minor omissions to occur, now fully remedied. Overall, throughout the school, governors attend to their responsibilities well through reports and reviews, in particular, for risk, health and safety and welfare matters.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.6 The senior leadership team's strong vision for the school has a highly successful impact in promoting the pupils' good achievements and excellent personal development. Pupils are given challenges to prove themselves within a caring environment, in accordance with the aims of the school. Leadership has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It sets clear educational direction and the positive tone for support and guidance. It ensures that policies, including the safeguarding policy, are rigorously implemented. The energy and enthusiasm evident inspires commitment and support from all who work within the school.
- 5.7 Communication is highly effective throughout the school. Development since the previous inspection has been extensive and this has led to improvements in quality, especially for aspects of the curriculum, including the innovative use of ICT. Common objectives are established so that clear educational goals, established by the senior leadership team, are achieved. However, self-evaluation currently has limited effect and impact on planning and outcomes throughout the school, mainly because it is not shared widely enough, particularly with governors.
- 5.8 The pupils' academic progress and pastoral needs are carefully tracked and communicated to necessary staff so that any concerns can be monitored. All managers set themselves high standards which reflect positively on pupils'

- exemplary behaviour, their good achievement and their excellent personal development.
- 5.9 Subject heads and co-ordinators monitor work effectively to ensure continuity and good practice. Both regular and ad-hoc monitoring of teaching, with immediate feedback delivered to teachers, is carried out. This contributes well to the thorough staff appraisal process which takes place for each staff member every two years and leads to suitable professional development.
- 5.10 Robust measures are in place to ensure that suitable and well-qualified staff are appointed across the school with appropriate recruitment checks carried out prior to appointment. A thorough induction programme is in place for all new staff and volunteers. Training is regularly provided on safeguarding and welfare, health and safety, as well as for academic improvements. However, not all training for new initiatives has been comprehensive or timely. In the Lower School, training for the recently introduced published schemes in phonics has not yet been fully implemented.
- 5.11 Leadership of resources is highly effective, including the management of the spacious setting. The team of administrative, maintenance, catering and other support staff significantly contribute to the smooth running of the school.
- 5.12 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. Parents who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires expressed wholehearted satisfaction with the education and care their children receive and all thoroughly recommend the school.
- 5.13 Parents support a very active parents' association. Events such as the 'Christmas Fair', 'The Summer Ball' and 'Thorpe Hall Day' create excellent opportunities for staff, pupils and parents to work together, helping to strengthen links across the school community. Parents are also invited to assemblies, concerts and plays, as well as to sports matches.
- 5.14 The school is committed to open and regular parent communication by a variety of means including text alerts, emails, online software and letters. Required information for parents of pupils and prospective pupils, including key school policies, is readily available on the school's website.
- 5.15 The school has an appropriate complaints policy although no complaint has reached the formal stages. Records show that more minor concerns raised by parents are dealt with promptly and sensitively.
- 5.16 Written reports for parents are regular and helpful. Most reports provide targets that help parents understand their children's next steps, but others place too much emphasis on information without associated analysis. On scheduled parents' evenings, parents are welcomed into school to discuss their child's progress and say that staff are always available, at other times, to answer questions or discuss issues and ideas.

**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) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend.**

- 6.1 The setting makes good provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. The educational programmes help children, including those under three, to make good progress from their starting points and be well-prepared for the next stage in their learning. The experienced staff have high expectations and use regular observation and assessments of the children to inform planning. Early interventions ensure suitable provision for children with EAL or SEND promotes their learning and progress. Children under the age of three benefit from specialist teaching in music and French, with PE, drama, swimming and yoga added to the curriculum for older children. Classrooms are warm and welcoming with good quality, accessible resources. The outdoor classroom for younger children, including those under the age of three, is well-designed and this aids learning. The garden area for Reception children is less well-developed. Learning is enhanced for all the EYFS children in the woodland classroom.
- 6.2 Partnership with parents is strong and staff encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning. There is an excellent information pack provided before children start. There are regular opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress and adding comments and 'Wow' moment cards to their children's learning journals creates a valuable home-school link. Feedback from parents indicates that most are very pleased with the provision, especially the daily involvement that the home-school journal brings. They were most positive about the fact that their child is happy and feels safe. A very few parents felt that the school does not deal well with cases of bullying. Inspection evidence shows that any bullying concerns are always carefully and sensitively handled.

### **6.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being**

- 6.3 The contribution of the EYFS provision to children's well-being is outstanding. Each child is allocated a key person who supports their learning and development. Children are happy, they enjoy their learning and show increasing independence in everyday activities. Under-three's put on their coats and boots with minimal help if going outside, older Nursery and Reception children can change their clothes competently, for instance, for swimming. Adults manage behaviour skilfully and relationships between children and staff are very warm and responsive. A suitable number of staff have paediatric first-aid qualifications and procedures are clear should accidents occur or children be taken ill. Comprehensive risk assessments ensure the learning environment is always safe for the children to explore. Freshly-cooked meals offer healthy choices. Highly effective routines consolidate the first class hygiene practices and children are taught about the importance of physical exercise. Transitions within the setting and beyond are sensitively-managed and ensure all children are well prepared for the next stage. Before- and after-school clubs provide opportunities for friendship with older pupils in familiar surroundings.

**6.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision**

- 6.4 Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The recent appointment of a governor with an educational background to take a special interest in the EYFS is improving governors' overview of the provision through regular visits. However, neither governors nor the EYFS leadership has ensured that the setting's self-evaluation is fully effective as a tool to set and achieve appropriately-focused development priorities.
- 6.5 Other aspects of leadership and management of the EYFS are very strong and ensure that the setting is safe and secure. Safeguarding and welfare requirements are met through well-implemented policies and training and children are well-cared for in a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment. Staff training, supervision by senior staff and regular appraisals ensure that teaching and care are effective. The appraisal process leads to pertinent target setting and high-quality professional development. Children's progress is monitored effectively and regularly shared with parents, at handover times, parents' evenings and in end-of-term reports. Strong partnerships with parents and good links with the local authority, including participation in a quality assurance scheme, makes a positive impact on the provision.

**6.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision**

- 6.6 The overall quality and standards of the provision are good. The majority of children, make the progress they need to reach a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. Pre-Nursery children enjoy mark making, singing and counting songs. Nursery children develop an awareness of sounds and letters, and begin to write their name. Reception children write simple sentences using full stops and capital letters and solve simple money problems.
- 6.7 The children's personal, social and emotional development is good. Pre-Nursery children show increasing ability to play independently, and feel safe, secure and happy, while older children confidently articulate their needs and desires. Children use ICT with increasing confidence, proudly showing off their technology-driven art work.
- 6.8 Leadership and management have ensured that all the requirements for safeguarding and welfare are met, and that children are happy and feel safe and secure. In response to the recommendations of the previous inspection, the setting has successfully introduced a system to monitor and evaluate the children's progress. Actions to complete the response to the other recommendations, concerning the use of the Reception immediate outdoor area and the clarifying of documentation, are underway.

**Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

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

**Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.**