



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**THE PARK SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## The Park School

Full Name of School	<b>The Park School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>933/6035</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>310214</b>		
Address	<b>The Park School The Park Yeovil Somerset BA20 1DH</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01935 423514</b>		
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Email Address	<b>admin@parkschool.com</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs Jane Huntington</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>The Revd Ian Green</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>219</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (111 boys; 108 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>15</b>	5-11: <b>39</b>
	11-18	<b>165</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>193</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding: <b>0</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>26</b>	
	Full:	<b>24</b>	Weekly: <b>2</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Elaine Smith</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>18 Jan 2011 to 19 Jan 2011</b>		

## 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 March 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 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.

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 December 2009 by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) 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.

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills	2
The quality of the pupils' personal development	3
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	4
<b>3 ACTION POINTS</b>	<b>6</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	6
(ii) Recommendation(s) for further improvement	6
<b>4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	<b>7</b>
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	8
<b>INSPECTION EVIDENCE</b>	<b>9</b>

## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Park School is an independent day and boarding co-educational school for pupils aged between three and eighteen years. It occupies two sites, a short walking distance apart in the centre of Yeovil. The school was founded in 1851 and became a company limited by guarantee in 1957, with a board of governors who are trustees of the charity. It admitted boys to the senior department in 1993 and a sixth form was officially opened in 2000. The school maintains a strong Evangelical Christian tradition that characterised its foundation. It welcomes pupils of all denominations and faiths. The head of the school was appointed in January 2011, and has overall responsibility for the whole school. The head of the junior department was appointed in 2006. Since the last inspection, a considerable amount of refurbishment has taken place and sports changing rooms have been built on the senior department site.
- 1.2 The school has a total of 219 pupils with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. Of these, 15 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and 39 are in the junior department. The Nursery and Reception classes are on the ground floor and the reception class has direct access to a secure play area. The senior department has 165 pupils, of whom 31 are in the sixth form. Twenty-six pupils are boarders. Day pupils are drawn from a 35-mile radius of the school and represent families with a wide social, economic, ethnic and religious background. Boarders mainly come from overseas and a small number are from service families.
- 1.3 Through its Christian ethos, the school aims “to provide a solid foundation for life by providing a safe and happy environment in which they can develop academically, physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually to their highest potential, so that they can mature into well rounded adults in today’s world”.
- 1.4 Admission is based on the school’s own selection procedures. The average ability of pupils is above the national average. Almost all pupils from the junior department transfer to the senior department. About two-thirds leave after GCSE and with few exceptions, sixth form leavers proceed to higher education. No pupil has a statement of education need (SEN). Fifty-eight pupils have been identified by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 10 receive specialist support. Thirty-two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and of these 23 receive support with English.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school in the EYFS setting and its NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

### ***Early Years Foundation Stage Setting***

School	NC name
Kindergarten	Nursery
Reception	Reception

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

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

- 2.1 The school's aims are particularly well met, and the overall achievements of day and boarding pupils are good. In lessons and extra-curricular activities, pupils display good levels of knowledge, skill and understanding. Their ICT skills, creative and physical skills are well developed and they enjoy investigative work in science. They are good listeners, confident and articulate speakers and they take pleasure in debating. From an early age they can reason well and think for themselves. Pupils demonstrate good literacy skills and read with fluency and understanding. They apply mathematical skills with confidence in both familiar and new work.
- 2.2 Pupils are successful, both as individuals and as members of teams, in local and national competitions, including engineering, public speaking, hockey and art. These reflect the pupils' eagerness to thrive in all that they do. As pupils are not entered for national tests at the ages of 7 and 11 years their attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average. On the evidence available it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. For senior pupils, the following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for pupils in maintained schools. The 2010 results show an improvement over the previous three years, with two-fifths of the grades being A\* or A. Results in IGCSE English as a second language have been higher than international and UK norms. At A level, results have been similar to the national average for maintained schools. The results in 2010 show an improvement over the previous three years, with just over two-thirds of grades in the A\* to B range.
- 2.3 Pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. The results at GCSE show that pupils make good progress, whilst at A level they make appropriate progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Almost all pupils obtain places at their first choice of university. As a result of the support they receive, pupils with LDD and EAL make good progress.
- 2.4 Pupils of all ages enjoy learning, apply themselves energetically, persevere and work collaboratively. As they progress through the school they become increasingly able to work independently. Pupils usually settle quickly at the start of lessons and organise their work methodically.
- 2.5 The pupils' progress is supported by a broad curriculum which caters for all ages and abilities, including those with LDD and EAL. It prepares pupils effectively for the next stage of their education and for adult life. In the junior department, emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy, with appropriate time allocated to science, design and technology, the humanities and creative subjects, physical education and games. In the senior department, the curriculum embraces National Curriculum subjects, but expands and enriches them to include two modern languages, separate sciences and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Whilst numbers in the sixth form are not large, pupils are offered a good range of A-level subjects.

- 2.6 The extra-curricular programme offers a varied array of activities including debating, Young Enterprise Scheme and choir. Through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, pupils are involved with service in the community.
- 2.7 Progress is supported by good and occasionally excellent teaching. Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses. They plan their lessons to make the best use of the limited range of resources and to provide for different learning styles. Well written schemes of work support the curriculum and provide continuity from one year to the next.
- 2.8 Marking is regular but does not always show how a pupil can make further progress. In the junior department, good use is made of standardised test information to guide planning and track pupils' progress. Whilst internal assessment arrangements are good in the senior department, standardised tests are not used to monitor pupils' progress. As a result teachers have no means of knowing whether pupils are achieving as well as they should be in relation to their ability.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.9 The pupils' personal development is good with spiritual awareness at its core. Pupils grow in self-confidence and self-esteem and develop a belief in themselves through the expectation of teachers, the ethos of the school and the developing PSHE programme. They have opportunities to participate in reflective worship and learn about accommodating differences and respecting the integrity of others, through regular assemblies based on Evangelical Christian traditions. Pupils understand the value of having a religious faith and how life can be enriched by this.
- 2.10 At every stage, pupils have a strong awareness of moral issues and the ability to distinguish right from wrong. They understand the need to respect the law and they are knowledgeable about public institutions and services. The school's family atmosphere nurtures strong relationships, and the pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and as they move round the school. Substantial sums of money are raised for charitable causes in this country and abroad, most recently for a school in Bangalore, a school in Haiti devastated by earthquake, and local projects such as the Lord's Larder at a local church.
- 2.11 Social development is a considerable strength and owes much to the way the pupils are encouraged to be caring and responsible members of the school community. They are polite to visitors and at ease in conversation. Pupils are encouraged to show initiative in all areas of school life. They take on posts of responsibility, such as prefects, house officers, team captains, school council representatives, and respond well to the challenge leadership brings. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, pupils commented that they like to put forward their ideas about the school through the school council.
- 2.12 The pupils' cultural awareness is well developed through activities, lessons and assemblies. They learn about their own cultural heritage through literature, and about other cultures in art, geography, modern languages, music and visits abroad. Overseas pupils enrich the community, where cultural diversity is acknowledged and pupils live and work together harmoniously.
- 2.13 Personal development is strongly supported by good quality pastoral care. Policies and systems are in place to identify and respond promptly to the individual needs of pupils. Suitable policies safeguard pupils and all staff have received safeguarding

training at the appropriate level. All necessary staff recruitment checks are now carried out but the recording of these in the central register of appointments does not meet requirements in several respects. Pupils are confident that they have someone to turn to, and feel well supported by teaching and boarding house staff. The school encourages healthy eating and pupils understand the importance of regular exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

- 2.14 Health and safety measures are effective, with risk assessments securely in place. First aid provision is good and arrangements for pupils who are unwell at school are appropriate. Fire procedures are well documented and managed, and educational visits are carefully planned. The attendance registers in the junior department do not meet regulatory requirements because they are not completed in accordance with the school's requirements.
- 2.15 The provision for pupils who board contributes successfully to their achievement and personal development. The last boarding inspection reported that the provision and care are of a good standard.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.16 The overall quality of governance is satisfactory and it effectively ensures the school meets its aims. The newly appointed chairman and the new head are working together to plan for the future success of the school. The governing body, through its committees, has a mechanism in place to oversee the work of the school, but not all committees meet regularly. Individual members of the governing body have begun to work more closely with the school to see it at work on a day-to-day basis. Governors are kept informed of the school's progress through regular reports from the head which enable them to make informed decisions concerning the school's needs. Governors are aware of their responsibilities for welfare, health and safety. However, they have not sufficiently overseen the implementation of safer recruitment procedures as far as the maintenance of the central register of appointments is concerned.
- 2.17 The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory, with some good features. The new head has a clear vision for the future development of the school. Her consultative style and open-door approach are welcomed by staff and parents. The senior management team possess complementary skills, and they have successfully generated a whole school ethos across both the junior and senior departments. Heads of department and subject co-ordinators carry a heavy workload, leaving little time for monitoring the quality of educational provision, or evaluating its outcomes.
- 2.18 At present, the whole school development plan has weaknesses, as it does not prioritise any objectives for teaching and learning, or for the future development of the school. Some, but not all, departments have development plans, but these do not always relate to the whole-school plan. The school now gives close attention to the recruitment procedures of all those working in the school, but the checking and recording in the central register of appointments has not been implemented rigorously in the past. The school's policies and procedures, some revised recently, effectively support the pupils' achievements and their personal development. Whilst the staff appraisal scheme is securely in place in the junior department, implementation of the scheme is behind schedule in the senior department. This hampers the school's self-evaluation processes. The school's premises and grounds are maintained to a good standard.

- 2.19 The school has strong links with parents from the EYFS to the sixth form. Parents are being encouraged to visit the school and are provided with a wealth of information on the school website, as well as through the weekly newsletter and Park News. Parents of current or prospective pupils have access to the required information. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated that they are supportive of the work of the school, and praised particularly the progress their children make, the range of subjects offered and the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and values. A small number of parents said they are not encouraged to be involved with the life and work of the school, that their concerns had not been handled well and they do not receive timely responses to their questions. The inspectors were unable to find evidence to support these views. The buoyant Parent Teacher Association arranges events to strengthen home-school links and supports the school in various practical ways. It recently raised funds to purchase play equipment in the junior department. Parents receive informative reports on the work and progress of their children, but not all subjects make helpful suggestions on how work can be further improved. The school has suitable arrangements for handling complaints. A mark of parental satisfaction is the fact there have been no formal complaints in the last twelve months.

### **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 does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore must:
- ensure that the appointment and recording procedures for all those working in the school are implemented appropriately [Part 4, paragraphs 19 (2)(b), (3), 21(6)(b)(ii)(iii) and 22 (4) and (6), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety];
  - ensure that attendance registers in the junior department are completed in line with requirements [Part 3, paragraph, 17].
- 3.2 In order to comply with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:
- ensure that within the final term of the EYFS, parents are provided with a written summary reporting their children's progress against the Early Learning Goals and the assessment grades.

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

- 3.3 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Prepare a whole school development plan to which governors and staff have contributed and of which all have shared ownership.
  2. Provide more time for senior and middle managers to monitor and evaluate the work of the school.
  3. Improve the quality, frequency and use of assessment in the EYFS.
  4. Increase the year-round use of the outdoor environment in all areas of learning in the EYFS.

#### **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 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS setting is good. It provides a caring, secure Christian environment where children make good progress in their learning. Activities are planned to meet the individual needs of children and they are well supported in their learning. Parents appreciate the friendly atmosphere and the high standards of behaviour which ensure that children are happy and have a secure start to their education. The experienced staff work hard to keep the needs of children at the heart of everything they do and demonstrate a good capacity to sustain and improve the current good standards.

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

4.2 The quality of leadership and management is good. Staff are appropriately qualified and all the required safeguarding checks have been undertaken. Relevant policies, risk assessments and procedures, including those to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, meet the EYFS requirements and support the management of the setting. Staff work well together as a team. They meet regularly to evaluate their work and identify areas for future improvement and development. Planning and observational assessment are satisfactory overall, but the information obtained from assessment is not used well enough to plan work. The school is aware that it does not at present report children's progress to parents against the EYFS profile assessment scales at the end of the reception year, whether in writing or through discussion. A satisfactory range of good quality resources are used well to promote opportunities for independent learning, both indoors and outside. Strong links are forged with parents and effective links with external agencies and cluster group schools offer valued support for staff.

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

4.3 The quality of the provision is good. The broad curriculum, a variety of activities and a good indoor learning environment ensure that children are effectively helped to learn and develop. Children who need extra help are closely monitored and appropriate support is given when needed. The balance of the curriculum is good, with many opportunities for child-initiated activities involving choosing, exploring and discovering in addition to those led by adults. Parents and other adults are welcomed into school to share their knowledge and experiences with the children. The provision for children's welfare is outstanding, and staff promote the welfare and health and safety of children effectively. The outdoor area is used regularly in good weather, but it is under-used during the winter months. The school recognises that more opportunities could be found for outdoor learning. The kindergarten and reception classrooms are bright, cheerful and inviting.

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

- 4.4 The outcomes for children in the EYFS are good. Children enjoy learning and, from a range of starting points, demonstrate well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. They tackle number problem-solving tasks with enjoyment and talk about their activities with growing confidence and expression. Their physical development is good. Attractive displays illustrate a variety of creative skills. By the end of the EYFS, children usually attain the majority of the Early Learning Goals in all six areas of learning. Their personal development is outstanding and their behaviour is exemplary. Children share, take turns and have good social skills. Their communication skills are a little above the expected level for this age. Children respond positively to adults and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Children understand about being safe and the importance of healthy eating, and they are learning the need for good hygiene. They form happy friendships and are courteous and considerate.

**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 and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Margaret Banks

Mrs Sara Davies

Ms Anne Lee

Mrs Jenny Clayphan

Reporting Inspector

Deputy Head, HMC school

Head, IAPS school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector