



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE TOWERS CONVENT SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	The Towers Convent School
DfE Number	938/6138
EYFS Number	EY411795
Registered Charity Number	229394
Address	The Towers Convent School The Towers Upper Beeding Steyning West Sussex BN44 3TF
Telephone Number	01903 812185
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Email Address	head@towers.w-sussex.sch.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Carole Baker
Chair of Governors	Sister Mary Andrew Fulgoney
Age Range	2 to 16
Total Number of Pupils	327
Gender of Pupils	Girls aged 2 to 16; boys aged 2 to 7
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 7 5-11: 86 3-5 (EYFS): 20 11-18: 214
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 327
Number of Boarders	Total: 0
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	27 Nov 2012 to 30 Nov 2012

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 October 2007.

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. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website 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.

This inspection contains 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, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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', 'satisfactory' 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 the chair of governors and other 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 house 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

Mrs Elizabeth Coley	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Pamela Hutley	Team Inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Mrs Dawn Moore	Team Inspector (Head Teacher, ISA school)
Mr Jim Turner	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS/HMC school)
Mrs Linda Trevethick	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Deborah Buckenham	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	8
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	9
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	10
(d) The quality of boarding	10
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	13
(a) The quality of governance	13
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	13
6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	16
(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	16
(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being	17
(c) The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision	17
(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision	17

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Towers Convent School is a day and flexi-boarding school for girls from the ages of 2 to 16, and a day school for boys from the ages of 2 to 7. It was founded in 1903 when five French girls were brought to England by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament to escape persecution of Religious Orders in France. The Order still owns the grounds and buildings, and six Sisters continue to live on site and participate in the life of the school. The school is now run as a charitable trust, with three of the Sisters acting as trustees and administering the school, together with other governors. Whilst operating as a Roman Catholic school, it welcomes pupils of all faiths and none. It is situated about five miles north of Shoreham-by-Sea, close to the rural town of Steyning. The current headmistress was appointed as the first lay head in 2003.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has admitted pupils from the age of two, and changed the boarding provision from full and weekly to flexi-boarding, responding to the needs of parents. This has enabled the school to convert most of the space previously used for boarding into teaching accommodation, including new art and design and technology (DT) rooms. In addition, refurbishment of the school kitchen, washrooms and old stable block has taken place, the dining room has been extended and the construction of two new junior classrooms was completed three weeks before the inspection.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 327 pupils on roll: 8 boys and 319 girls. There were 27 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for those from the ages of 2 to 5, of whom 7 were under the age of 3 and 21 attended part-time. A total of 86 pupils were in Years 1 to 6 and 214 were in Years 7 to 11. Currently, up to six girls can board at any one time on a flexible basis; no pupils were boarding at the time of the inspection. The school has identified 49 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 38 receive learning support, mostly for dyslexia or dyspraxia. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and one pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language (EAL). Thirty-four pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The majority of pupils live within 20 miles of the school and come from families with a professional, business or rural background. The ability profile of the school is above the national average overall, with a wider spread of abilities within and between year groups in the junior school.
- 1.4 A Gospel-centred, Eucharistic community, the school aims to build a loving and welcoming environment that enables pupils to grow in the love of God and of each other, where each individual is equally valued and, seeking to live by the school motto *Semper Fidelis* (Always Faithful), to uphold the values of friendship, trust, understanding, openness, forgiveness, integrity, generosity of spirit, care, support, self-discipline and good manners. The school sets out to foster a love of learning which will motivate pupils to realise their full potential by developing their own talents, and encourage within them a desire to know and investigate, persevere, show enthusiasm, and take some responsibility for their own learning and achievement. It seeks to promote an awareness of social concerns near and far so that energies are channelled into action through collective responsibility.
- 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 Pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning, broadly fulfilling the school's aim to foster a love of learning, thereby encouraging pupils to realise their full potential by developing their own talents. Pupils succeed in their academic work because they display excellent attitudes towards their learning and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils also enjoy excellent relationships with each other, and they benefit from good teaching overall, although its quality is wide ranging. The teachers' strong subject knowledge and their effective use of resources enable pupils to make good progress. On occasion, the tasks set in lessons are not well matched to the abilities of those pupils with SEND and the more able, and the quality of marking is variable. In addition, a significant amount of learning time is lost, particularly in the junior school. An effective curriculum, supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and trips, and a strong careers and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, also enable pupils to gain a broad base of knowledge and skills.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent; within this spiritual community, pupils demonstrate qualities of exceptionally good manners, courtesy, tolerance and respect in all their relationships. They reflect carefully on faith issues and have strong moral values. The pupils have a keen sense of responsibility for others less fortunate, and this is demonstrated by their fund raising for local, national and global charities. Their cultural awareness is also well developed. Supporting their personal development is the outstanding care of the leadership, most staff and the Sisters, who play a very active part in the life of the school. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of senior pupils raised concerns about the inconsistency and amount of homework, and the variability of sanctions and rewards given by a few staff. Inspectors agree with their views. The arrangements for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are excellent. In response to the findings of the previous inspection, the opening of upstairs windows has been restricted. The quality of boarding makes a positive contribution to the personal development of the very few girls who take the opportunity to board, on an infrequent and flexible basis. All the recommendations of the previous boarding inspection have been implemented.
- 2.3 The school largely fulfils its aims, because of strong governance and good leadership and management overall. Governors give effective support to the school and evidence of prudent financial management is seen in the provision of a new junior school building. The headmistress and senior team provide good leadership with a clear vision demonstrated in a well-constructed school development plan, and since the previous inspection individual roles have been clarified. An audit of each department in rotation over the next three years has recently begun which strongly links all management processes and this is already proving to be of benefit. Minutes of all meetings are carefully recorded, in response to the previous inspection. All recruitment checks on staff have been carried out as required. The school carefully promotes excellent links with parents, who are extremely positive about all areas of school life.

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 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Identify and share the most effective existing practice in teaching to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils, including the EYFS.
 2. Ensure that lessons begin on time, particularly in the junior school.
 3. Monitor the quality of marking more rigorously so that it clearly informs pupils of what they need to do to improve.
 4. Respond positively to the concerns of senior pupils relating to homework and the inconsistent use of sanctions and rewards.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 The aim of the school to foster a love of learning that will motivate all pupils to realise their full potential is broadly fulfilled. Pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively in their academic work and also in extra-curricular activities. The pupils are articulate and confident, expressing themselves well orally and in their written work. They listen carefully to each other and to the explanations of others, and their behaviour is exemplary. Their numeracy skills are developed well in subjects such as science and DT, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are also of a good standard. The pupils demonstrate strengths in the creative and performing arts, particularly in art, music, drama and dance. Evidence was seen of pupils being given some opportunities to think for themselves and to reason well within lessons, though this was not the case in all subjects. In addition, on occasion, more able pupils were not given tasks that were sufficiently challenging, and those with SEND were not always provided with work that matched their needs because all pupils were given the same work irrespective of their ability. This limited their progress.
- 3.3 Many opportunities exist for pupils to achieve success individually and in teams, and these make an excellent contribution to their personal development. Over the last four years, several pupils have achieved full marks from the awarding body at GCSE in drama, geography, chemistry and history. The school has achieved the Eco-Schools and Active sports awards. Individual pupils have had outstanding success in music, sport, public speaking competitions and speech and drama examinations. Team success has been realised in netball, rounders and cross-country, and many pupils are involved in the annual school musicals. Pupils take an ICT qualification at the end of Year 9 and pupils in Year 11 undertake the Junior Sports Leader Award successfully. Twenty-one pupils achieved bronze level of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in 2012. When they leave at the end of Year 11, all pupils go on to further study; most transfer to sixth-form colleges in the area, while a few are offered and accept scholarships to other independent schools.
- 3.4 In the junior school, pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. Inspection evidence confirms this judgement and includes consideration of the levels at which pupils are working in relation to national targets. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. The pupils follow a broad curriculum, and at the age of 11 most continue into the senior school for their secondary education. In the senior school, the following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Performance at GCSE has been above the national average for girls in maintained schools. In 2009, results were also similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. In the GCSE results in 2011, over 40 per cent of the grades awarded were A* or A, and the results for 2012 show a good improvement on this at nearly 60 per cent. This level of attainment at GCSE and the nationally standardised progress data that is available indicate that pupils are making at least a good rate of progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. Throughout the school, good progress was

also seen in lesson observations, in pupils' written work and in curriculum interviews with them.

- 3.5 Pupils with SEND or EAL also achieve well in examinations and often make good progress in lessons because of the effective individual sessions they have and when the tasks set are suitable for their ability. In an English lesson involving editing their Victorian diary, pupils with SEND made good progress in developing their vocabulary because their work was matched well to their needs. The achievement of more able pupils is good when teachers have high expectations, appropriate challenge is offered in lessons and they are given opportunity to share their opinions and views.
- 3.6 The good quality of teaching makes an effective contribution to the pupils' learning and achievement, as do their positive attitudes to learning, their exemplary behaviour and the excellent relationships they enjoy amongst themselves and generally with staff. They co-operate extremely well with each other and also work effectively on their own. Occasionally, the amount of work achieved in the lesson is limited because of loss of time or pace. Pupils generally approach their lessons with enjoyment, and the presentation and organisation of their work are often good.

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

- 3.7 The quality of the curriculum is good.
- 3.8 The curriculum is broad, well planned, and suitable for pupils of all ages, needs and abilities. It successfully supports the school's aim to foster a love of learning in order to motivate pupils to realise their full potential by developing their own talents, and results in good achievement. The time given to linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative areas, together with the rich and varied extra-curricular programme and many visits, provides a well-balanced education for all pupils.
- 3.9 In the junior school and Years 7 to 9, the pupils broadly follow the National Curriculum, and French is taught from the Reception class, while a comprehensive PSHE or 'Education for Life' programme is followed throughout the school which reflects its aims and ethos. Frequent visits from local professionals enhance the pupils' education in health, well-being and personal safety. Religious education (RE) lessons for all pupils ensure that spirituality is at the heart of the school community, where each individual is valued. At the end of Year 9, pupils take an ICT qualification. At GCSE level, pupils follow a common core of English language, English literature, mathematics, French, RE and double award science, as well as either a short or full course in physical education (PE) (the examination is taken at the end of Year 10), and a further three subjects are chosen from a good range of options, including separate sciences. In Year 11 most pupils study for the Junior Sports Leader Award. Curriculum planning and schemes of work are suitable at each phase of the school.
- 3.10 Pupils benefit from a thoroughly planned careers programme, which offers useful help to pupils and their parents, both in Year 9 when choosing GSCE options and in Years 10 and 11 when preparing for post-16 education. Pupils in the latter years attend the school's 'college convention', receive individual careers support, and help with sixth-form applications and interview practice. During the school day, time is occasionally lost because the timings of lessons are not strictly adhered to by some

staff; this is particularly the case in the junior school and results in a significant amount of reduced learning time and less rapid progress overall.

- 3.11 Provision for pupils with SEND is good and identification of those in need of an individual education plan is efficient. One-to-one lessons provide additional help, though support within the classroom is less effective. Pupils with EAL are supported well by staff and by their peers, and are given the help they need in subject lessons with the acquisition of English. This enables them to understand and enjoy the full curriculum as quickly as possible. More able pupils are offered a series of workshops to extend and challenge their thinking, including mathematics and science enrichment days. This aspect of the school's work is in its early stages of development.
- 3.12 The extra-curricular programme provides excellent support to the academic curriculum, with a comprehensive range of activities including sports, music, drama and creative arts, and contributes successfully to pupils' achievements. Of particular note are The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, growing crops and recycling with the Eco-Schools project, and the running of the school fair trade tuck shop as an enterprise activity. Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in competitive sports, mathematics and biology challenges and public speaking competitions with other schools, and to compete internally in the many and varied inter-house competitions, including cookery, the 'brain-box' quiz and dance. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 assist with the running of clubs, for example 'disco fit' for junior pupils. An excellent range of cultural trips and activities days supports the curriculum, and residential visits further afield also enrich pupils' experience.
- 3.13 Strong links exist with the local, national and international communities, which help to develop the pupils' understanding of the world around them. These include fund raising for and visits to a local hospice and drop-in centre, volunteering at play schemes and with young readers during the holidays, and supporting the charitable works of the Sisters in Brazil and Tanzania.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.15 Teaching overall enables pupils to make good progress, although its quality is wide ranging, and it supports the aims of the school. Throughout the school, teachers have excellent subject knowledge. The generally strong relationships between staff and pupils mean that the teachers know their pupils well as individuals. The atmosphere in lessons is positive and conducive to learning, and lessons are enjoyable; pupils are keen to work together and to support each other's learning as a result. Teachers plan lessons effectively, and the most successful teaching employs a wide range of activities at a brisk pace, with pupils responding positively to the high expectations. In less successful lessons, time is not effectively used as the pace is slow, teaching is over-prescribed and interactions to develop higher order thinking skills and support independent learning are limited.
- 3.16 Any pupils with statements of special educational needs are given appropriate support in line with the requirements of their statement. However, in some lessons the needs of pupils with SEND and the more able are not completely met because the tasks they are given are not sufficiently well matched to those needs, which results in less rapid progress for those pupils. In the senior school, drop-in sessions, called clinics, are well established in many subjects; teachers are committed and

generous with their time beyond the timetable, and the clinics are appreciated by some of the pupils as an opportunity to improve their understanding. Throughout the school, extension work is mostly used when pupils finish the work set for the whole class, limiting additional challenge to the breadth of an individual's learning. Teachers check that those pupils with EAL understand the tasks they are being given and provide individual support as necessary. A good quality and quantity of resources are used effectively and support learning well.

- 3.17 Teachers assess pupils' work regularly. However, there remains variation in the implementation of the marking and assessment policy and in the quality of marking overall. Most work is marked in a timely manner, and some marking gives encouraging comments and praise, though some is only cursory. The best sets targets for the pupils so that they know what to do to improve or asks questions to encourage pupils to reflect further. Pupils appreciate marking where it is comprehensive and constructive. The collection of assessment data and monitoring procedures are thorough and carried out regularly.
- 3.18 In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a small minority of senior pupils raised concerns about the inconsistency and amount of homework. Their views were confirmed in interviews with them and in their homework diaries. The homework policy indicates the amount of time to be spent on each subject, but on occasions staff expectation exceeds this and sometimes many large pieces of work are due to be handed in at the same time. Less able pupils are frequently given class work to finish, in addition to the regular homework set.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' personal qualities develop extremely well, in line with the school's aims. The pupils' spiritual awareness is outstanding. The school's emphasis on moral purpose, underpinned by the Sisters' guiding influence, largely ensures that all pupils are valued and cherished as individuals by staff. Pupils reflect very well on their own lives, the lives of others and their place in the world. Senior school pupils demonstrated an excellent spirit of co-operation, leading a school assembly themselves as they explored the meaning of Christmas. All pupils are given effective opportunities for personal growth through the PSHE and the 'Education for Life' programmes. Those of all ages and faiths show respectful and considerate attitudes towards each other. They speak confidently of the need to support each other and this can be seen at play times, when the older pupils provide excellent assistance to the younger ones. Junior school pupils develop excellent self-awareness through cross-curricular approaches to their learning. They celebrate the achievements of each other in assembly, and in lessons they consider the lives of other pupils in different circumstances, understanding security provided by their own families and those who love them. In a senior school tutor period, the pupils reflected extremely well on wonders of nature and on celebration of the world around them.
- 4.3 Pupils develop a strong set of moral values and have a clear awareness of right and wrong. In the junior school, pupils are kind and considerate in their attitudes, listening to the views and opinions of others. Relationships with one another in all sections of the school are excellent. Strong co-operation and respect for the views of others are seen in lessons where paired or group work is undertaken. Behaviour is exemplary. The 'buddy' system used in the junior school develops a sense of consideration and support at play times. In the senior school, pupils explore very well ethical issues such as sustainable resources, alcohol abuse and euthanasia. Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of justice.
- 4.4 Pupils' social awareness is excellent. They take advantage of the many opportunities to be fully involved throughout the school. They take on a wide range of responsibilities which they carry out very well, for example as head girl, deputy head girl and prefects in the senior school, and as house captains and library monitors in the junior school. Senior pupils are actively involved in special events, and show initiative in choosing and leading charitable fund-raising events such as coffee mornings. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and they show a readiness to improve other people's lives. Charity work is undertaken across the school, often focusing on children in disadvantaged situations, such as Brazilian street children. Pupils perform their music at nursing homes and hospices. Junior school pupils demonstrate concern for those less fortunate by raising funds for a range of causes.
- 4.5 Pupils have a strong appreciation of their own and others' cultures. They reflect effectively, demonstrating a well-developed understanding on differences experienced by those from other cultures, by learning about music and artists from other parts of the world and through a suitable focus on other faiths in RE lessons. Pupils celebrate many special days such as the European Day of Languages. They develop a good knowledge of their own culture through visits to museums and

castles, as well as in receiving regular visitors to the school. They have a good understanding of services and institutions in England.

- 4.6 When they leave the school, pupils demonstrate an extremely high standard of personal development. They are considerate, reflective, knowledgeable and compassionate citizens, ready to contribute fully in the next phase of their education and to society as a whole.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is good.
- 4.8 In line with the school's aims, the arrangements for pastoral care support pupils' personal development effectively. Staff and the Sisters know the pupils extremely well and most provide excellent care. Pastoral information is communicated effectively and staff are generally aware of any issues or difficulties affecting pupils. On the whole, pastoral matters are dealt with promptly and make use of some consistent strategies. Form teachers help and advise pupils and make a significant contribution to pastoral care, supporting and caring for them. However, responses from pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire and verbal feedback during the inspection indicate areas of dissatisfaction. A small minority of pupils reported that a few teachers are inconsistent and unfair in their treatment of individuals and that sanctions imposed can at times be indiscriminate. After investigating these issues thoroughly, inspectors agree with these concerns.
- 4.9 Relationships between pupils and most staff are exemplary, as are the relationships amongst the pupils themselves. The Sisters make an exceedingly valuable contribution to school life, ensuring that pupils are well supported and enabled to overcome any difficulties. Warmth and sincerity permeate the school, which is on the whole a very happy community. Pupils are confident and friendly, and despite their concerns say that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits through the provision of nutritious meals, which provide excellent choice. They are encouraged to take regular exercise through the PE curriculum and the very wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- 4.10 Positive behaviour strategies promote exemplary conduct. Avoidance of all forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, is achieved through consistent strategies. Pupils say that bullying is rare and, should it happen, it would be dealt with constructively. Several methods are used to secure pupils' views, including a food and catering committee and school council. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt that their opinions are not always listened to, but, on investigation, this issue appeared to be linked to the inconsistencies mentioned above.
- 4.11 The school has recently updated its three-year plan on accessibility in order to continue to meet the requirements of the Equality Act.

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

- 4.12 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.13 Throughout the school highly effective policies and procedures for promoting the welfare of the pupils, including child protection, contribute to pupils' personal development and the fulfilment of the school's aims. All staff receive regular training in safeguarding and the designated child protection officer has been trained in inter-agency working. New staff have an appropriate induction in relevant procedures. The governor responsible for overseeing child protection meets with the designated officer on a regular basis to discuss safeguarding issues, and other governors are trained in child protection. Good relationships exist with the local safeguarding children board.
- 4.14 The school has produced comprehensive policies covering all aspects of health and safety, including measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Regular fire drills are held and members of staff receive appropriate fire awareness training. Thorough risk assessments are carried out for buildings, curriculum activities and school trips. In response to the previous inspection, the opening of the upstairs windows is now restricted.
- 4.15 First-aid kits are suitably placed in all areas of the school and the medical room provides appropriate facilities for pupils who are injured or fall ill during the school day. Medicines are stored and administered safely, and the accident reporting procedures are highly effective. A significant number of staff are trained in first aid and those pupils who have specific medical needs are cared for very well. Registers record accurately pupils' admission to and attendance at the school and these are suitably stored as required for three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.16 The quality of boarding is good overall.
- 4.17 During the week of the inspection, there were no pupils boarding. Since the previous inspection, the school has moved from full and weekly boarding to making boarding available on a flexible basis, in order to accommodate the needs of parents.
- 4.18 The outcomes for boarders are good. A very few parents responded to the boarding questions in the pre-inspection questionnaire, but those who did indicated that they appreciate and are satisfied with the provision of flexi-boarding and the care their children receive. It was difficult to ascertain boarders' views before the inspection as it was clear from the questionnaire responses that many girls who do not board had answered the boarding questions. However, boarders spoke articulately, confidently and enthusiastically about their boarding experiences, responding positively during the inspection. Relationships are excellent, promoting the personal development and independence of boarders. The warmth and support from both the leadership and the Sisters, who together care for the boarders, help to provide a happy and homely environment. Girls sometimes choose to board for a night rather than go to a friend's house. Systems and policies are effective and enable girls to develop their self-esteem and self-reliance. Boarders' views are sought and taken into account, and they do not experience any discrimination.
- 4.19 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Since the previous inspection, the school has taken the decision not to upgrade the boarding accommodation

further due to the infrequency of the uptake of flexi-boarding and the very small number of pupils involved. The accommodation is small and has not been updated but it is homely, warm, adequately furnished and secure. There is a suitable kitchen, and a small sitting room provides space for watching television, playing board games or having quiet time. Washing facilities are adequate for the small number of boarders, and have been improved since the previous inspection. Laundry facilities are available but rarely required. Boarders' valuables are safe and secure, with items being locked away at night when appropriate. Boarders have a small range of activities available to them in the evenings appropriate to the limited time between after-school activities, the end of the homework club and bedtime. There is no boarding at the weekends. Contact with parents is straightforward. A pay telephone which was available at the time of the previous inspection is rarely used, as boarders have their own mobile telephones or use the school telephone on the very infrequent occasions when they want to contact parents. This is seldom necessary as boarders are usually only in residence overnight.

- 4.20 The medical arrangements and provision of first aid are excellent. All medication is appropriately stored and dispensed with parental consent having been given in advance, an improvement since the previous inspection. The arrangements for self-medication are effective and the confidentiality and rights of all boarders are respected. Records are suitably kept and securely stored.
- 4.21 The refurbishment of the main school kitchen and the dining room since the previous inspection has had a very positive impact, helping to create a more pleasant dining environment for pupils and staff. There is a salad bar available each day which complements the choice of main meals available. Food is locally sourced, plentiful and nutritious. Those with particular dietary requirements are well catered for and a vegetarian option is always available. Breakfast is provided for a small number of day pupils and the girls who have boarded overnight.
- 4.22 Boarders' safety and welfare are a priority. Before they try boarding for the first time, they are given a handbook that provides details about the boarding experience. The very small number of boarders facilitates individual care, tailored to meet the needs of each girl. Boarders feel very safe and secure in the company of the Sisters who, together with the leadership, are very experienced, committed and dedicated. Boarders know that there is always an adult to whom they can turn for help and guidance. An experienced and qualified independent listener is available, in addition to the Sisters, and various other members of staff also provide required support. In the boarding area, contact details for various external agencies are clearly displayed on notice boards, an improvement since the previous inspection. An adult is readily available overnight should a boarder need assistance. Parents can contact their children easily and the school's complaints policy includes the contact details for the inspectorates, in response to the previous inspection.
- 4.23 Fire drills are held during the day and at night each term, with regular reviews undertaken of fire documentation and the fire risk assessment. Boarders can make drinks and snacks. There is a small stock of everyday items available to the boarders in case they forget something when they stay overnight.
- 4.24 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent, with clear and comprehensive policies for safeguarding and safer recruitment rigorously implemented, an improvement since the previous inspection. Care for others underpins the philosophy in the school and is frequently demonstrated in pupil and staff interactions around school. The anti-bullying policy promotes an open and

trusting atmosphere in the school and this extends to the boarding area. Bullying is not tolerated and is promptly challenged if it occurs. Pupils feel that they can report any incidents of bullying and recently enjoyed a very successful anti-bullying week. They are extremely confident when speaking with adults both during the school day and in the boarding setting. Boarders feel secure in the knowledge that any concern they may have while boarding is dealt with promptly.

- 4.25 With the small numbers of flexi-boarders it is evident that staff are always aware of the boarders' whereabouts. There is effective communication between school staff, the Sisters and parents. Email is used to good effect. The missing child policy is clear and well understood.
- 4.26 The leadership and management of boarding are good. The boarding aims are clearly set out and securely achieved. The school has taken a conscious decision to continue to offer flexi-boarding only. All the recommendations of the previous Ofsted inspection of boarding in October 2008 have been implemented.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 The quality of governance is good.

5.2 The board of governors fully supports the aims and ethos of the school. The governors, including two trustees, bring a variety of expertise to the board. They are few in number, which enables them all to have effective and regular oversight of the school. Some governors make a direct link with different aspects of the school, such as child protection and the EYFS. The chair is one of the Sisters, and is in close contact with the leadership, as she lives on site and teaches within the senior school. Those who take responsibility for the finances of the school maintain weekly contact with the bursar and leadership. Evidence of the board's strong financial provision is seen in the new junior building, recently completed, and the refurbishment of several areas of the school since the previous inspection. The board also ensures that a good quality and quantity of human and material resources are available to meet the needs of the pupils. It endeavours to keep abreast of its regulatory responsibilities through regular training, which supports understanding of its role well. Governors undertake an annual review of the child protection policy and procedures, and they consider safeguarding, welfare, health and safety regularly, including a review of a few school policies at every meeting; however, their current system for monitoring compliance is not carried out with sufficient rigour.

5.3 A few governors have become more involved in the life and work of the school and, after visits during the school day, they make a verbal report to other governors at the next meeting. They are relatively well known by staff. The leadership and bursar prepare termly reports for these meetings, which provide a good deal of information about the school. Minutes indicate that governors take a keen interest and debate all aspects of school life, its challenges and achievements, including educational standards and the areas for improvement within the school development plan. In this way, they not only support but also challenge senior leaders, enabling improvement and growth.

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

5.4 The quality of leadership and management is good.

5.5 This enables the aims of the school to be largely fulfilled, reflecting the good quality of the pupils' education and their outstanding personal development. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are strongly committed to their roles, and work together well as a team. Leadership is good. The senior team demonstrates effective leadership, both in academic and welfare areas, and its members' individual roles have been clarified since the previous inspection. The leadership and her team have a clear vision for the future improvement of the school and this is presented in a well-constructed school development plan, which is focused effectively on the current areas for improvement as identified in the priorities from self-evaluation. A great deal of information about pupils' progress and welfare is shared in various staff meetings and, in response to the previous inspection, minutes are kept carefully. The pupils are particularly appreciative of the support and excellent care shown to

them by the leadership and the Sisters within the community, which lie at the heart of the school's ethos.

- 5.6 Senior leaders have recognised that their management processes have not been as strong as they had intended them to be. In recent months a new audit of subjects has been agreed, beginning with one department, with a view to covering all subjects over a three-year period. This audit combines an in-depth review of all aspects of leadership and management of the department with monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, the appraisal process and continuing professional development of staff, linked to the school development plan. Staff are well qualified and deployed effectively. They have been trained in the key areas of safeguarding and welfare, health and safety, and many show high levels of care and concern for pupils. Whilst the review of policies is not undertaken sufficiently rigorously, most staff implement them effectively. The induction of new staff is good, and regular opportunities for staff to participate in continuing professional development, both within school and externally, are valued.
- 5.7 Aside from a few minor difficulties in the past, the centralised register accurately records the recruitment checks carried out on staff, governors and volunteers when they were appointed, including the most recent, and all staff have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Accommodation is used to best advantage and the grounds are well maintained. Non-teaching staff, including those involved in catering, cleaning, grounds and administration, make a strong contribution to the support offered to pupils and enable the school to run efficiently.
- 5.8 Links with parents are excellent. The school has developed this partnership extremely well, in fulfilment of its aims. It has promoted an open and accessible environment where parents feel most welcome. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents were enthusiastic about the opportunities they have to be involved in the life and work of the school and to discuss their children's progress. All who responded were positive about the high standards of behaviour achieved and the range of extra-curricular activities. Inspectors agree with these views. No single issue was raised as a concern by more than a very small number of parents.
- 5.9 Parents new to the school are provided with a range of comprehensive information through the prospectus, handbooks and open days, as well as the website, which provides access to the required policies and procedures. Parents are encouraged to approach teachers about any concerns either by email or through an appointment. The parents are appreciative of the prompt way with which concerns are handled and followed up, where appropriate, at a later date. They are aware of the formal complaints procedure. Meetings to inform parents of their children's progress are held twice a year in the junior school and once in the senior, alongside two reports each year about pupils' work and progress throughout the school. These reports give clear information on the progress pupils have made and set targets for future improvement. Parents appreciate effort grades in the reports, especially for those pupils who are less able.
- 5.10 Newsletters and information, such as those concerning teams' sports matches, are sent out through the recently established email system. A record of the school's activities and successes is recorded in an informative annual magazine. Parents are invited to attend concerts and plays, and to accompany their children on the many trips organised. They are informed about current educational issues in school through workshops called 'parents as learners'. They are encouraged to be involved

in a wide range of social and fund-raising events organised by the strong parent teacher association, ranging from a new parents' barbecue early in September, which is open to the whole school, to a Christmas bazaar, which regularly raises large sums of money for the school. The association was particularly complimentary of the Sisters' support during these events.

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 outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. The educational programmes give children many opportunities to express themselves confidently and with much enjoyment. The enthusiastic staff work well together, with high expectations of the children, engaging and motivating them most successfully. They are knowledgeable about how to promote learning and development, encouraging children to think critically and creatively, and they use excellent resources to develop the children's skills. In the Nursery, the needs of the children are met very well. This is not always the case in Reception, where the small group of children is sometimes taught more formally. There is a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities, with emphasis particularly in the Nursery on independent learning and how to make choices in child-initiated play. During the inspection, the youngest children enjoyed face painting, which prompted much discussion, and staff prepared the Reception class very well for an assembly in which they proudly shared a presentation on clothing with Year 2.
- 6.2 Regular assessments in the form of observations and photographic evidence are used in planning the next stages for individual learning. Good support is given by experienced teaching assistants to those with SEND and challenging tasks are provided for the more able; the support of the SEND co-ordinator is sought if a need has been identified. Initially, two-year-olds are assessed in communication and language, personal, social, emotional and physical development. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the information provided and of the pastoral care. They are very appreciative of the help given to support children settling into new classes, and the regular contact they have through the 'open door policy' or more formally through high quality reports. Stickers of achievement at home are sent in by parents for staff to share at school, for example for a child achieving a ten-metre swimming badge or getting himself dressed in the morning.

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

6.3 Provision for the children's well-being is outstanding. Key people are well known to both parents and children, and this relationship has been developed extremely well. Staff act as excellent role models, ensuring that children behave exceptionally well and feel safe and secure in a warm and welcoming setting. The children are very confident when talking and playing with adults and they co-operate very well with each other. They understand the importance of physical exercise. The Reception class warmed up and thoroughly enjoyed a PE lesson on developing star jumps, forward rolls and balancing into a sequence. Children also understand healthy eating, demonstrating the preparation of fruit for themselves at play time in the Nursery and bringing healthy snacks from home in the Reception class. Water is always available. Children enjoy a nutritional hot lunch every day. Most manage personal hygiene independently. They enjoy sharing their well-resourced playground with the rest of the junior school, ensuring a smooth transition into their next class.

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

6.4 The leadership and management of the provision are outstanding. There is a named governor who takes a keen interest in the setting, visiting regularly and reporting back to the board. Safeguarding and welfare procedures are implemented rigorously; all staff have been checked with the CRB and trained in child protection. Regular and robust risk assessments are undertaken. Staff meet regularly to evaluate the provision, to assess how well each child is achieving, and to plan and set targets for improving the setting. Managers oversee the educational and welfare programmes very well, and weekly and daily plans are discussed with the teaching assistants. Effective systems for monitoring, appraising and supervising staff support the many opportunities for continuous professional development. Strong links are established with external agencies to ensure support should it be needed. Partnerships with parents are a strength of the setting.

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

6.5 The overall quality and standards are outstanding. Most children, including those with SEND, make excellent progress in relation to their starting points, and their needs are met extremely well. Reception children were seen enjoying diving to the bottom of the swimming pool to retrieve toys. They know how to use £1.00 coins to buy various items costing up to £10.00 in total, and they are confident about using computers and digital cameras; having taken photographs of friends in class, they created pictures using a computer program. Children aged three are confident counting up to and down from ten and were seen attempting observational paintings of plants with reasonable accuracy. The two-year-olds are confident about 'dragging' objects across the interactive whiteboard and they listen with concentration to short stories. The children are enthusiastic yet polite to their peers and show respect to all adults. They understand how to stay safe, be kind and share. They respond well to praise and encouragement and all enjoy school. The children's safeguarding and welfare are high priorities. Since the previous inspection, risk assessments for the safety of the children have been reviewed and they are recorded meticulously. Greater privacy is now ensured during nappy changing.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

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