

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Holme Grange School

Full Name of the School	Holme Grange School
DCSF Number	872/6004
Early Years Number	EY 291118
Registered Charity Number	309105
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Age Range	3 to 13
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	19th to 22nd January 2009

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage were not inspected as part of this inspection.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Holme Grange opened in 1945 as a boarding school for boys only. In the mid 1970s it changed to become a co-educational day school. The school is on a single site, housed in a range of buildings including a former country manor house which is a grade II listed building, a separate Nursery unit called Little Grange, a new purpose-built teaching block for Years 3 to 8, a large sports hall, and a small number of converted buildings to provide specialist teaching areas. The former manor house accommodates administration offices, classrooms and a learning support suite. The new purpose-built teaching block, the John Graves building, houses specialist rooms for art, French, English, mathematics, geography and history which is shared with religious studies.
- 1.2 The school aims to set high standards and to give inspiration for each pupil's life. The objective is to help children to become good all-round personalities so that they achieve well academically and in all or some of the wide selection of activities provided.
- 1.3 The numbers on roll at the start of the inspection were 254. Fifteen full-time and fourteen part-time pupils are in the Nursery. There are 81 full-time pupils in the pre-preparatory department (pre-prep) and 144 pupils in the preparatory department (prep). This includes 121 pupils in Years 3 to 6 and 23 pupils in Years 7 and 8. A proportion of pupils in Year 6 sit the 11+ examination and transfer to independent senior schools or maintained grammar schools. Other Year 6 pupils stay on for Years 7 and 8 and undertake common entrance examinations for independent senior schools.
- 1.4 Assessment data indicates that there is a wide spread of ability, but overall it is just above the national average. There are no pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN). However, the school has identified 62 pupils who attend learning support for their learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD). The school currently has four Japanese pupils, two in the pre-prep department and two in the prep. There are also pupils with Russian or Asian backgrounds. Some of these pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and are given extra support in learning English. The new headteacher took up her post in January 2009 and the school was last inspected in February 2003.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for its Early Years and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage

School	Age of children
Little Grange	3 to 4

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Holme Grange provides a good quality of educational experience for its pupils. It meets its aim to “inspire the child in and out of the classroom”. Provision in the Nursery is often outstanding. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the quality of its curriculum.
- 2.2 The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers the full range of National Curriculum subjects; parents agree that pupils are offered an appropriate range of subjects. The curriculum serves pupils’ interests, aptitudes, needs and abilities well. Children aged under five in the Nursery and Reception are guided well in the areas of learning of the Foundation Stage. Reception children have opportunities to work and play in the Nursery’s outdoor gardens and playground, but this is a distance from their classrooms in the main building and they have to be escorted there. As a result, they cannot choose to work independently in an outdoor area next to their classroom. Outdoor arrangements for Reception are currently under review, with a view to enabling their free, independent access to outdoor learning in the large, well-kept grounds which surround the amenities.
- 2.3 In Nursery and pre-prep classes, lessons are mainly taught in their own classrooms, with some specialist teaching elsewhere. This increases as they get older. By the time they reach Year 5, children work with a full range of subject specialists. The curriculum is enhanced by provision for French from Year 3 onwards, German in Year 7 and Spanish in Year 8. Setting arrangements are in place for mathematics from Year 5 and French from Year 6. Year 8 classes are streamed by ability.
- 2.4 The school pays due regard to the requirements of 11+ and 13+ examinations and helps pupils to prepare for these. Transition to senior schools is assisted by receiving extra tuition in English and science for 11+ candidates. Parents needing information about selecting senior schools receive appropriate guidance although the school is seeking to further improve links with senior schools.
- 2.5 The curriculum for each subject is set out in writing in a school curriculum policy document. This covers all aspects of the curriculum and is of satisfactory quality. Some individual subject documentation is very good, but elsewhere not enough guidance is provided. This is particularly the case for Years 3 to 5.
- 2.6 Good provision is made for personal and social development both in classrooms and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills both in and out of class. The headteacher has recently formed a school council, which provides excellent citizenship opportunities from Reception to Year 8.
- 2.7 For four days a week pupils have a designated reading period after lunch, and there is a reading workshop for reluctant readers. Pupils, from Nursery to Year 8, use computers occasionally in other subjects, and information and communications technology (ICT) is taught as a discrete subject in the ICT suite. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers in the full range of subjects although the school is currently implementing a programme to improve this.
- 2.8 Physical development is not only enhanced by a timetabled programme of physical education and games, but also through competitive sporting fixtures. There are opportunities for all to participate. For example, there are two under-8 and two under-9 soccer teams. This is much enhanced by the school’s facilities, which are good and include many outdoor pitches, a large

- sports hall and a new all-weather pitch. These are significant improvements made since the last inspection.
- 2.9 There is a new programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), based on the social and emotional aspects of learning programme. This has been developed and coordinated by the headteacher and is timetabled for all classes.
- 2.10 There is an extensive programme of popular extra-curricular activities on offer. Many pupils opt to participate in these and those interviewed were very positive about them. Extra-curricular activities include art, languages, including Mandarin Chinese, various sporting activities, cookery, music, ICT and board games.
- 2.11 There is a wide range of workshops and presentations by visiting speakers for all ages, which enhance the curriculum, along with many trips and residential activities. For example, in Year 2 a parent has talked about the Festival of Diwali. Year 4 furthered their studies of the Romans at St Albans, and pupils from Reception to Year 8 took part in an African workshop. Annual residential visits enhance learning for pupils in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 to the Isle of White, Normandy, Dorset and Cornwall.
- 2.12 All pupils are actively encouraged to play a musical instrument; 99 pupils play an instrument and also perform in the school orchestra. Instruments learnt include the piano, guitar, drums, trumpet, saxophone, flute, cello and violin. Many pupils sing in the choir. Drama productions are of a high standard and the school has a long-standing tradition in the performing arts. Parents and pupils agree that there is a strong range of extra-curricular activities.
- 2.13 Transition between year groups and phases is effective. Records about the “Nursery learning journey” are passed on to teachers in Reception. These, and records of attainment along with targets for improvement, are passed from Year 2 to Year 3 at a meeting at the end of the summer term to assist smooth and effective transition. In the prep school, good records of attainment and progress are accessed digitally by teachers. Records are also kept of pupils’ reports.
- 2.14 The learning support department provides members of staff with updated information on pupils who require additional support, including those with LDD, those in vulnerable circumstances and those with EAL. There are efficient and effective procedures, which lead to the accurate identification of pupils with LDD. The school has identified 67 pupils as having LDD, 50 of whom receive specialist learning support in individual sessions. Once identified, pupils are monitored and tracked. Their needs are catered for, both in and out of the classroom and individual education plans are drawn up and passed on to the relevant teachers. Staff meet weekly and also have regular meetings with parents. Documentation is thorough. Pupils make good progress as a result of targeted intervention. There are also effective systems in place for teaching children who have EAL. These are improvements made since the last inspection.
- 2.15 Specific, individual provision for the more able is at an early stage of development. A register of more able pupils has been set up this term and specific criteria for identification agreed. A working party has been set up, consisting of teachers representing each subject and year group.
- 2.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.17 Pupils' learning and achievements are good and the school meets its overall aim to set high standards for all. Since the last inspection, standards of achievement have been maintained.
- 2.18 Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in subjects are usually good, and sometimes outstanding. Year 8 pupils are able to discuss similarities between the characters in plays such as *Macbeth* and *Billy Elliot*. Skills in literacy are applied in other areas of the curriculum such as history and geography. The achievement of different groups of pupils is good overall. The school does not use national tests, although it assesses attainment in core subjects at the end of Years 2 and 6 by applying National Curriculum criteria to its own modified tests. Results indicate achievement above the national averages for all maintained primary schools. Pupils have achieved eighteen academic and one science scholarship in the past three years. They achieve good Common Entrance results at the end of Year 8 and usually gain access to their first choice of independent senior school.
- 2.19 Pupils' progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is good and they make further rapid progress in Years 7 and 8. The progress of children aged under five is also good. Pupils achieve well in art and music, with four music and two art scholarships awarded in the last three years. Successes in national and regional events in badminton and girls' hockey have been achieved. A display board allows pupils to write autobiographical accounts of their sporting achievements. Pupils achieve high standards in drama throughout the school.
- 2.20 Pupils are eloquent and articulate, and use vocabulary that is appropriate and mature. Year 7 pupils performed Mark Antony's '*Friends, Romans, Countrymen*' speech from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* with a compelling clarity. Year 8 pupils quoted from Shakespeare in a relevant and analytical way to support their views and arguments. Writing in all age groups is good. It demonstrates a strong grasp of general and subject specific vocabulary. Year 6 pupils in geography used terms such as 'location', 'humid', 'equatorial' and 'tropical' to describe rainforests.
- 2.21 The application of mathematical concepts is occasionally seen in subjects such as science and geography. ICT work on display shows that pupils achieve and learn well and make good use of computers in ICT as well as in geography fieldwork. Their ICT skills in other areas of the curriculum are underdeveloped.
- 2.22 Pupils demonstrate strong reasoning skills and many argue their views effectively, with due regard to the views of others. They organise their work and time well in lessons.
- 2.23 Pupils' ability to work both independently and co-operatively is a significant strength of their learning, and contributes to their achievement of high standards. Pupils in PSHCE lessons work together to build towers and analyse the success of their teamwork and provide targets for improvement. Pupils lead competitive rugby and hockey matches well against other schools. They organise, position and support other players, raising the standard of play for the whole team. Pupils settle well to tasks. They persevere in their work and their enjoyment in the great majority of lessons is evident.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.24 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This has been maintained since the last inspection. They develop spiritually, socially and culturally through informative assemblies about different countries, the study of world faiths and opportunities to take on positions of responsibility. This is fully in keeping with the school's aim to awaken and develop pupils' wider interests in life.
- 2.25 Pupils' spiritual development is good. They show good self-esteem. They are confident but not arrogant, respectful towards adults and caring and sensitive towards their peers. They often show humility in conversation.
- 2.26 Pupils develop self-esteem through a well-established system which publicly recognises personal achievement in assemblies, in newsletters and in the giving out of the new 'Going for Goals' reward certificates. Pupils are helped to develop self-knowledge and self-esteem in topics such as 'Good to be me' in the new PSHCE programme, and when peers recognise positive characteristics in each other in the recently introduced 'star of the week'.
- 2.27 The religious studies scheme of work helps pupils explore values and religious beliefs. Pupils in Year 6 visit a synagogue to gain further insights into and understanding of the beliefs of others. Muslim parents talk about their faith and culture to Nursery children. Discussions with pupils show that they view assemblies more as opportunities to receive information than as chances for reflection. Prayers are said regularly in assemblies and at lunchtime but opportunities to allow pupils time for deeper reflection have not been provided but this aspect is being improved this term.
- 2.28 Pupils' moral development is good. In discussions, they feel the school's code of conduct encourages them to be honest, to own up to mistakes and to appreciate kindness. They understand why the school rules and the code of conduct are necessary, saying that it is 'in order to have a safe and well-organised school'. They confirm that the rules help them to have a positive attitude. Pupils agree wholeheartedly with the messages on the new wall posters which promote values such as honesty, co-operation, good manners and responsibility.
- 2.29 In French and mathematics lessons pupils show good sportsmanship when playing games, taking turns, honouring the rules and being gracious in defeat. They are helped by the school's motto to 'work hard and play fair'.
- 2.30 Pupils' social development is good. They interact with each other well and show respect and consideration when listening to each other's views in discussions. Pupils like to be helpful and they value the many positions of responsibility they are given at both form and school level. They show a mature understanding of the commitment required for each position and carry out their duties conscientiously.
- 2.31 The new school council has democratically elected representatives. It allows pupils to propose ideas, discuss and vote for school improvements. Pupils welcome this opportunity to contribute to school life and make a difference. It provides them with an excellent forum to 'raise things teachers might not have thought about' but that concern pupils. They enjoy democratic votes on issues such as the use of mobile telephones in school. They learn how to be good citizens in this way.

- 2.32 The house system encourages a sense of identity and belonging through inter-house sports competitions. Good behaviour around school is rewarded with house points. Pupils work well together, and co-operate well in pairs and groups. They speak well of close friends and there is much mutual respect. Those of different ages, ethnicity and gender usually relate well to each other. Year 8 prefects enjoy their responsibilities for younger pupils, although they sometimes find the work challenging. Many younger pupils enjoy the attention and support they receive from older peers.
- 2.33 In 2008, pupils raised significant funds for Fair Trade causes, the BBC Children in Need Appeal and the Cambrian group of schools for autistic children. They raised money from cake sales and the collection of pocket money. The annual Thames House Christmas bazaar was organized and initiated by pupils. Pupils also perform musically at meetings of the Rotary Club and other local organisations in the community such as residential homes for the elderly.
- 2.34 Pupils develop well culturally. This is fostered by a good range of visits to places such as the National Gallery, museums, the theatre and opportunities for all to play in the orchestra, sing in the choir and act in plays. Pupils learn much about a wide range of world cultures. They study the problems and challenges of the Third World in geography. They develop an interest in other cultures and have an awareness of life beyond their immediate environment. This is further developed by the school's good links with a school in Kenya. A wall display shows that pupils in Year 2 understand some of the significant differences between their education and that of children in Kenya.
- 2.35 Pupils are given good opportunities to understand other cultures. Children in the Nursery enjoy working and playing in the Chinese-themed role-play area, complete with kimonos to dress up in, a Chinese dragon and table set with chopsticks. They celebrate the Chinese New Year. The annual Year 6 trip to Normandy also stimulates interest in and improved understanding of another nation and its culture.
- 2.36 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.37 The quality of teaching is good and this has been maintained since the last inspection. The school largely succeeds in its aim to draw out pupils' abilities and academic potential.
- 2.38 Outstanding teaching was seen in a significant minority of lessons. In these lessons teachers have clear learning objectives, plan activities appropriate to the different abilities in the class, explain tasks clearly, often using pupils to lead learning, demonstrate concepts and support others in completing tasks. When teaching is good, teachers have detailed subject knowledge, manage time effectively and provide opportunities for independent and cooperative work.
- 2.39 Where teaching had shortcomings, there was a lack of classroom organisation and tasks were too easy. In a few lessons the pupils were not given enough scope to think for themselves and give an individual response to tasks set.
- 2.40 When teachers plan for pupils' differing abilities, progress is good. Differentiated tasks and support from the teachers and teaching assistants in the Nursery, pre-prep and Years 6 to 8 promote effective learning. There were fewer examples of differentiated teaching in Years 3 to 5. In a Year 6 gymnastics lesson the teacher successfully used various teaching strategies to enable pupils of all abilities to put a sequence together based on the theme of rolling.

- Structured teaching for pupils who are gifted or more able is at a relatively early stage of development.
- 2.41 Pupils on the LDD register have well-constructed individual education plans, which are shared with all staff. These pupils have excellent one-to-one tuition with specialist teachers and also benefit from valuable in-class support.
- 2.42 Relationships between pupils and staff are strong and pupils throughout the school try hard, persevere and respond to questions and tasks enthusiastically in lessons. Teachers use skilful questioning to draw out learning. Good questioning was evident in Nursery in circle time and also in a Year 8 English lesson, which used 'Of Mice and Men' as a stimulus for descriptive writing. Teachers use open-ended questions to challenge pupils to explain their thinking. They develop pupils' creative abilities. For example, an excellent display of shoes designed and made by Year 6 pupils shows their flair and creativity. Pupils are actively encouraged to sing with gusto in hymn practices and respond positively to this request. Older pupils have good opportunities to complete their independent research, for example, on different satellites in science and individual studies of the River Wey in geography.
- 2.43 Target setting is used to greater effect in Years 1 and 2 than with older pupils. In these two year groups, teachers and pupils review the week's work and then discuss and decide on individual targets to focus on the following week. In prep school, the inconsistent use of targets for improvement in teachers' marking and in reports to parents means that pupils are not clear enough about the steps they need to take to improve. The school is taking steps to address this issue.
- 2.44 Specialist teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subjects they teach. In the best lessons they explain and demonstrate concepts and ideas carefully and clearly enabling pupils to show good understanding.
- 2.45 Teachers have sufficient resources for the tasks they undertake. Excellent, entirely appropriate software is used in learning support lessons and this enables pupils to make good progress. Large subject resource rooms adjacent to classrooms provide ample, accessible space for storage.
- 2.46 Teaching is enhanced by the quality of specialist facilities such as for ICT and physical education. In the past, pupils have not had enough opportunities in the past to use ICT in the full range of other subjects. Sports facilities include games pitches and fields and an outdoor swimming pool plus good accommodation for the Nursery. Displays of pupils' work in classrooms, hallways and corridors are attractive and stimulating.
- 2.47 Nursery and pre-prep staff have established a well-developed system of assessing, monitoring and tracking pupils. The "Nursery learning journey" leads to the completion of foundation profiles at the end of Reception. Baseline assessments are completed in reading, writing and spelling and pupils' achievements are monitored throughout the pre-prep and passed on to the prep school. Nursery and pre-prep staff have introduced a commercial assessment system and established strategies to monitor, track and set targets, which is an improvement made since the last inspection. This is consistent with the school's aim to develop pupils' abilities and academic potential.
- 2.48 Pupils' work shows that marking in the prep school is sometimes detailed and helpful but at other times incomplete and lacking in consistency. When this is so, it does not conform to the school's clear marking policy. As a result, pupils are not always aware of the marking criteria and do not have enough constructive feedback on how to improve their work.

- 2.49 The school has a comprehensive pupil database available on computer to all staff, which provides information about reading ages, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) scores and examination results. Information from and analysis of assessment data, however, is not used enough to inform the planning of what to teach next. In the prep school, assessments include standardised reading tests taken by Years 3 to 8 in the autumn term. NFER verbal and non-verbal tests are taken by pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 7 twice a year and by Years 6 and 8 in the autumn term. Core subjects are starting to use National Curriculum level descriptors, which ensures ongoing assessment and will enable them to track progress. The school is aware of the need to have a more coherent assessment system.
- 2.50 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care, guidance and support is good and the school meets its aims to develop pupils' personalities and ensure that they are secure and happy. The school has maintained the standards identified in its last inspection report. Effective measures are taken to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- 3.2 Good arrangements for pastoral care are well established. Teachers have a good overview of pupils' personal and academic development and are supported well by comprehensive policies and guidance. These provide high quality support for pupils in a friendly and relaxed manner within a family environment.
- 3.3 Class teachers are responsible for the welfare of their pupils, and all matters are treated seriously and handled sensitively. Staff meetings are used to highlight concerns and to plan support for pupils. Good quality guidance and care at each stage of education is also provided through circle time, tutor time and within PSHCE lessons. Staff treat pupils with respect, and this enhances the school's positive, caring ethos and friendly atmosphere. Pupils understand they can turn to appropriate members of staff when they have a problem and confirm that they do so when necessary.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is a great strength. Pupils speak warmly of staff and see them as highly supportive. Teachers speak kindly to pupils. Pupils mix well and are friendly and considerate towards one another both in class and in the playground. They are encouraged to support and help each other, and they do so willingly. The school's house system helps promote discourse and interaction between year groups. It also provides additional pastoral support. Members of staff monitor pupils closely and are quickly aware of any problems.
- 3.5 Pupils identify their class teachers as the persons they would usually approach when seeking help and advice. The willingness of teachers to help pupils whenever necessary enables them to receive positive support and guidance. Pupils also identify other staff with specific responsibilities when they need support or help. They speak positively about the staff in charge of pastoral care.
- 3.6 PSHCE is a significant strength of the school. The well-organised PSHCE scheme of work challenges pupils to reflect upon issues in their lives. Dynamic lessons achieve good responses, where pupils discuss moral issues in depth and show excellent understanding of how they can improve their contributions to school and outside life.
- 3.7 The school has other effective pastoral arrangements in place. Noticeboards identify pastoral and welfare issues. Staff meetings and briefings also help to ensure that staff are aware of pastoral concerns about pupils. Specific staff provide important links between parents, staff and governors. They ensure that teachers are aware of medical issues involving pupils and their families. As was the case at the last inspection, documentary guidelines about pastoral care in the staff handbook lack formality.
- 3.8 The school's arrangements for promoting good behaviour are understood by staff and pupils, who see them as fair. Pupils' behaviour is often good and occasionally outstanding. Teachers' expectations are high. Pupils of all ages are polite and welcoming, and they speak confidently and eloquently to adults. There is an effective anti-bullying policy in place and cases are dealt with on an individual basis. Pupils feel that adults deal effectively with

unacceptable behaviour when it occurs, although they feel that some teachers are too lenient. They recognise that the 'blue slip' sanction system works, and that senior staff are supportive in dealing with transgressions in behaviour. Staff and pupils feel that indiscipline occurs rarely and hardly ever merits more serious sanctions.

- 3.9 Good child protection measures are in place. The school's policy is comprehensive, and there has been recent training in child protection for the whole staff. The headteacher is the designated child protection officer, and she is supported by a deputy child protection officer and a governor with responsibility for this area. These adults have received the appropriate training. The headteacher has undertaken safer recruitment training, and it is planned that more staff and governors undertake this training. Good arrangements for pupils with LDD are in place and plans to deal with accessibility meet the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. The systems for recording admissions are appropriate and attendance registers are maintained correctly.
- 3.10 The school takes good care to ensure pupils' health, safety and wellbeing. Pupils are supervised well and arrangements to ensure their health and safety are successful. There is regular staff training with regards to medical issues and first aid, including the use of epi-pens, and all staff benefit from this training.
- 3.11 The school has due regard for health and safety requirements. The bursar has employed independent expertise regarding health and safety for a thorough site survey. This has involved regular updates to produce a comprehensive action plan. Good progress has been made in maintaining and upgrading the open air swimming pool and electrical re-wiring.
- 3.12 A thorough fire risk assessment has been made and all necessary measures are taken to minimize risk. Checks on smoke detectors and alarms are performed regularly, fire practices are undertaken termly and all records are logged.
- 3.13 Careful attention is given to the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Catering arrangements are good and pupils are enthusiastic about the standard of food provided. The school matron plays a valuable part in maintaining high standards of healthcare and welfare and every child is known. Due attention is paid to teaching pupils about the dangers of drug, alcohol and tobacco misuse through a thorough science programme.
- 3.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.15 The quality of links with parents and the community is good. Most parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The school has maintained its strong relationship with parents and improved its links with the wider community since the last inspection, and achieves its aims in this respect.
- 3.16 Written reports are sent to parents twice a year. An interim report denoting pupils' effort and attainment is sent out in the spring term. There are two parents' meetings annually for all pupils. The reports are full and informative but do not always provide enough advice on how pupils might make further improvements to their work.

- 3.17 A fortnightly newsletter written by the headteacher keeps parents fully informed about activities, as well as celebrating team and individual successes. A well-produced magazine also illustrates the school's vibrant cultural activities. The school is improving its links with parents by enhancing its website and introducing electronic mail communications between parents and teachers. Almost all parents responding to the inspection questionnaire agreed that the school encourages them to be involved in its life and work. Parents show great support and loyalty to the school through attendance at sport, music and other cultural events.
- 3.18 There is an active parents' association which gives excellent support through social events and fund raising. The chairman of the parents' association, the school matron, is invited to report regularly on parental issues or concerns at meetings of the governors. Parents speak to teachers informally before or after school, and certain staff are beginning to use electronic mail to develop closer communications with pupils' home.
- 3.19 The parents' information pack is thorough, and the well-presented prospectus presents an attractive picture although it lacks detail about the school's philosophy and values. Parents enjoy close access to staff and generally feel warm about the formal and informal contacts afforded them. Parents appreciate opportunities to participate in weekly assemblies prepared by the pupils.
- 3.20 The school has a formal system for handling complaints although no complaints from parents have been recorded in the current academic year. The parental questionnaire showed that parents who responded largely agreed that the school handles concerns well.
- 3.21 Links with the community are much improved since the last inspection. The school offers bursarial assistance to local parents who would not otherwise be able to afford independent education for their children. Scholarships are also awarded in Years 7 and 8. Links are increasingly good with other schools, organisations and individuals at local, regional and national levels although the school has identified the need to improve these links further.
- 3.22 The school funds a community support officer who visits local maintained schools on a weekly basis to give specialist advice on physical education. The school's sporting facilities are also used by the local community. Pupils perform at a local home for the elderly. Fundraising for various national charities takes place regularly, through special events including church collections. International links with a Kenyan school are strong and this together with trips and residential courses, have a highly beneficial impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world as well as their local area.
- 3.23 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good. The governing body is led well and its effectiveness is complemented by the range of governors' professional skills. These include knowledge of school leadership, school inspection and improvement, business, industry and finance. Governors take their roles to improve the quality of the school seriously and have taken decisive action to achieve this. They show promising signs of success in recent times in realising their aim to improve the school's educational provision. Governors' relationships with staff and senior managers are positive and formal links with the school's management have greatly improved in recent years. The effectiveness of governance has improved over time since the last inspection.
- 4.2 The governing body has committees for finance and general purposes, building, grounds and marketing. These are increasingly effective, and enable the senior management team to lead staff and pupils forward in a positive way, with the confidence that they have the support of an understanding, sensitive and committed governing body. The minutes of governors' meetings show that the governors have good and improving working relationships with the headteacher and her colleagues. A member of the teaching staff chairs a governing body committee and this informs governors more clearly about the school's development.
- 4.3 Governors seek to strike an effective balance between being supportive and acting as 'critical friends'. They delegate executive powers to the senior management team to manage the school. Governors are closely involved in overall strategic planning. Strategic objectives are identified and appropriate actions taken. Primarily, these include the strengthening of leadership and significant investments in the refurbishment, repair and upgrading of school accommodation and resources for learning with a renewed emphasis upon a whole-school ethos as paramount.
- 4.4 Since the last inspection, much has been done to improve the indoor and outdoor accommodation. Enhanced purpose-built accommodation has been provided for the Nursery along with more outdoor play equipment and landscaping of the wild areas and gardens. A new all-weather pitch has been laid and the manor house roof has been greatly restored. Cricket nets have been developed with the help of the parents' association. The playing field has had a drainage system installed and the swimming pool refurbished. The school's outdoor areas have been improved ongoing tree-planting, conservation of established trees and clearing work around the woodland walkway. The ICT network has been significantly improved.
- 4.5 Full governing body meetings and committee meetings take place regularly and are well attended. The new headteacher is a key member of the governing body and participates in all of its committee meetings. A number of governors regularly attend school events, such as plays, concerts and sports fixtures. Governors monitor key aspects of the school and have been concerned in the past at the absence of a structured, formal programme for staff of continuing professional development, appraisal or performance management. The school has not benefited from a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation of teaching or standards for some years. Governors have sought to address these issues for a considerable time and have now appointed new senior managers who have the remit to improve matters swiftly. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities conscientiously in monitoring health and safety, provision for pupils with LDD and child protection.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The quality of leadership and management is good and the school's expressed aims are fulfilled increasingly well. The quality of leadership and management has been improved since the last inspection. There are strong signs that the new leadership is well placed to address school improvement rigorously in a timely and well-judged way.
- 4.7 The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, a director of studies and a head of pre-prep who has additional responsibility for the Nursery, achieves a good balance between strategic, curricular and pastoral leadership. Senior managers are setting about improving Holme Grange further with considerable determination and perception. This year, the school is embarking upon an exciting journey involving improvements to the curriculum, the monitoring and enhancement of teaching, the promotion of new opportunities for pupils who are gifted or able, the further promotion of spiritual awareness and the development of links with national and international organisations.
- 4.8 The school's most senior leadership is characterised as well-organised, knowledgeable, purposeful and collegiate. It shares its expectations of how to improve the school further and shows great drive in achieving this. Key personnel with academic and pastoral responsibilities are involved increasingly although the burdens of leadership need to be properly delegated as time allows.
- 4.9 The personal involvement of the school's leaders in teaching and learning is evident. The school's ethos is that of a caring and happy family and it has a good curriculum with significant extra-curricular opportunities. Senior managers liaise often with each other to ensure that school improvement is a continuous and corporate process. They show painstaking care and commitment for pupils and contribute to an ethos of mutual respect and support. The school enjoys a happy and friendly atmosphere. Teachers ensure that pupils work and play in a disciplined, well-ordered family community. The staff has a strong blend of specialists in primary education as well as in a broad range of specialist subjects.
- 4.10 The school derives its objectives for improvement from knowledgeable self-analysis. School development planning has had shortcomings in the past but is being improved currently. In recent months, senior managers and subject leaders have analysed its strengths and needs for the future in a perceptive and committed way. The quality of self-evaluation is thorough and this underpins the school's capacity to improve itself further.
- 4.11 The school's leadership has recently been restructured and strengthened to good effect. Curricular links between the pre-prep and prep departments are improving. Provision for children aged under five is often outstanding. Resources, accommodation and facilities have improved greatly although organisational issues remain to be addressed in Reception classes and in the accommodation for subjects such as music and drama.
- 4.12 The school development plan is a key element in school improvement but at present is only a seminal document that has yet to be shared by a wider readership. Although targets for improvement are identified accurately in meetings, timescales, dates of completion, success criteria and budgetary implications are being decided upon this term.
- 4.13 The overall quality of subject leadership is satisfactory. Subject leaders have striven to improve their subjects further. Many have developed and refined policies and schemes of work. Some subject leadership is good, for example, in science, overall in pre-prep and in the Nursery.

- 4.14 The school has a well-qualified, committed and hardworking staff, both teaching and non-teaching. The arrangements for recruiting any adult who might have contact with pupils are rigorous and pay due regard to government safeguarding guidelines. Generally, the school has not supported staff enough in the past with a programme of in-service training which meets its educational priorities. That is now a new and much-needed priority for the coming year. More training, for example, is planned for the effective use of interactive whiteboards as those resources are installed.
- 4.15 The system to appraise the work of teachers is in its infancy although senior managers know their staff increasingly well. Senior managers and governors also take into account the views of pupils and teachers in their ongoing evaluations of progress. Teaching is monitored and evaluated rigorously in a regular, recently introduced programme. Lesson observations are made with a set focus and evaluations are shared; these are beginning to have a dramatic effect.
- 4.16 A recent influx of new teachers, coupled with a blend of youth and experience in the staffroom, has had and is having a good effect upon teaching and learning. Consequently, the school benefits from strengths in its staffing. The school supports and mentors newly qualified teachers well and they are given appropriate occasions to observe good practice in teaching and to reflect on how to improve their own teaching. Staff are supported by clear and helpful, but only recently introduced, policy documentation and guidelines.
- 4.17 The financial management of the bursar and her staff is excellent, being linked closely to educational priorities. It is effective in ensuring that the school now has good and improving resources. The school is benefiting from careful financial husbandry that ensures it has a healthy basis for future development. School administration is highly efficient and the school is smoothly run. The school secretary and other administrative staff play a key part in this. The beautifully-appointed grounds are suitable for the educational needs of pupils and are very well maintained by caretaking staff.
- 4.18 The school meets all the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.19 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and fully meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school meets its aims and aspirations in many regards. It prepares its pupils well for the next stage in their lives and their future wellbeing. Their achievements are often good relative to their abilities. Pupils acquire well-rounded knowledge, understanding and skills in many subjects and develop confidence and maturity in their personal lives. The school provides a broad and varied educational experience. Pupils enjoy a caring and happy family ethos. They enjoy coming to school and often show excellent attitudes to learning. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The great majority of parents are pleased with the school's provision for their children and the links with them are good. Pastoral care is good and children are kept safe and secure. The overall quality of leadership and management is good as is the quality of teaching.
- 5.2 The headteacher, senior managers and staff have improved standards and broadened the learning experience since the last inspection. The school has made good improvements as a result of good leadership and the reshaping of the senior management team. The school has identified the need to improve its pupils' standards in the use of ICT across the curriculum, as well as the achievements of more able pupils. It also has good plans to improve further its links with external organisations and in the accommodation for Reception classes.
- 5.3 The school meets all regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school should address the following areas in order to improve further:
1. introduce a structured programme for the continuous professional development of staff, which meets the school's educational priorities, in order to spread good practice in teaching as widely as possible;
 2. develop further the school development plan and share the new leadership's vision for the school's future with governors, teachers, pupils and parents;
 3. ensure that the work set matches the needs and abilities of all pupils, including the more able, and that they know how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve further; and
 4. improve the independent outdoor learning opportunities for Reception pupils and the use of ICT in the full range of subjects for all pupils.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 This inspection was carried out from 19th to 22nd January 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed many lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The many responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed fully, and the inspectors examined a wide range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Rob Isaac	ISI Reporting Inspector
Mrs Angela Alsop	Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mr Peter Bird	Headteacher, Maintained Primary school
Mrs Stephanie Salter	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Peter Wells	Headteacher, IAPS school