



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**HOMEFIELD PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Homefield Preparatory School

Full Name of School	<b>Homefield Preparatory School</b>			
DCSF Number	<b>319/6001</b>			
Registered Charity Number	<b>312753</b>			
Address	<b>Homefield Preparatory School Western Road Sutton Surrey SM1 2TE</b>			
Telephone Number	<b>020 8642 0965</b>			
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Head	<b>Mr P R Mowbray</b>			
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Colin Lynch</b>			
Age Range	<b>2½ to 13</b>			
Total Number of Pupils	<b>415</b>			
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys</b>			
Numbers by Age	0-2½ (EYFS):	<b>12</b>	5-11:	<b>269</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>62</b>	11-13:	<b>72</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>415</b>			Capacity for flexi-boarding: <b>0</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>0</b>		
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Barbara Whiteway</b>			
EYFS Gender	<b>Boys</b>			
Inspection date/EYFS	<b>1 Feb 2010 to 2 Feb 2010</b>			
Final (team) visit	<b>1 Mar 2010 to 3 Mar 2010</b>			

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Homefield Preparatory School is a selective independent day school for boys aged from two-and-a-half to thirteen years. It aims to enable each individual to achieve his potential, without pressure, by providing the highest standards of teaching for all. Within a caring and Christian ethos, the school seeks to provide the best preparation for each boy's next school and a secure foundation for each child's future life. Founded as a private school in 1870, Homefield became a charitable trust and moved to its present purpose-built site in 1968. Since the last inspection it opened the new Sutherland building to house science, art and technology, music facilities and the new library.
- 1.2 The school includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting, known as Homefield Early Years Unit (EYU). Homefield EYU is made up of a class of twelve boys who are rising three, a class of twenty-nine boys aged three to four, and thirty-three boys aged four to five, divided between two Reception classes. It is housed in a series of large, purpose-built rooms, resourced to cater for the needs of younger children and has separate toilet and wash facilities for all boys. The EYFS classes have a designated outdoor play area and children also use the main playground at lunchtimes.
- 1.3 The school is situated in the London Borough of Sutton and receives pupils from families with a wide variety of professional and cultural backgrounds, who strongly support their children's education, expecting them to go on to selective independent senior schools. The school has charitable status and has a governing body.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection the school had 415 boys on roll, of whom 14 were attending the Nursery on a part-time basis. The average ability of boys is above the national average, so that if they achieve in line with their abilities, results in national tests will be above the average for all primary schools in England. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 49 boys as having some form of learning difficulty and disability (LDD), of whom 11 are on 'action plus'. A further 27 speak English as an additional language (EAL) and receive support within the school. In all, 51 pupils receive nursery funding through the local authority, and a further 109 receive some level of fee support from the school itself.
- 1.5 The school is organised into three departments: the Early Years Unit, the Junior Department (Years 1 to 3) and the Senior Department (Years 4 to 8).

- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

***Early Years Foundation Stage Setting (EYU)***

School	NC name
Kindergarten	Nursery (2 to 3 years)
Nursery	Nursery (3 to 4 years)
Transition	Reception (4 to 5 years)

***Junior Department***

School	NC name
Class 1	Year 1
Class 2	Year 2
Class 3	Year 3

***Senior Department***

School	NC name
Lower 4 <sup>th</sup>	Year 4
Upper 4 <sup>th</sup>	Year 5
5 <sup>th</sup>	Year 6
Lower 6 <sup>th</sup>	Year 7
Upper 6 <sup>th</sup>	Year 8

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 After a good start in the EYFS, pupils at Homefield develop into highly educated and informed young students, thoroughly prepared for the next stages of their lives. They achieve excellent results in national tests and succeed in their entry to senior schools, many with scholarships. Many distinguish themselves in the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, most notably in sport, chess and the expressive arts. This is because of the breadth of their experience both within and outside the formal curriculum, although the application of information and communication technology (ICT) to subjects throughout and the time and tasks set in the humanities and science in the lower part of the school are limited. Most of the teaching is good and some is outstanding, especially where pupils are taught to evaluate their own and one another's work.
- 2.2 Throughout the school, pupils show outstanding maturity in their attitudes and are often prodigiously well informed about the wider world and current affairs, able to form their own opinions and to listen with respect to those of others. This is because of the excellent and well-managed support they receive from teachers and tutors and the good quality of personal care, and pupils said they felt secure in the school as a consequence. Safeguarding has been uneven. There is good practice in the prevention of bullying, the promotion of good behaviour, and the identification of concerns about well-being, and links with the safeguarding authorities. The arrangements were marred by lapses in safety and in the vetting procedures, which have now largely been dealt with.
- 2.3 Both pupils and their parents think well of the school. Parents' strongest approval is for the quality of teaching and range of subjects, the pastoral care, behaviour, attitudes and values promoted by the school, the range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities to be involved. They have good information from the school and good opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, which has good and educationally productive links with the community.
- 2.4 Both the governance, and the leadership and management of the school have strengths and weaknesses. Governors have helped the school develop, ensuring appropriate funding, and have largely suitable mechanisms to oversee the school, but lack breadth of membership. The distinction between governing and executive function is too blurred and the mechanisms for ensuring compliance proved too weak. Similarly, leadership and management strongly uphold the considerable success of the school and have successfully innovated in such matters as the improvement of pastoral structures. However, development planning and appraisal had become patchy and have only recently begun to be re-established, and administrative systems lacked the alertness or efficiency to ensure that key regulatory areas were identified and consistently observed.
- 2.5 Satisfactory overall progress was made in fulfilling the recommendations from the last inspection. The complaints procedure now makes provision for an independent member of the appeals panel. Assessment now influences the planning of provision for individuals. Provision of ICT has improved but retains some weaknesses. The school has appointed a single co-ordinator for learning support and an EAL specialist, although the teachers' use of individual education plans (IEPs) and sensitivity to the needs of pupils with EAL in lessons vary. The school has not

maintained its record in complying with regulatory requirements, and this has exposed weaknesses in governance and management not previously apparent.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

2.6 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended, and therefore it was required to:

- tighten systems and mechanisms for recording and monitoring health and safety [Regulation 3.(4), under Welfare, health and safety];
- carry out a fully documented fire risk assessment [Regulation 3.(5), under Welfare, health and safety];
- include information about pupils' previous schools, where available, in the electronic admissions record [Regulation 3.(9), under Welfare, health and safety];
- ensure that the school's procedures and practices for staff recruitment fully comply with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education* [Regulations 3.(2)(b), under Welfare, health and safety, and 4.(2)(a) to (d), 4C.(2)(a) to (f), and 4C.(3), (6) and (7), under Suitability of staff and proprietors];
- provide any information reasonably requested in connection with the inspection that is necessary for its purposes [Regulation 6.(7)(a), under Provision of information].

2.7 At the time of the final visit, the school had fully addressed about half of the deficiencies and had made substantial progress towards rectifying the remainder, as noted in the text of the report. However, in the case of the following requirements measures are planned but not completed or improved procedures will take time to become established, and therefore the school must:

- complete the interagency training of the designated safeguarding person and annually monitor the implementation of all aspects of safeguarding [Regulation 3.(2)(b), under Welfare, health and safety];
- ensure that governors and leadership continuously monitor the tightened procedures for health and safety [Regulations 3.(4) and (5), under Welfare, health and safety];
- complete, fully implement and closely monitor procedures and practices for staff recruitment so that all future appointments and their recording in the centralised record of appointments comply fully with DCSF Guidance *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education* [Regulations 3.(2)(b), under Welfare, health and safety, and 4.(2)(a) to (d), 4C.(2)(a) to (f), and 4C.(3), (6) and (7) under Suitability of staff and proprietors];
- provide in good time any information reasonably requested in connection with it that is necessary for the purposes of the inspection [Regulation 6.(7)(a), under Provision of information].

- 2.8 In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school was required to:
- complete the interagency training of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) and of the designated EYFS practitioner;
  - provide sufficient staff with appropriate levels of training in first-aid, including staff with training in paediatric first-aid in the EYFS;
  - ensure adequate supervision of pupils in the EYFS at break times in accordance with EYFS requirements.

Since the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is inspected under a different system of regulation, within a two-day limit, the report cannot mention any regulatory deficiencies which are remedied by the end of the standard inspection.

**(ii) Recommended action**

- 2.9 In addition to rectifying the weaknesses in meeting regulatory requirements, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Improve the effectiveness of governance by: fulfilling the plans to extend the range of membership of the governing body; creating more separation between the committee structure and the management team; strengthening the governors' oversight of all compliance and especially those related to safeguarding children and safer recruitment.
  2. Strengthen the administration and management of the school by: establishing clear and robust mechanisms for guaranteeing that new requirements are identified and fully and efficiently implemented, especially in relation to safeguarding; revising the composition of the senior leadership team to ensure that the full range of strategic elements, including finance, administration and Early Years and juniors, are represented; improving the structures for management and review of the curriculum, taking more account of the size of senior departments and the relationship between junior and senior departmental structures.
  3. Improve achievement further by: improving the balance of time devoted to non-core subjects in the Junior Department, extending the amount of independent writing and reducing the use of worksheets in those subjects; training teachers to use effectively the ICT equipment they have and increase pupils' opportunities to use it; ensuring that teachers consistently make effective use of the IEPs to support pupils with LDD or EAL.

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

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

- 3.1 Pupils are highly educated and fully prepared for the next stages of their lives. They develop well in the Nursery and Reception stages and make good progress throughout the school in most of their lessons and in their written work. By Year 6 they have made exceptional progress in English, mathematics and science, as shown in the excellent results in the national tests, compared with their above average overall abilities. They leave the school with success in their applications for entry to their chosen senior schools. Many achieve competitive awards in academic, aesthetic and sporting activities. Pupils achieve well across a wide range of sporting, artistic and other activities beyond the timetable. Achievements in lessons and in pupils' books are usually good and in some cases outstanding, particularly in the aesthetic subjects. In satisfactory lessons, pupils made good progress in routine knowledge and skills but without sufficient higher order thought or reflection.
- 3.2 Pupils from the Nursery upwards establish secure foundations in literacy and numeracy and are able to apply their skills effectively. Their ability to apply mathematics in the context of science, where, for example, they were able to explore simple mechanics through the measurement of the relative distances of weights from a fulcrum, is a particularly strong feature. As at the last inspection, within the lessons observed, pupils rarely applied the skills acquired in ICT lessons to other curriculum subjects. The school has rightly identified a need to broaden the range of pupils' writing in English. However, too much of the writing in the humanities and science in the lower part of the school is confined to copying and the completion of worksheets. Pupils are highly articulate and are able at their various ages to express themselves well, to reason cogently and sceptically, and to listen and respond to the views of others. They are well informed about their subjects and about the wider world of public affairs. They study well and concentrate in lessons, even if at times they can be excitable. They write extensively. They present their work attractively and apply themselves, both independently and in co-operation with others. This is seen at its best in art, music and some other subjects, where they routinely evaluate their own and one another's work with mature and often well-informed sensitivity. Self-evaluation has been introduced, though not yet fully established.
- 3.3 Because of the breadth of extra-curricular activity and the skill with which much of it is delivered, many pupils achieve often distinguished standards, most notably in sport, where they are national preparatory schools' rugby champions and national under thirteen chess champions. Pupils have taken pride in the various activities relevant to the wider world, such as the funds they raise for schools in Africa and Asia.
- 3.4 Overall, pupils of all abilities make at least good progress, including those with LDD or EAL and the more able, because of the support and encouragement they receive from their teachers and tutors. However, in some lessons the good IEPs were not effectively used in the planning and some teachers have not adapted their delivery to the needs of those pupils learning English.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)**

- 3.5 The school provides a good education for all its pupils, with some excellent features, particularly in the range of activities after school and within the community, to enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world. This gives opportunity for pupils of many different interests, talents and abilities to thrive. The school delivers a broad curriculum, strong in language, including French and Latin for all, and in physical education. Provision in the EYFS covers all the Early Learning Goals in a balanced way, and transition into Year 1 and throughout the school is good. In the lower part of the school, literacy and numeracy are heavily emphasised, at the expense of humanities and science. Provision for ICT is now adequate. The programme of personal, health and social education (PHSE) is well planned and delivered in the Senior Department by specialist staff. Since the last inspection, the provision of ICT has been strengthened, but its application in the classroom is still limited.
- 3.6 Curricular planning and monitoring are satisfactory. Although processes for reviewing and improving provision vary, from the temporary lack of an assistant head for the curriculum, it is good practice that co-ordinators in the Junior Department attend subject meetings with those in the Senior Department, and staff in each of Years 1 to 3 plan their work together, ensuring consistency within years and good transition from one year to the next. Some departments, however, are too small to allow departmental meetings to be productive. The monitoring of the curriculum has not been consistently maintained, but has recently been re-established.
- 3.7 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, with a high uptake, is provided for all pupils. These include, for example, a wide range of sports and a highly inclusive range of drama and instrumental and choral ensembles. Chess is a special strength of the school. Links with the wider community are also established through the use of off-site facilities, and coaches and adults who lead some activities. A valuable initiative was the funding of schools in Sri Lanka, Malawi and Angola, enriching understanding of these countries.
- 3.8 The school has suitable arrangements for assessing and supporting pupils with LDD, with good IEPs in place, provided by a special educational needs co-ordinator. Teachers are aware of these but do not all use them effectively. The provision for pupils with EAL has been strengthened. Support in the classroom for pupils in the earlier stages of learning English is variable, and, in some cases, teachers did not show awareness of the need to pace their delivery carefully and check for understanding.

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

- 3.9 The quality of teaching is good because of the teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm about their subjects. Teachers are very effective in preparing pupils for the vital entry and scholarship examination tests they take. Occasionally, however, the focus on the mechanics of examination papers, though effective, was unnecessarily narrow. The best teaching at all levels is imaginative, challenging, varied and inspiring. Above all it gives to pupils full responsibility for their own learning under strong guidance. In extra-curricular areas, including sport, the arts and chess, pupils also have access to expert coaching and teaching, which lifts their skills and maturity to high levels. Teachers also take their role in supporting community-based

activities, such as the Eco-Council, very seriously, making sure, for example, that pupils were thoroughly informed and prepared for the visit of an officer of the House of Commons, at which their questions were intelligently penetrating on topics from the need for citizens to change lifestyles to the safety of nuclear energy.

- 3.10 Teachers in most lessons made their lessons interesting, challenging and enjoyable. Most lessons observed had a clear purpose and were organised with a clear structure and a variety of activities and tasks, including whole-class, individual and co-operative working. Extensive use is made of visits to museums, galleries and other venues to enhance learning. In the EYFS, imaginative use was made of outside resources, as, for example, when children co-operated in the digging, weeding and planting of a bare patch of ground outside the class. Older pupils valued their visit to France to improve their already substantial proficiency at speaking and writing French.
- 3.11 Teachers know their pupils well through their thorough assessment of progress that they carry out and, since the last inspection, pupils' work is much better marked, with suggestions for improvement and clear targets of which pupils were fully aware. The best teaching has clear strategies for supporting pupils with different needs and abilities. Many teachers and tutors make excellent use of pupils' diaries to ensure the orderly carrying out of homework and involvement of parents, and to promote good attitudes and behaviour through house and conduct points and 'crests'. One pupil described the diary as "my life saver." Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are carefully assessed and, where necessary, helpful individual support is provided. Teachers are usually aware of and pay regard to the IEPs but in some cases rely on helping pupils when they get stuck, rather than adjusting tasks to suit them better. The initiative of using support staff in class was seen to be helpful in a lesson observed, but so far no training has been provided. The support for pupils with EAL has suffered from the loss of the specialist teacher, although the provision has improved since the last inspection. However, levels of competence are not assessed and some teachers do not adjust the pace of delivery or the nature of tasks sufficiently. The school has a sound basis for analysing standards and outcomes, and targeting improvement, using measures of progress throughout.

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

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

- 4.1 Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are cheerful, polite and considerate to one another and to adults. They combine spirited exuberance with good behaviour and respect for the school's rules and values and they are well informed about the world in which they live. Pupils demonstrate outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness in the maturity with which they discuss with adults a wide range of topics. This is in line with the school's aim of valuing all its pupils and encouraging mutual respect between all pupils and adults.
- 4.2 Pupils respect themselves and each other, and gain a strong sense of self-worth and self-confidence from the school community and from the support of their teachers. Through the work they do in the expressive arts and literature, and through PHSE, tutor groups and assemblies, pupils learn to reflect deeply on their own and others' feelings, personalities and motivations. Pupils have a highly developed sense of value and many older boys were able to understand not only the importance of respect for morality and the law but the difficulties and uncertainties involved in deciding the right thing to do. They behave very well in class and around school, and even when they become over excited, they readily calm down when called upon to do so. They respect the school's principles of conduct and regard them as reasonable, and respond positively to the rewards and sanctions.
- 4.3 Pupils' social development is outstanding. The school is a vigorous and friendly community, in which older and younger pupils relate well to each other, and senior pupils accept responsibility for looking after and setting an example to younger pupils. Pupils are able to fit in but are able to be themselves because different personalities and talents are valued equally. The school council is an important vehicle for developing a sense of communal responsibility in the Senior Department. Senior pupils make presentations to their peers, who then vote for those they wish to represent them on the council. Many pupils are able to experience the responsibilities of organisation and management because of the many team games and cultural activities. They are very well informed about public life and government. Members of the Eco-Council were able, for example, to discuss the penetrating questions they had prepared for a session about the environment with a visiting expert. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities fosters team spirit and healthy competition.
- 4.4 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. They enjoy a vast array of cultural opportunities through the range of their studies, in which, for example, both French and Latin introduce them to different values and ways of life, and through religious studies and assemblies, in which, within the Christian ethos, all major world cultures and faiths are celebrated and valued. During the inspection, for example, juniors learned about Holi in assembly. Through their involvement with charities, pupils are able to express a sense of gratitude for the lives they lead, as well as helping those in need.

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

- 4.5 The high quality of pastoral care exercised by staff is counter-balanced by serious deficiencies in key aspects of safeguarding, health and safety. These have largely been attended to, though new procedures are not yet fully embedded in school practice.
- 4.6 The pastoral care of the pupils is good and has many outstanding features. Staff provide effective support and guidance for pupils, in accordance with the school's aims. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and help them take advantage of the opportunities open to them. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils report that staff help them with any problems they may have with respect to their work or with friendships. This quality is effectively supported by a clear structure, understood by all, and which has been successfully improved in the Senior Department by having tutorial groups with pupils of all ages, allowing mixed groups of children to be together each day. These were instigated in 2008 as a result of an anti-bullying survey; the response to this initiative has been very positive.
- 4.7 The school's pastoral systems ensure that all pupils are well cared for; these include the work of form and tutor staff, the use of the home book, pupil profiles, meetings with staff and parents, the code of conduct and the monitoring by a senior member of staff of incidents that pupils report. Pupils spoke very highly of the care and guidance that they receive and were able to identify members of staff to whom they would turn if they had a problem.
- 4.8 The school operates an effective and positive behaviour policy. Careful recording and monitoring have identified improvement in both behaviour and relationships. Similarly, the policies and procedures to minimise bullying are strong and any instances are carefully dealt with and recorded.
- 4.9 At the initial visit, the measures for safeguarding pupils were found to be flawed, with both strengths and weaknesses. The child protection policy is in line with local safeguarding board requirements. All staff receive suitable induction and annual updates in basic child protection, going beyond the requirement and ensuring that staff are familiar with procedures. Concerns about welfare are effectively recorded and links with the local safeguarding services are strong. However the planned interagency training of the designated safeguarding person was too late for the required triennial interval, while the designated EYFS practitioner had not received interagency training. The systems for reviewing the implementation of the policy were too weak to identify the serious shortcomings in the school's recruitment procedures. The weaknesses in the child protection policy had been dealt with by the final visit, and the training of the DSP and the implementation of the revised policy remained outstanding.
- 4.10 The school has suitable policies for health and safety, including risk assessments of classrooms, activities and visits out of school. Regular checks were made on equipment, though the records of these were not systematic and management did not have comprehensive rosters to enable them to monitor the completion of checks. Thus no current fire risk assessment had been carried out at the time of the initial visit. By the time of the final visit, a professional fire risk assessment had been carried out. The arrangements for medical support are in most respects satisfactory. Policies are clear, and careful records of accidents and the administration of medication are maintained. A good number of staff have received one-day training in first-aid. However, at the initial visit, the number of staff with two-day training had

declined, and insufficient EYFS staff were trained in paediatric first-aid. By the final visit, more EYFS staff had received the required qualification.

- 4.11 Since the last inspection, the school has produced a suitable access plan. The school has good access, particularly in relation to mobility. Registers of attendance are correctly maintained electronically, and pastoral staff monitor them closely, so that they can identify patterns of attendance and follow up any concerns. The admissions register lacked information about the last school attended in some cases. This gap had been remedied by the final visit.
- 4.12 The school strongly encourages a healthy lifestyle. Meals are tasty and balanced, with choices including vegetarian and salad alternatives. Both in the school day and in extra-curricular activities, pupils acquire the habits of taking regular exercise. Many walk to school and are pleased that a new cycle track is to be developed around the field.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is uneven but satisfactory overall, because despite weaknesses in its systems for ensuring compliance in key areas of safeguarding, it has other strong features that have contributed importantly to maintaining and developing the many strengths the school has. Above all, governors have been successful in supporting the distinctive aims and ethos of the school.
- 5.2 The governing body has a range of expertise to cover such matters as finance, the laws and estates, but has rightly recognised the need to expand the number and range of fields covered, especially in relation to education, care and compliance. It has a sensible committee structure, but has recognised that the direct inclusion of senior management on subcommittees can undermine the separation needed between executive and gubernatorial functions. The structure of committees has also given insufficient prominence to the key area of care and safeguarding.
- 5.3 The governing body has been very effective in its strategic planning of the physical development of the school, including the building of the Sutherland building, and has ensured that the school is suitably financed and resourced. Governors visit the school and attend its functions, some observing lessons, though this is more so in the lower parts of the school than elsewhere. Structures exist to check compliance including matters of welfare, health and safety. However, the mechanisms for checking that regulatory policies are in order and fully implemented proved weak, a matter which has led the governors to undertake vigorous improvement, to be more systematic in covering regulatory areas and securing substantive evidence of implementation and compliance.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, with both strengths and weaknesses. Leaders at all levels in the school have been very effective in maintaining the aims and ethos of the school. They maintain an environment for academic success without undue pressure, providing ample preparation for pupils' future lives and, in all but one vital area, excellent pastoral care. A lack of alertness and administrative rigour has led to patchy development in some areas and to a failure in safeguarding, as the school is now aware.
- 5.5 The structures the school operates are effective and the school has innovated in positive ways, and kept innovation under review. So the use of vertical tutor groups has been very successful, while the lack of success of vertical grouping in the EYFS was rapidly identified and abandoned. The senior leadership team is not sufficiently representative of all parts of the school, in the absence of routine input from finance and non-educational administration or from the EYFS and Junior Department.
- 5.6 The leadership of the school gives good educational direction, demonstrated in the progress that the pupils make in all stages and in their results in entrance tests to senior schools. Matters such as monitoring, appraisal and self-evaluation have been more uneven. The intensive monitoring of written work after the last inspection did succeed in bringing most marking in line with school policy. However, since then it has been much more variable, so that both appraisal and self-evaluation were interrupted and were only beginning to be re-established in Autumn 2009.

- 5.7 The senior leadership team carefully analyses the needs of the pupils in line with the school's aims. Management has good insight into most areas of the school's provision, and was aware of most of the issues raised by this inspection. It is a strength that the school has surveyed parents and that it has in this way enabled both them and pupils to influence development. However, in the absence of a long-term development plan, the recent short-term plan, much of which was drawn up largely by the senior leadership team, though comprehensive, lacks a sense of rationale and priority.
- 5.8 Management has been successful in appointing staff of high calibre, such as those responsible for standards in aesthetic and physical elements of the curriculum. However, at the initial visit, the procedures for checking those who work in the school were inadequate. The school had not noted the requirement in force since 2007 to establish a centralised register of appointments to assure management and governors that all checks had been made. Inspectors also found that in several cases records of other checks, including references and employment histories, were absent. Systematic medical checks had not been implemented. Examples were found in which staff had been permitted to start work before Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks had been completed without a List 99 check and careful supervision. A few that had lived or worked overseas had not been checked in the countries concerned. The school immediately acted vigorously to address these issues. By the final visit, the school had made determined progress. The designated safeguarding person had completed a day's training in safer recruitment; required CRB and overseas checks were complete; where documentary evidence was missing, further checks had been made, so that records were complete; new procedures had been devised, though not yet fully embedded in school practice.

### **5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.9 The school has good links with its parents, in accordance with its aims. The response of parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire was strongly positive, and this was corroborated by the discussions with them. Virtually all approved of the quality of teaching and range of subjects, the pastoral care, behaviour, attitudes and values promoted by the school, the range of extra-curricular activities and the opportunities to be involved. A minority had reservations about the learning support, which, though effective overall, does have some weaknesses. Parents told inspectors that each pupil was known by many of the teachers.
- 5.10 Parents have many opportunities to participate in the work and life of the school. Many assist with sporting, travel and other events. An active parents' association helps organise social and school fundraising events on a regular basis. Regular coffee mornings promote informal contact with parents and charitable fundraising. Parents' views are now regularly consulted through questionnaires, in ways that have led to clear change and adjustment to provision, such as the re-organisation of EYU classes.
- 5.11 Parents are provided with regular information about the school through its website and through regular newsletters. They receive all the required information. Regular reports, together with parents' evenings, provide them with detailed information about what their children study, about their progress and targets for improvement. In addition, homework diaries are used well to inform and engage parents.
- 5.12 Parents are aware of the complaints procedure, and feel confident in talking to staff about concerns. Suitable records are maintained and concerns are handled with

due care. Since the last inspection, the procedure for complaints includes provision for a member of the formal appeals panel to be independent of the management of the school. The school did not provide all the required information to inspectors in time or in the form requested. The pre-inspection package was incomplete and contained sketchy information at the time of the initial visit. The version supplied shortly before the final visit, though much more detailed and helpful, was still incomplete.

- 5.13 The school has extended the range of its charitable activities and links with the community in ways that contribute both to pupils' development and to the community itself. The school is providing increased opportunities for local clubs, orchestras, mother and toddler music and reading, and other groups to use its facilities. It has hosted the Sutton Music Festival, and has funded and hosted a cricket festival for local maintained schools and a joint choral music production with pupils from local maintained schools.

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

6.1 Homefield Early Years Unit provides a good start to the boys' education. The caring, welcoming atmosphere ensures that all are welcomed and valued. The capacity for sustained improvement is good. Children's learning and development needs are met well overall. There is evidence of some extension activities in lesson plans and adult support is given for those boys in need of more help. Sometimes, more able boys are not sufficiently challenged in their learning.

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

6.2 Leadership and management of the Early Years are good. Children's well-being and safeguarding are enhanced by thorough risk assessments. However, the adult to child ratio at playtimes and lunchtime for the EYFS does not meet regulations. The school has acted on this immediately but now needs to ensure that correct ratios are consistently adhered to. Policies and documentation overall are comprehensive. Adults regularly make observations of what the boys know, understand and can do and these are used to set individual targets in reading, language development and number work for boys to achieve in the Reception classes, and in the Nursery year groups they are used to inform future planning. There is evidence of some extension activities on lesson plans and adult support is given for those boys in need of more help. Sometimes, more able boys are not sufficiently challenged in their learning. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the setting.

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

6.3 The provision is good, with caring, involved adults who support boys' learning and development well, including the very few who need extra support and those who are new to learning English. The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is safe, secure and well maintained, and offers the boys opportunities to learn across all the areas of learning. Resources are good and there is evidence in planning that these are regularly changed to ensure that the boys are encouraged to try out new things and to learn independently. For example, boys were fascinated in the Reception classes with the 'polar bear trays', which included frozen blue ice and shaving foam as snow. The boys were trying to get the ice to melt quickly by breaking it into smaller pieces to see if this made a difference. This creative play effectively helps to develop their knowledge and understanding, and encourages them to find out more about the world around them. There is a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-directed activities.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for boys are good and they achieve well. Boys enter the Nursery with a wide range of skills and abilities. They make good progress in their learning throughout their time in the EYFS. In some imaginative play at the 'travel agents' one boy was able to identify Africa on a map of the world. By the time they leave the unit the boys are achieving at a level above what is expected for their age. However the school is far too modest in its assessments of what the boys achieve, and is not fully accurate in its assessment use of the EYFS profile. During lunch, boys talk about which foods are healthy, as well as understanding the benefits of exercise, which one boy described as "the thing that gives you energy". Boys behave extremely well and are very polite to each other and to adults, and there are good behaviour management and high expectations from all adults. In the Nursery, when boys were acting out *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, they co-operated together very well. This was also seen when two boys were working together to build a helicopter from multi-link cubes in the older classes.

**What the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## 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 and chair elect of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Tony Hubbard	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Penny Forsyth	Junior Team Inspector (Head, IAPS)
Dr Trevor Lee	Junior Team Inspector (Head, IAPS)
Mrs Suzanne Battey	Junior Team Inspector (Head of Junior School HMC)
Ms Sue Vale	Early Years Lead Inspector
Ms Kathryn Bender	Early Years Team Inspector