



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

## **INTEGRATED INSPECTION THE MOAT SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## The Moat School

Full Name of School	<b>The Moat School</b>
DfE Number	<b>205/6395</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1068445</b>
Address	<b>The Moat School Bishops Avenue Fulham London SW6 6EG</b>
Telephone Number	<b>020 7610 9018</b>
Email Address	<b>office@moatschool.org.uk</b>
Head	<b>Miss Clare King</b>
Proprietor	<b>The Constable Educational Trust</b>
Chair of the Governing Council	<b>Mr Simon Goldhill</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 16</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>67</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys and Girls (53 boys; 14 girls)</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>08 Mar to 11 Mar 2016</b>

## PREFACE

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI integrated inspection was in March 2013.

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

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

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

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

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

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with members of the governing council, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Joanne Stone-Williams	Team Inspector (Former Assistant Head, ISA school)
Mrs Helen Wainwright	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, Society of Heads school)

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(a) Main findings</b>	2
<b>(b) Action points</b>	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>7</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	7
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	8
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	8
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>10</b>
(a) The quality of governance	10
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	10

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

- 1.1 The Moat School is a specialist co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 who have dyslexia and related specific learning difficulties. It occupies a shared parkland site close to the river Thames in Fulham, with amenities for sport and recreation nearby. It was founded in 1998 by the Constable Educational Trust. This charity became an incorporated charitable company limited by guarantee in 2004. The members of its governing council are trustees and directors of the company.
- 1.2 The school aims to identify and nurture the talents and creativity that dyslexic children often possess to enable them to flourish, experience success and fulfil their potential, in a safe and supportive learning environment. Further, the school seeks to develop self-esteem, to motivate pupils towards independent learning and to take public examinations in preparation for further and higher education or vocational training. In addition to its teaching staff, the school has a therapeutic team of speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and a counsellor.
- 1.3 The school has 67 pupils on roll, aged between 11 and 16 years. Pupils come from 22 London boroughs and the surrounding area, and are from many different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The ability profile of the pupils is well below the national average. All have identified special educational needs and/or difficulties (SEND), some of them considerable, including, but not exclusively, dyslexia, dyspraxia and high-functioning autism spectrum disorders. A majority have missed periods of education. At present, 46 pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. One pupil requires support for speaking English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

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

- 2.1 Pupils' achievement is excellent. The school carefully nurtures pupils' talents and creativity to enable them to flourish, fully in keeping with its aims. Pupils leave Year 11 with a number of GCSEs: a significant achievement for pupils who have had to overcome often severe learning difficulties and absence from education. Recent results show an increase in subjects in which pupils achieve A\* and A grades. The vibrant curriculum fully meets pupils' needs and includes a vast range of enriching experiences that greatly enhance pupils' skills and social development. Joint ventures with mainstream schools are just beginning. These enable pupils to develop links to aid smooth transition to their future lives. Teaching is excellent, grounded in strong relationships and expert knowledge of the needs of each pupil. The additional adults in class are caring and supportive but are not always directed effectively to support learning fully in lessons. Pupils show exemplary attitudes to their work. As a result, skills, knowledge and understanding develop extremely well in relation to each individual's ability.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent, the result of the school's extremely successful work to fulfil its aims to develop pupils' self-esteem and to motivate them towards independent learning. Pastoral care and support are of extremely high quality and include the well-tailored support of therapists. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Attention to welfare, health and safety is good. All risks are carefully assessed, including fire risk and safety issues. A few clarifications and adjustments were needed, and promptly made, to the school's statutory policies during the inspection. This ensured that all written procedures now reflect the excellent implementation of requirements evident in the school.
- 2.3 Leadership and management are excellent. The school fully meets its aims because school life is well organised and staff are united in common clear purpose and direction. Excellent progress on the recommendations of the previous inspection has led to improved self-evaluation and development planning, and much fuller understanding of software systems in use in the school. Governance overall is good. The governing council is highly effective in ensuring that the school is faithful to its founding aims. New arrangements for monitoring the work of the school have recently been introduced but are not yet embedded. This limits the quality of trustees' support and challenge to the school. Parents are highly supportive of the school and its work with their children.

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

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

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Improve the effectiveness of monitoring the school's work by the governing council, in order to provide more rigorous support and challenge to the school.
  2. Ensure that learning support assistants are more effectively directed to support learning throughout lessons.
  3. Increase the opportunities for pupils to be involved in joint ventures with mainstream schools.



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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils' speaking and listening skills develop strongly. The work to promote reading, which recently won the school a national prize for initiative, ensures that pupils read with confidence, interest and enthusiasm. Many can explain themselves cogently and logically. A GCSE group wrote skilfully about the arguments on both sides regarding the forthcoming referendum on membership of the European Union. Pupils apply their numeracy skills diligently, for example in working out how much bicycle maintenance products cost, and they can reason confidently as to how to raise money for them. Pupils write imaginatively, both factually and creatively, for example to persuade their teacher not to give them homework. Physical development is good, built up through a regular sports programme using outside venues. Pupils develop strong technological and science skills, including information and communication technology (ICT) and design technology. They much enjoy, and achieve well in, music, drama and art. The pupils' artwork on display around the school is excellent.
- 3.3 Pupils' achievement in extra-curricular activities, devised to enhance their personal skills, is excellent. Small individual successes represent excellent achievement in terms of increased self-confidence and ability to join in. Pupils take part, and perform well, in the regular productions they put on at school and in the local community, such as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and an in-house written musical play, *Cinderella Bella*.
- 3.4 Despite what are often exceptionally low starting points, and the fact that over half of the pupils have missed considerable periods of their education, most are ready to take five or more GCSEs in Year 11. The following analysis uses the national data for the Years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been below the national average for maintained secondary schools. Results for 2015 are similar, but individual attainment rose, and included some A and A\* grades. This level of attainment was judged alongside other evidence. The inspectors scrutinised pupils' workbooks and files, observed lessons, checked school data on pupils' progress and looked at how targets are increasingly more difficult on pupils' individual education plans. They discussed progress with pupils and staff. Taken together, the evidence shows that pupils make excellent progress while at the school, relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. Pupils leave Year 11 with a number of GCSEs and move on to further education or apprenticeships.
- 3.5 The excellent support pupils receive for their learning enables those with more serious SEND to make excellent progress and achieve standards that fully reflect their potential. This level of support exploits and develops the skills of the more able pupils, who also achieve highly.
- 3.6 Pupils show exemplary attitudes, both to the school and to their work and learning. Their behaviour in the classroom responds to the nurturing care provided by staff and fully supports their overall achievement. Most willingly persevere when the work is more difficult. They work constantly, co-operatively and individually, to overcome their difficulties. Many find organisation of themselves, and of their work and

performance, a considerable challenge. By the time they leave, they have an excellent range of such skills.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum fully supports the school's aims for pupils to fulfil their potential and to take public examinations. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents were supportive and appreciative of all the school offers their children.
- 3.9 Teaching meets all aspects of the statements of special educational needs and EHC plans held by many of the pupils. Each pupil has a tailored curriculum map, with detailed targets, whether stated or not. The maps are carefully monitored and reviewed regularly. Opportunities abound for more able pupils to be sufficiently challenged. For example, they devise and lead some of the enrichment activities, such as a special effects make-up class and a group to make artefacts out of cardboard. Courses are provided which nurture and develop interests and skills for the more able pupils, such as GCSE English literature, and practical musicianship.
- 3.10 The curriculum covers all the required areas of learning and includes humanities, creative and aesthetic subjects, and physical education. The strong foundation of literacy and numeracy is broadened through science and technology, including design technology and ICT. Pupils prepare for at least five and up to nine GCSEs. Modern foreign languages are included in the extra-curricular programme, including French, Italian, Spanish or Korean, depending on pupils' requests.
- 3.11 The excellent programme for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) includes all aspects of citizenship and democracy, and covers the rule of law and the right to individual liberty. Tolerance and respect for others and their beliefs are promoted, mostly as part of the religious studies programme. A balanced presentation of political, cultural and social issues is given in both curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 3.12 Careers education is strong. The annual transitions evening, which provides post-16 information to Years 10 and 11, often features presentations from former pupils and parents describing their career paths. Pupils are given guidance in writing a curriculum vitae, letters of application and interview technique. Work experience for Year 10 enables tailor-made placements to meet pupils' interests, ambitions and needs.
- 3.13 An excellent variety of extra-curricular activities, known as 'enrichment', ranges from unaccompanied choral singing to cake decorating and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The sessions take place as the final hour of the school day on four days each week. All pupils are included, in mixed age groups, to enable social skills to develop, as well as practical and intellectual skills. The element of choice is strong. Teachers, learning support assistants and pupils propose and describe activities in termly presentations from which pupils select their choices. Frequent 'skills for learning' sessions offer valuable help for pupils in small academic mentor groups, targeting literacy, numeracy and social skills.
- 3.14 Strong links are forged with the local community, including a popular 'outside the classroom' gardening project and trips organised to museums and galleries. A joint venture with a mainstream school on the prevention of bullying was an excellent but isolated example of enabling pupils to link back into mainstream education in

preparation for their future. Residential trips, for example to activity centres on the Isle of Wight and Cornwall, increase pupils' awareness of the wider world and greatly enhance their social development.

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

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.16 Teaching is lively and adaptable, and is highly effective in enabling pupils to make rapid progress, fully supporting the aims of the school.
- 3.17 Each pupil has an individual curriculum programme, which is linked to all planning so that it meets every need. Teachers use their detailed and expert knowledge of their pupils to carefully plan lessons that aim to foster interest and independence, and to build self-confidence, as well as develop pupils' academic learning. The more able pupils are successfully encouraged and challenged to extend their goals. Teaching fully fulfils the provisions of statements of special educational needs and of education, health and care plans. Therapists and counsellors enhance pupils' learning experience. The requirements of pupils with EAL are fully met through individual support.
- 3.18 Teachers' marking is mostly detailed and thorough, with constructive comments. Action is well in hand to ensure complete consistency in this respect, to enable all marking to lead to rapid improvements in pupils' work. Assessments are regular and help teachers to diagnose next steps with accuracy.
- 3.19 Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of the difficulties their pupils face are excellent. This enables them to understand exactly how to introduce new concepts to pupils. For example, in a physics lesson, nuclear fission was successfully explained and reworded in order to enable understanding. Teaching methods are suitably varied to adapt to pupils' different needs and make excellent use of resources. Time management is excellent: fast paced to maintain attention, but also carefully planned to include rest breaks and 'brain-gym' sessions when needed. Where learning support assistants are allocated to support class needs, this is often successful. Sometimes, however, the assistants are not sufficiently prepared by the teacher to support learning fully in the lesson.
- 3.20 Teachers' warm relationships with their pupils are particularly effective in encouraging the pupils to express their ideas, fostering interest and independence. The use of laptops assists pupils to organise themselves well. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, a few parents thought that the homework set is not appropriate and a small minority of pupils felt that homework does not support their learning. Inspectors checked pupils' homework books and found a highly appropriate range of work that fully supported their learning in class.
- 3.21 Political issues are covered in an impartial way. In any debating issue, pupils are encouraged to research both sides of an argument. Lively interactions between teachers and pupils, particularly evident in lessons of a practical nature, such as cooking or business communication, foster enjoyment. Extreme sensitivity to pupils' feelings enables the pupils to be relaxed and grow in confidence. All these factors have contributed to the creation and maintenance of a high quality learning environment that leads to pupils' excellent achievement.

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

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school actively promotes principles that enable pupils to develop high quality personal skills and fully reflects its aims for pupils to develop self-esteem and experience success. Parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire highly praised the school's work. Pupils of all ages, when asked about their understanding of the characteristics of being British, such as democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty, were united in the view that "this is what we do here." They could give examples from life around school and from their work in PSHEE and English, and from presentations in assemblies.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Through the school, the increase in their self-esteem and self-belief is rapid. Pupils expressed how rapidly their confidence had developed since their arrival at school, when many were at a low ebb and felt that they could not achieve. Pupils develop an appreciation of non-material aspects of life, enjoying the special room set out for them to relax and catch up with friends. They appreciate the availability of therapists and a counsellor to help them through difficulties, and this helps them to develop emotional maturity.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils know and understand behaviour expectations and meet these, creating an ordered, calm and friendly atmosphere. Consequently, they develop a clear understanding of right and wrong, and a deep respect for each other and adults. They are aware that, because of their difficulties, they sometimes misinterpret peers' actions. They show mature moral understanding, using mediation processes to overcome such misunderstandings. They explore moral and ethical issues through PSHEE and assemblies, and through this they develop knowledge and understanding of the criminal and civil law in England.
- 4.5 Pupils develop excellent social skills as a result of the significant focus the school places on this aspect in ensuring that they are ready to learn. Pupils take increasingly greater responsibility for themselves and their interaction with others. They make suggestions as to how to help and care for others in their class. Their social awareness is increased further in sessions in a 'responsible thinking' classroom. These are aimed at developing pupils' responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils raise money for charity, and take part in house competitions and events, helping them to acquire a strong sense of team responsibility.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural development is strong. They show well-developed tolerance and respect when discussing beliefs and cultures. They have a very strong acceptance of each other's sensitivities and difficulties. Pupils are careful not to discriminate against others. They have many opportunities to experience other cultural traditions during lesson and enrichment time, and have a great respect for their own through provision for creative subjects such as music, art and drama, and through visits to art galleries.
- 4.7 By the time they leave the school pupils' progress in their personal development is excellent. They are unfailingly courteous and polite to visitors, and show respect, consideration and responsibility towards others.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 Parents who responded to the pre inspection questionnaire are very happy with the school's care and support for their children. Compassionate and empathetic staff provide highly effective support and guidance. This enables pupils to develop as individuals, increase in confidence and achieve personal success, in line with the school's aims. The staff have excellent relationships with the pupils and this helps to support the positive relationships that are evident among the pupils.
- 4.10 Pupils are strongly encouraged to develop nutritious eating habits and healthy lifestyles. Lunchtime menus focus on pupils' health and offer attractive variety. Pupils have access to the outdoors for fresh air and exercise in the regular games and physical education sessions. Yoga and 'walking for health' are popular enrichment activities.
- 4.11 A warm and welcoming atmosphere greets visitors to the school, reflecting its skill at promoting good behaviour. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils did not feel that the school deals well with bullying and indicated that teachers are not fair in the way they give sanctions and rewards. Records were checked in detail and these matters were discussed with staff and pupils. Inspectors could not find evidence to support the negative views.
- 4.12 Pupils' views are sought and acted upon in a variety of ways, including pupil surveys and the school council. This is an active, vibrant and effective body, giving pupils the chance to take on leadership roles, along with other opportunities, as enrichment group leaders or in leading assemblies. Pupils can point to their requests being acted upon promptly, for example a request for playground enhancement. This wide range of evidence did not support the view of a small minority of pupils who, in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, felt that they do not have such opportunities and that their views are not taken into account.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve the educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.15 Policies, including that for child protection and safeguarding, reflect the excellent implementation evident in the school, now that minor adjustments to wording have been made. All staff understand the latest guidance for child protection, including preventing radicalisation and extremism. Training is at the appropriate levels for their roles, and at the required intervals. The procedures take full account of the nature of pupils' SEND, for example by allocating support from therapists or a counsellor.
- 4.16 The school has excellent arrangements for reducing risk from fire and other hazards. Fire training for staff ensures that all risk is reduced. Regular fire drills are held and carefully recorded. The health and safety policy and associated first-aid policy are thorough and implemented effectively. A risk assessment policy describes procedures with which risk assessments are carried out, and those that were checked during the inspection fully meet requirements to mitigate risk for all aspects of school life and also cover visits to outside venues.

- 4.17 The provision made for pupils who are ill or injured is adequate, with due regard for the range of their learning difficulties. Pupils' medical or other needs are known to staff. First-aid boxes are located around the school and are well maintained.
- 4.18 The admission and attendance registers are correctly completed and suitably stored for the required period. Prompt checks are made by form teachers if a pupil is unexpectedly absent.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing council maintains faithful adherence to the school's aims to enable its pupils to flourish, experience success and fulfil their potential, in a safe and supportive learning environment. Members of the council effect proper oversight of financial planning and investment in staff and resources. Their understanding of educational standards has recently begun to improve through the allocation of specific link roles for individual governors. The work is at an early stage, so that monitoring the work of the school to provide increased support and challenge is not yet strong.
- 5.3 The council's current focus is a range of measures, well in hand, to ensure that the school is provided with improved stimulus for growth and development. Members of the council take seriously their responsibilities for child protection, welfare, and health and safety. The systematic approach to reviewing areas of regulatory compliance includes the annual full review of the safeguarding policy. Procedures and implementation are updated regularly, but at the time of the inspection some policies needed minor adjustments, including the safeguarding policy. This shortfall was dealt with speedily, so that all now meet requirements, especially those for child protection, health and safety, and arrangements to mitigate risk.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.5 Leadership and management at all levels are highly effective, fully promoting the aims of the school, through which pupils are enabled to move successfully into independence and everyday life. The school ethos is one of respect for others without question, whether staff, pupil or visitor. The school operates in a democratic way, listening and responding to views, from wherever they emanate.
- 5.6 The leadership team ensures that all school policies are carefully and thoroughly implemented, including that for child protection and safeguarding. All members of the leadership team have undergone up-to-date safeguarding training to the level of a designated lead. All other staff are trained in the latest safeguarding guidance, including the prevention of radicalisation and extremism.
- 5.7 The leadership team is highly committed to the success of the school and has established a clear educational vision and direction for the school. Members have a detailed knowledge of the background and potential of every pupil, allowing them to make a sustained impact on pupils' excellent personal development and achievement.
- 5.8 The school has fully met the recommendation of the previous inspection to improve its self-evaluation and development planning. The leadership team devises and monitors the school development plan, which covers every aspect of the school. The team monitors the excellent manner in which its priorities are followed up. The

plan is carefully focused on the benefits to pupils. An example of this focus is the highly successful 'responsible thinking' classroom, which has been established in response to behaviour management issues, some of which were identified at the previous inspection.

- 5.9 The school takes care to appoint staff who are trained and experienced in SEND and understand the significant learning needs of the pupils. All appropriate recruitment checks are in place before anyone, including governors and volunteers, begins work at the school. The centralised register is maintained carefully and accurately. Staff are all appropriately and frequently trained in their roles, particularly regarding safeguarding and welfare, health and safety.
- 5.10 The leadership team is comparatively large and this ensures that all aspects of leadership and management are strong. The inclusion of the special educational needs co-ordinator on the leadership team is a recent, positive addition that enables the core purpose of the school, to provide for pupils with SEND, to be at the heart of decision making. The staff appraisal process is rigorous. The recommendation of the previous inspection to involve heads of department in the process has been met. Appraisal is felt by staff to be a positive, constructive and supportive procedure. It has been enhanced recently to include observation and professional dialogue with staff at another school, to provide moderated views. All staff, including catering, maintenance and office personnel, are strongly committed to the school's success, and all contribute fully.
- 5.11 The school has excellent relationships with parents. In their response to the questionnaire, the parents were overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. They are satisfied with the education, support and communication from the school. They feel that the school does all it can to help their children, and that their children are happy and safe at school.
- 5.12 Parents appreciate the warm welcome they receive at every contact with the school and they are thoroughly involved in school events and life. They are encouraged to alert the school of any issues they may have and these are dealt with promptly. The written complaints procedure thoroughly reflects the excellent manner in which it is implemented.
- 5.13 The parents of prospective and current pupils are provided with a full range of written information, enhanced by a curriculum showcase evening and an invitation to experience lessons and lunch. Parents therefore have excellent opportunity to understand the life their children may experience at school and some of the strategies used to help them.
- 5.14 For parents of current pupils, communication through the tutor and learning mentor system works effectively to enable them to share in the work and progress of their children. Further discussion about their children's needs and progress is provided at parents' evenings and at annual review meetings. Regular written reports supplement these opportunities. The individual curriculum maps devised for each pupil are shared with parents to allow them to understand the school's plans for their children's learning. All parents who stated a view would recommend the school to others.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**