



CASTLE COURT
SCHOOL

We have one childhood. It has to be the best.

Excellent in all areas

ISI Inspection Report 2015



“A genuine sense of wonderment permeates throughout the whole school.”



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We have one childhood. It has to be the best.

Inspection Summary September 2015

The overall view of the inspectors is that Castle Court is excellent in all areas, the highest inspection grading the school could achieve.

Some of the highlights in their feedback include:

The Quality of Academic and Other Achievements

The quality of the pupils' achievement and learning is excellent.

- They benefit from an excellent curriculum which is wide ranging, and is enhanced by an outstanding selection of exciting and adventurous extra-curricular opportunities.
- Pupils of all ages acquire excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in their academic and extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils also express their creative talents to a high standard in drama, dance and music.
- They are highly skilled from an early age in their use of information and communications technology (ICT), particularly tablet computers.
- Pupils gain places at their first choice of senior schools, and a significant proportion are awarded scholarships, particularly for academic prowess, art, sport and music.
- Pupils have excellent work habits, concentrating at length, settling to tasks without fuss and persevering with challenging activities. They are acquiring excellent skills for the future.

The Contribution of Curricular and Extra-Curricular Provision

The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

- The curriculum is fully supported by an excellent extra-curricular programme of clubs and activities that take place both before and after school.
- The pupils' experience is enhanced by an excellent range of trips.

The Contribution of Teaching

The contribution of teaching is excellent.

- Pupils' thinking is consistently challenged, encouraging them to be active learners.
- At all levels of the school, teachers know their pupils extremely well, and provide the necessary support and encouragement to enable pupils of all ages and abilities to use their own initiative and to be unafraid of making mistakes.

The Quality of the Pupils' Personal Development

The spiritual, moral and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.

- A genuine sense of wonderment permeates throughout the school.
- Pupils have a sense of the wonders of nature and the world around them from the rural surroundings of the school, and a love for the natural world.
- Pupils demonstrate a deep sense of social responsibility.
- The excellent relationships between pupils, parents and teachers is a significant strength of the school which has led to the pupils displaying confidence, pride and impeccable manners.
- Pupils have a positive work ethos and work well both independently and collaboratively. They value and celebrate one another's contributions and achievements. Older pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next schools, displaying confidence, maturity and character required for their next step in their education.
- Year 8 pupils encapsulated the experience on offer at Castle Court by saying the school represents "freedom", "opportunity", "choice" and "friendly faces".

The Contribution of Arrangements for Pastoral Care

The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.

- Being outdoors plays a significant part in the everyday life at the school.
- Pupils are supervised with diligence, while also permitted the freedom to manage risks and explore their surroundings.

The Contribution of Arrangements for Welfare, Health and Safety

The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.

- The school's caring ethos means that pupils trust staff and are ready to turn to them with any worries they may have.

The Effectiveness of Governance, Leadership and Management

The quality of governance is excellent.

The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.

- Parents value the school's judgements, and respect and trust between home and school are evident.
- Parents were especially pleased with the range of activities provided and felt that their children are happy and safe at school. They would recommend the school to others.
- Clear lines of communication exist, for example through the use of the tutor system, and parents welcome the ease with which they can access personnel at the school at all times and levels.
- Parents feel that the school makes particular effort in the ways in which it communicates and informs its parent body.



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

CASTLE COURT PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Castle Court Preparatory School

Full Name of School	Castle Court Preparatory School
DfE Number	835/6023
Registered Charity Number	325028
Address	Castle Court Preparatory School Knoll Lane Corfe Mullen Wimborne Dorset BH21 3RF
Telephone Number	01202 694438
Fax Number	01202 659063
Email Address	hmsec@castlecourt.com
Headmaster	Mr Richard Stevenson
Chair of Governors	Mr Michael Cuthbertson
Age Range	2 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	362
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (210 boys; 152 girls)
Numbers by Age	2-5 (EYFS): 62 5-11: 238 11-18: 62
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Maryanne Hellewell
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	22 Sep 2015 to 25 Sep 2015

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. 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 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) intermediate inspection was in October 2012 and the previous ISI integrated inspection was in September 2009.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the EYFS, which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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

Inspectors

Mrs Jane Chesterfield	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sylvia Chetwood	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Kerrie Daunter	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mr Bill Pratt	Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Kathryn Henry	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Castle Court Preparatory School is a day school for girls and boys aged from two to thirteen years. It is situated in a rural location near the village of Corfe Mullen, between Wimborne and Poole in Dorset. The school was founded in Parkstone in 1948 and moved to its current location in 1968. It is a registered charity, run by a limited company trust and directed by a governing body.
- 1.2 The school aims: to raise self-esteem whilst providing a broad and academic stimulus, with opportunities for pupils to excel, both in and out of the classroom; to provide all pupils with a first-class, all-round education, firmly rooted in Christian principles; to encourage all members of the school community, whatever their faith or background, to strive for excellence; to ensure that pupils are considerate, friendly and confident, and feel part of a warm, welcoming and caring family; and as a school, to be forward thinking.
- 1.3 The school offers Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision to children in its Nursery and Reception classes. There are currently 362 pupils on roll, 62 of whom are in the EYFS. Since the previous full inspection, the present headmaster took up his post in 2010, a new senior management team has been appointed and children have been admitted from the age of two in the EYFS.
- 1.4 Results of standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the pupils is above the national average. Most pupils are of at least above average ability, with some year groups having a notable proportion of pupils with well above average ability. Pupils come from mainly professional or business backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic or overseas backgrounds.
- 1.5 Thirty-six pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and thirty of these receive specialist support from the school. No pupils currently have an education, health and care plan. Twenty-one pupils have been identified as having English as an additional language (EAL), and one currently receives specialist support from the school.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used by the school from Reception and throughout this report to refer to year groups. The school refers to its younger Nursery group as Badger Cubs and to its older Nursery group as Badgers.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims of providing all pupils with a first-class, all-round education, firmly rooted in Christian principles. From the EYFS onwards, pupils' achievement and progress are excellent, and they reach high levels of attainment. They benefit from an excellent curriculum which is wide ranging, well planned and well matched to their needs. It is enhanced by an outstanding selection of exciting and adventurous extra-curricular opportunities. Teaching throughout is excellent, and the school has tackled the recommendations from the previous inspection very thoroughly. A small amount of inconsistency in the effectiveness of methodology, marking and target setting is still evident, alongside a great deal of excellent practice. The teaching is characterised by enthusiasm and expertise, an excellent understanding of pupils' needs, and outstanding relationships with, and support for, pupils.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent, and they have a particularly strong spiritual and moral awareness. They are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. Excellent pastoral care and record keeping mean that all aspects of pupils' development are monitored, their achievements are celebrated and their weaknesses supported. The school's policies are effectively implemented in practice to ensure a happy and safe environment. The school gives excellent attention to welfare, health and safety, and procedures for safeguarding pupils are followed meticulously.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent. The governors maintain a thorough overview of all areas of the school, including the EYFS, and ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements in full. They exercise wise expenditure and invest prudently in the school's future, most recently with the provision of tablet computers for every pupil from Year 3 to Year 8. Leadership and management in all parts of the school are excellent. Senior leaders give outstanding direction to the school, creating a positive team spirit and sense of purpose amongst the staff. All are focused on improvement and have achieved much since the previous inspection. Parents are exceptionally happy with the school and what it offers their children. They feel that staff are very approachable and that the school involves them very effectively as partners in their children's education.

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) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that all teaching demonstrates, consistently, the school's expectations for marking, target setting and variety in teaching methods.

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 Children in the EYFS achieve at a high level. They make very good progress in their learning and development relative to their starting points, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills. Children with SEND are identified quickly and appropriate support is put in place. Profiles completed in the summer term show that most children reach at least expected levels of development and many exceed them in nearly all areas of learning.

3.3 Throughout the EYFS, children listen very well, for example during the weekly assembly to recognise the special moments they have experienced at home and when listening to stories. The youngest children can make their needs known to those around them when engaged in activities. Older children respond well to the high expectations of staff. In the Reception classes they independently access programs on the computer which support the development of their mathematical skills. They demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning when exploring the outdoor environment and on their weekly visit to a soft play centre in the nearby town, where they have the opportunity to take on new challenges and make decisions about the activities undertaken. Children are very happy and highly motivated, and respond enthusiastically to learning challenges. This was evident when they were learning to programme electronic floor toys to take a particular route.

3.4 The school is successful in ensuring that pupils are well educated in accordance with its aims. Pupils of all ages acquire excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in their academic and extra-curricular activities. They listen carefully to their teachers and to one another in class, and express their ideas clearly and confidently. Pupils read fluently and with understanding, and take care with, and pride in, their written work. They show that they are capable of thinking tasks through logically and independently, for example in their language work in English, French and Latin. Many show exceptional creativity in their artwork. Pupils also express their creative talents to a high standard in drama, dance and music. They have a secure grounding in mathematics and science, and are highly skilled from an early age in their use of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly tablet computers.

- 3.5 Pupils make the most of the extensive opportunities they have to be physically active, and many excel at sport. Pupils have played for their country in tennis and athletics, have won national medals in these sports and in swimming, golf and cross country, and have represented the locality in rugby, while boys' and girls' hockey teams have been particularly successful at local and national level, and rowing squads have competed in regattas at local senior schools.
- 3.6 Although pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. This is based on the evidence available from lesson observations, work scrutiny and school data. Almost all pupils gain places at their first choice of senior school, and a significant proportion are awarded scholarships, particularly for academic prowess, art, sport and music.
- 3.7 Pupils' progress is excellent across their time at the school. This is evident from lesson observations, scrutiny of work, and discussions with pupils and staff. There is no significant difference in the progress of different groups of pupils. The progress of pupils with SEND or EAL is excellent as a result of the high quality support they receive in class or in their withdrawal sessions. Pupils who have been identified as able, gifted and talented achieve highly and make excellent progress as a result of the high level of challenge offered to them in the top sets.
- 3.8 Pupils of all ages and abilities show a great eagerness to learn and enthusiasm for their lessons. They display excellent attitudes to learning, and their behaviour in class is exemplary, so that teachers are able to make the most productive use of lesson time. Pupils have excellent work habits, concentrating at length, settling to tasks without fuss and persevering with challenging activities. They are acquiring excellent skills for the future.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 In the EYFS, the excellent provision clearly meets the needs of all the children who attend. They have a wide variety of opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, to explore their environment and engage in independent learning. Children under the age of three are very well supported as they settle into their first days at school. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of their personal, social and emotional skills. Outdoor learning, visits to a soft play centre and a woodland learning environment all provide excellent opportunities for children's development across all seven areas of learning.
- 3.11 Opportunities for counting are fully exploited in the Nursery, for example tallying the number of children present in the class. An effective balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities allows children to develop their own ideas and engage in imaginative play, for example when pretending to work in 'matron's office' in the Reception role play area.
- 3.12 The school fulfils its aim of offering a broad and academic stimulus with opportunities for pupils to excel by providing a curriculum that exceeds the required areas of coverage and meets the needs of all ages and abilities. From Years 1 to 8 the curriculum includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum but extends well beyond its boundaries. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are taught, along with a range of other subjects including French, German, history, geography, religious studies, art, design technology, music, ICT and sport. Latin is introduced in Year 5. Personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE) is also taught from Year 1. This ensures, as appropriate for the age of pupils, that they are given a balanced view of values such as the rule of law, individual freedom and democracy. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have an extended woodland learning session every fortnight in the extensive grounds around the school. The curriculum is further supported by the school's range of animals, including pigs, chickens and guinea pigs, and pupils are very much involved in looking after them. Physical education and games are taught to all pupils, and from Year 1 upwards around one hour each day is allocated to these. Pupils in Years 1 to 8 enjoy tuition in dance and in music and movement.

- 3.13 The provision for pupils with SEND or EAL is excellent. Early intervention and strong links with outside agencies are secured. Throughout the school, individual needs are identified early by class teachers or through the thorough assessment programme. A variety of effective strategies is used to cater for these pupils, including individual withdrawal and support in lessons from teaching assistants. Able, gifted and talented pupils are identified through the use of standardised tests and through staff referral. They benefit from the targeted provision of extension work in some lessons. Pupils showing strong academic potential are invited to join an enrichment activity after school involving themed discussion and debate. Within the curriculum, teaching is carefully planned to enable pupils to work at a pace and level appropriate to their needs, and giving all pupils the opportunity to learn and make progress. To this end, pupils are placed in sets based on prior attainment in English and mathematics from Year 3 onwards. Setting by ability is also used in science, French and Latin by Year 6. Other subjects are taught in mixed ability groups. The school's effective use of ICT across much of the curriculum provides creative and innovative ways for all pupils to deepen their understanding. In the current term and for the first time, all pupils have their own tablet computer. The use of these computers is still being developed but they are already being imaginatively and successfully employed, for example in Latin and English, amongst other subjects.
- 3.14 The curriculum is fully supported by an excellent extra-curricular programme of clubs and activities that take place both before and after school. Games and sports provision is excellent, and pupils have a busy schedule of matches against other schools and many additional opportunities to participate in physical pursuits through the activity programme. Other activities include choir, orchestra, swimming, riding, scholarship extension lessons, cookery, geo-caching, drama and dance.
- 3.15 The pupils' experience is enhanced by an excellent range of trips. During an annual week of activities at the end of the summer term, pupils take part in a variety of residential visits. Years 5 and 7 travel to France, Year 6 go to a three-day adventure camp and Year 8 attend an activity week in Devon.
- 3.16 The pupils' experiences are enhanced by many links with the local community and other local schools. At the annual harvest festival, a key school event, the produce collected was donated to a local shelter for the homeless. The school also has supportive links with a local hospice and an orphanage in India.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.17 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.18 Staff in the EYFS are extremely knowledgeable about how children learn and develop. There is a strong emphasis on developing relationships in order to promote children's confidence and independence. However, whilst children have been taught to show very good levels of independence in their self-care, this is not always the case in learning contexts. Regular observations are used to assess children's learning and development in order to identify the next steps in their learning. Curriculum planning incorporates children's interests and high quality learning experiences move their understanding forward. For example, the older Nursery children carefully scrutinised different seeds and considered what these might become.
- 3.19 Throughout the school, teaching is successful in enabling pupils to make excellent progress and is effective in supporting the aims of the school. Teaching displays high expectations of pupils and is characterised by excellent subject knowledge and subject enthusiasm. Lesson planning is consistently thorough. Typically, lively teaching, demanding tasks and the use of skilled questioning techniques ensure that pupils' thinking is consistently challenged, encouraging them to be active learners. Teaching responds effectively to the pupils' differing learning needs. During the inspection, imaginative use of pictorial resources enabled lower ability pupils in an English lesson to understand a particularly challenging poem. Some set tasks are open ended to encourage pupils to think independently and to take an original approach. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning at home, with the amount set increasing proportionately as pupils grow older.
- 3.20 Excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils, and an atmosphere is created in which pupils feel secure and comfortable to ask questions to clarify their understanding. At all levels of the school, teachers know their pupils extremely well, and provide the necessary support and encouragement to enable pupils of all ages and abilities to use their own initiative and to be unafraid of making mistakes. Clearly explained objectives motivate pupils to stay focused and thus achieve high levels of progress, as well as exemplary behaviour and efficient completion of work. At the previous inspection it was recommended that teaching methods should become less teacher led in order to encourage pupils to work independently. Much improvement was observed in this area but some inconsistencies remain.

- 3.21 A comprehensive whole-school marking policy is in place. In some cases work is marked thoroughly and comments provide positive feedback. Marking takes into account a pupil's individual ability and potential. There are some excellent examples of marking that is extremely thorough and offers guidance to pupils on how to improve. However, this is not the case in all year groups and subjects, particularly with regard to the use of targets. This was a recommendation from the previous inspection.
- 3.22 The school makes widespread use of ICT to support learning across the whole curriculum. It has addressed a recommendation from the previous inspection to improve the use of interactive whiteboards: these are used effectively in many lessons. Teachers are also developing their skills in directing pupils to use their new tablet computers effectively, with the aim of enhancing learning and enabling pupils to monitor their own progress. A good start has been made in this area.
- 3.23 Assessment and monitoring are strong. Pupils are regularly assessed using a range of standardised tests. The increased use of ICT has enabled the results of these tests to be analysed and communicated to all teachers. The rigorous analysis of data for all pupils enables the school systematically to track and monitor the progress and capabilities of pupils of all abilities. This informs future planning and choice of teaching methods in a highly effective way.
- 3.24 The detailed tracking of pupils means that those with SEND or EAL and able, gifted and talented pupils are identified at an early stage in their school lives, and the school has detailed policies concerning the procedures in place to support them. Excellent provision is made for pupils with SEND and for those with EAL, with highly effective links between the staff who teach them and the specialist support staff. Able, gifted and talented pupils are identified and their needs are mostly met through extra challenges and tasks appropriate to their abilities. The setting system works well to provide pupils with work that challenges them appropriately. A recommendation of the previous inspection was to share best practice in order to provide teaching that meets the needs of all abilities within each class. This area has improved significantly but some inconsistencies remain.

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 takes active steps to promote the personal development of the pupils, including their preparation for life in the broader community.
- 4.3 The personal and social skills of the children in the EYFS are excellent. They behave well and show respect for one another by listening and responding when asked a question. Children make a positive contribution to the setting by co-operating with one another, sharing equipment and enthusiastically tidying up together at the end of each session.
- 4.4 Arrangements for transitions to new classes in the EYFS are excellent. An induction day for two year olds is held in the term before they start in the Nursery when their individual needs are discussed. Excellent communication and integration of the whole of the EYFS at playtimes and assemblies help children to feel secure when making the transition to a new class. In the summer term the Reception children visit Year 1 for a story every week, and teaching assistants move up with the children into Year 1 to ensure continuity and support, particularly for children with identified needs.
- 4.5 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Pupils are confident and aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. A genuine sense of wonderment permeates throughout the school, for example as pupils listen to music. During enrichment lessons, pupils pose thought-provoking questions when considering issues such as the creation and the potential future of artificial intelligence. In keeping with the ethos of the school, Christian values underpin everyday school life; pupils confidently take turns to say grace before lunch, while those in older years write reflective prayers in preparation for the harvest festival. Pupils have a sense of the wonders of nature and the world around them from the rural surroundings of the school, and a love for the natural world as they care for school pets and livestock. They show great imagination and creativity in their artwork.

- 4.6 Moral development is excellent. Being part of the school council and actively involved in the development of school rules, the pupils develop a concern for justice, and have a strong sense of right and wrong and of personal responsibility. Pupils adhere to and understand the importance of rules around the school, such as those relating to safety in the swimming pool and the science laboratories. They have an awareness of English laws and understand the necessity to uphold these, demonstrated, for example, in a discussion about 'road rage.'
- 4.7 The social development of the pupils is excellent. They demonstrate a deep sense of social responsibility, making significant contributions to the local community through meaningful fund-raising events and links with local and international charities. Younger pupils are gaining an awareness of local issues, supporting homeless people with their harvest festival contributions, while older pupils extend this, developing qualities such as empathy and resilience through a 'sponsored sleep out', which involves sleeping outside for the night in cardboard box shelters in the school grounds.
- 4.8 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. Pupils show a keen interest in, and respect for, a range of cultures and the diverseness of society, such as religious beliefs in Judaism and Islam. They have a secure understanding of Western cultural traditions, particularly in art, music and the theatre. The promotion of British values is purposefully integrated into school life, through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Pupils have an appreciation of democracy through their own appointment of peer representatives to the school council. Older pupils display a sophisticated awareness of the democratic process, for example through their experience of mock elections alongside the General Election.
- 4.9 The excellent relationship between pupils, parents and teachers is a significant strength of the school which has led to the pupils displaying confidence, pride and impeccable manners. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school and particularly appreciate opportunities to join in a wide range of activities and the positive impact of teachers helping them to learn. During lessons, the rapport between pupils and teachers is excellent and a mutual respect between them is upheld across the whole school, including during more sociable times such as lunch, served in the style of a family meal.

- 4.10 In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils indicated that their opinions are not sought by the school. Minutes from school council meetings and subsequent discussions with senior members of staff showed the school council to be running effectively.
- 4.11 Pupils have a positive work ethic and work well both independently and collaboratively. They value and celebrate one another's contributions and achievements. Older pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next schools, displaying the confidence, maturity and character required for their next step in their education. Year 8 pupils encapsulated the experience on offer at Castle Court by saying the school represents 'freedom', 'opportunity', 'choice' and 'friendly faces'.

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

- 4.12 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.13 In the EYFS, a very high standard of care is provided by all staff. This, together with an effective key person system, means that children feel safe and settle quickly when they come into school. A previous inspection recommendation for the EYFS to develop the role of the key person has thus been implemented successfully. Good hygiene practices are encouraged from the very beginning of children's time at school. They recognise the importance of washing their hands before eating. Nutritious snacks and lunches raise children's awareness of the importance of having a healthy lifestyle.
- 4.14 Throughout the school, pupils' personal development is supported by excellent pastoral care, based on the teachers' in-depth knowledge of individuals. Teachers provide excellent support and guidance.
- 4.15 The extremely positive relationship between staff and pupils is a significant strength of the school. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils said that teachers are unfair in their giving of sanctions. Inspectors found the behaviour policy and anti-bullying policy to be clear, noting that, in practice, emphasis is placed upon positive reinforcement of good behaviour through 'plusses', merit badges and the expanded house system. Records show that any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with swiftly through the appropriate implementation of reasonable sanctions.

- 4.16 Pupils are served wholesome family meals in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. Healthy eating is encouraged through discussion about food sources and the benefits it brings to the pupils' well-being. Being outdoors plays a significant part in the everyday life at the school, where pupils have access to a wide range of stimulating and exciting outdoor learning environments, including the woodland area, adventure play area and a well-stocked vegetable garden.
- 4.17 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND. It has developed the role of the form tutor to incorporate oversight of each pupil's development and since the previous inspection, a leadership post has been created specifically to support girls. This role has played a significant part in the increased enjoyment and participation of girls.
- 4.18 The pupils are extremely well cared for by all members of the school community. They are supervised with diligence, while also permitted the freedom to manage risks and explore their surroundings, in keeping with the school's aim to nurture and develop confidence.

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

- 4.19 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.20 Safeguarding and children's safety are given a high priority in the EYFS. The staff team members work well together to ensure that the environment is safe. Risk assessments are completed for the weekly educational activities that take place away from the school site. Care practices are excellent, staffing levels meet requirements and all staff in the EYFS have paediatric first-aid qualifications.
- 4.21 The school gives excellent attention to safeguarding its pupils, incorporating the most recent requirements in a timely manner and ensuring that all staff are familiar with changes in guidance. Those responsible for overseeing safeguarding receive regular training, and whole-staff training in safeguarding is up to date. Recruitment procedures are thorough and systematic, and the required checks on staff are recorded accurately on the school's well-maintained single central register of appointments.

- 4.22 The school's caring ethos means that pupils trust staff and are ready to turn to them with any worries they may have. Staff have a clear understanding of the pathways to follow in reporting concerns. They address the importance of e-safety, promoting pupils' support of one another through discussion about potential hazards and how to stay safe while online.
- 4.23 The school's procedures for reducing the risk from fire are thorough. Regular audits are carried out and the recommendations are carefully acted upon. Fire drills take place in a timely way and are fully recorded, and equipment is tested according to a systematic schedule. Health and safety matters are treated with high importance. Risk assessments are comprehensive, covering all aspects of school life and visits, and the school makes every effort to provide a safe yet exciting environment where pupils can learn, discover and explore. Excellent provision is made for pupils who are ill or injured, or who have particular needs. Fully trained medical staff are available at all times to tend to those who need help.
- 4.24 The school's admission and attendance registers contain all the stipulated information, and are suitably maintained and stored for the required three years. Registration is undertaken punctually each day and absences followed up promptly.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors' involvement in the EYFS is highly effective. Responsible governors have relevant expertise that helps them to maintain an overview of practice.
- 5.3 The governors have an excellent oversight of the school through their committee structure, which ensures that they are kept fully informed about all aspects of school life. They meet their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, and investment in staff, accommodation and resources in all respects. Prudent financial management has enabled the governing body to plan for the future and direct expenditure towards key priorities, such as the provision of tablet computers for pupils, the forthcoming construction of a sports hall and an ongoing programme of classroom refurbishment.
- 5.4 Governors maintain an excellent insight into the daily life of the school and monitor its work very closely. A systematic schedule for policy reviews ensures that all are updated in a timely fashion. Governors have a wide range of varied, relevant and valuable expertise that they bring to their roles. They attend regular, pertinent training which helps them to carry out their roles effectively, including safeguarding updates and safer recruitment. The governing body analyses and reviews the school development plan, and offers the school an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- 5.5 Governors ensure that the school fully meets statutory requirements in all areas. They are assiduous in the attention they give to safeguarding and to ensuring that the school keeps up to date with changing guidelines. They carry out the annual review of safeguarding comprehensively, and ensure that the well-being of pupils is at the centre of the school's ethos.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 In the EYFS, children's welfare, health and safety are ensured through the consistent implementation of appropriate policies and procedures and the safe and stimulating environment. Strong and effective partnerships with parents support children's learning and development. Staff are very approachable and encourage parents to engage in their children's learning. In questionnaire responses, all parents showed a genuine appreciation of the provision and of the high level of communication about their children's progress and welfare.
- 5.8 Effective teamwork in the EYFS contributes greatly to the progress and development of all children. Every opportunity is taken to integrate the Nursery and Reception children, particularly in the outdoor learning environment. There are clear priorities for development and extremely good lines of communication. Arrangements for staff supervision are very good and lead to focused professional development. Diversity is very well promoted through encouraging children to listen to one another and work together co-operatively.
- 5.9 The senior management team is successful in achieving the aims of the school, working hard to promote pupils' achievements, well-being, personal development and care. They are approachable and accessible, and their enthusiasm and commitment to the school are apparent. The school has successfully addressed almost all of the issues raised at the previous inspection; some minor inconsistencies still exist in some elements of teaching, such as marking. The roles of all those with management responsibilities have been clarified and time given to allow them to carry out their work effectively, with particular reference to the monitoring of their specific areas and subjects and the consistent implementation of policies and procedures.

- 5.10 The recruitment and induction of staff are managed successfully. Induction procedures for staff new to the school, and for those new to the teaching profession, support them well. All staff receive regular training for their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Management is highly successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all pupils, especially in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.11 The school ensures that safe recruitment procedures are practised, by conducting the necessary checks and recording them on the single central register as required. A system for the appraisal of staff is managed effectively. Targets are identified to enhance professional practice, and in-service training opportunities are becoming more closely linked to the development planning process.
- 5.12 Strategic school development is well planned, and senior managers, with governors, have undertaken thorough reviews, identifying the school's key strengths and needs. This has resulted in a clear vision for school development and educational priorities for the future. The current plan is thorough and well formulated, and takes into account the views of all departments, including grounds and support staff. School self-evaluation is accurate and realistic. In the period since the appointment of the new headmaster, much has been achieved both in terms of work undertaken and that which is planned.
- 5.13 Relations and communications with parents, past, present and future, are excellent in all parts of the school. Links with parents have developed extensively since the previous inspection and are strong. No significant areas of concern were raised by parents in pre-inspection questionnaire responses; these revealed wholehearted support and endorsement for the work carried out by the school. Parents were especially pleased with the range of activities provided and felt that their children are happy and safe at school. They would recommend the school to others.
- 5.14 Responses also indicated that all parents are very positive about the educational experience offered to their children, and discussions with parents illustrated overwhelming gratitude for the school's provision. Parents genuinely feel informed and listened to, and that they have excellent opportunities to comment on the way in which the school operates. They appreciate that their wishes cannot always be realised. Parents value the school's judgements, and respect and trust between home and school are evident.

- 5.15 The introduction of a family lounge has been welcomed by parents and it is used frequently as an informal 'drop-in' facility, with refreshments available. There has been a concerted effort by the school to increase and improve face-to-face contact with members of staff. Clear lines of communication exist, for example through the use of the tutor system, and parents welcome the ease with which they can access personnel at the school at all times and levels.
- 5.16 Parents feel that the school makes particular effort in the ways in which it communicates and informs its parent body. Management and staff have embraced the use of online technology, such as the website and social media, and recognise a need to provide a high level of service to parents, with facilities such as holiday courses for pupils. The introduction of a virtual learning platform has revolutionised communication and parents can now receive information about homework, menus, calendar dates, academic progress and many other relevant details.
- 5.17 The school takes great care to keep parents informed about their children's progress and has improved the standard of reports to parents, in line with the recommendations of the previous inspection. High quality written reports contain information on a pupil's knowledge and progress, with a summary of work covered and details of how the pupil could improve further. Parents are actively involved in school life in a variety of ways, including running a chess club, and are regularly invited to school events, sporting fixtures and concerts. They are encouraged to support their children whenever possible.
- 5.18 Parents with a concern or query regarding their children are able to contact the school at any time, as well as attending regular formal meetings at which they discuss their children's progress. The school has clear and appropriate procedures for the reporting of parents' concerns, and parents are secure in the knowledge that they will receive timely responses to their questions. Parents are particularly well supported in their choice of senior schools. Meetings and individual appointments are arranged with the headmaster, who ensures that parents have all the information they need to enable them to make an informed choice.

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



“Year 8 pupils encapsulated the experience on offer at Castle Court by saying the school represents ... “opportunity”, “choice” and “friendly faces”.”





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