



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST HILARY'S SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Hilary's School

Full Name of School	St Hilary's School		
DfE Number	936/6042		
EYFS Number	EY390338		
Registered Charity Number	312056		
Address	St Hilary's School Holloway Hill Godalming Surrey GU7 1RZ		
Telephone Number	01483 416551		
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Email Address	secretary@sthilarysschool.com		
Head	Mrs S Bailes		
Chair of Governors	Mrs V Gillman		
Age Range	2 to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	254		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (77 boys; 177 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	23	5-11: 173
	3-5 (EYFS):	58	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	254	
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	23 Nov 2010 to 24 Nov 2010		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in October 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st 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 Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 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, though inspectors will 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Hilary's School is a non-selective day school for girls aged two to eleven and for boys aged two to seven. The school was founded in 1927 and is a charitable trust with a board of governors. The school bases its values on firm Christian principles through which pupils may learn the importance of tolerance, care and consideration for others. It aims to provide traditional values, supporting and nurturing high expectations.
- 1.2 The school is situated in its own grounds on the outskirts of Godalming, overlooking the surrounding countryside. The heart of the school is a Victorian house that has been extended to provide additional purpose-built accommodation as the school has developed. A new building, the Hiorns Centre, providing a large indoor area, was opened in 2009. Pupils are drawn from Godalming and the surrounding area, with parents who come from a wide variety of business and professional backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils represents ethnic minority groups.
- 1.3 The setting for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a dedicated area within the school building and with its own outside play areas. Sixty-two children aged two to four are in the three Nursery classes and many of these attend on a flexible part-time basis. Nineteen pupils aged four to five are in the two Reception classes which, with the Year 1 and 2 classes, form the Lower School. Boys leave at the end of Year 2, mainly going on to independent preparatory schools. Girls in Years 3 to 6 comprise the Upper School.
- 1.4 The school has 254 pupils on roll. Numbers of boys and girls in the EYFS and Years 1 and 2 are balanced. The majority of pupils enter the school in the EYFS; a small number of girls join at the start of Year 3.
- 1.5 The ability range of pupils is above the national average, and includes a significant proportion of pupils whose abilities are far above the national average and very few of below average ability. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school identifies a further 44 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, all of whom receive support. A small number of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language and two of these receive support for English as an additional language.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' learning and achievement is excellent. Pupils are well educated; the school fulfils its aim to support and nurture high expectations. Pupils of all abilities achieve highly in all aspects of their learning. They are articulate, show independence of thought and have well-developed literacy skills. Their love of books and appreciation of literature are evident. They show high levels of creativity; the art work of older girls is sophisticated and carefully executed. Numeracy skills are strong. Transferable information and communication technology skills are used effectively in work across the curriculum.
- 2.2 At the age of 11, girls gain entry to a wide range of selective secondary schools; each year several achieve scholarships for academic work, or for art, drama or music. Pupils are highly successful in the many individual examinations taken in dance, drama and instrumental music. Pupils benefit from their participation in a wide variety of activities and competitions; in sports, mathematics and the arts they enjoy frequent success at local and regional levels.
- 2.3 Results in national tests at the age of 11 are excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. This analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. These results, together with results of standardised tests used by the school to measure pupils' progress as they move up the school, indicate that pupils make good and often rapid progress in relation to those of similar abilities. Effective teaching, the pupils' well-developed skills and knowledge, and their thorough understanding are significant contributory factors in the high levels of attainment and progress.
- 2.4 Pupils enjoy their learning; they are thoughtful and responsive, and take pride in their work. They co-operate well together and have the confidence to tackle tasks independently.
- 2.5 A well-planned and stimulating curriculum strongly supports pupils' learning. A wide ranging personal, social, citizenship and health education programme fosters their personal development well. Provision for pupils with particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for able, gifted and talented pupils is excellent. The curriculum is enriched by numerous relevant visits and visitors to school. Residential visits of increasing length for pupils in Years 3 to 6 foster independence and self-confidence. Pupils benefit greatly from the imaginative range of extra-curricular activities provided.
- 2.6 High quality teaching was seen in the small sample of lessons observed and pupils' work also reflects this effective teaching. Teachers' high expectations, and their depth of knowledge, enthusiasm and meticulous planning make a strong contribution to pupils' successful learning. Systems of assessment are thorough, established and used effectively. The development of a centralised system for the storage of all assessment data, together with other pupil information, provides strong support for pupils' learning and personal development. Teachers' marking is regular and informative. Target setting is used well, and is understood and enjoyed by pupils.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.7 The quality of pupils' personal development is outstanding. The school is highly successful in fostering attitudes of tolerance, care and consideration for others.
- 2.8 Pupils show excellent spiritual awareness. Assemblies reflect the school's Christian ethos. The active part pupils play in worship through singing, instrumental music and drama fosters their spirituality well. Pupils flourish in an atmosphere of encouragement and praise. Their self-esteem is high because they know that their achievements are recognised and celebrated. This recognition is confirmed by the individual records of achievement, compiled during their time at the school, which are presented to all pupils on leaving. They develop self-confidence through class discussions in which they are encouraged to speak and also to listen and value others' opinions.
- 2.9 Pupils show outstanding moral awareness. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and willingly abide by the moral values underpinning the life of the school. As a result their behaviour is excellent and they show a clear awareness of the needs and rights of others.
- 2.10 An excellent sense of social awareness is evident in the way in which pupils fulfil their responsibilities. Whether acting as playground 'buddies', organising fund-raising events or helping with tasks in class, they take their duties seriously and carry out tasks conscientiously. Pupils willingly support each other within the relaxed family atmosphere of the school. A recent school election campaign, held at the time of the general election, and focusing on issues important to the school community, developed their understanding of democratic processes well.
- 2.11 Pupils show a highly developed appreciation of their own and other cultures. They benefit greatly from their participation in plays, ballets and concerts. An understanding of cultures other than their own develops through their study of artists, musicians and writers from widely differing cultural traditions. They learn about the major festivals of other faiths and so develop respect and understanding for the different experiences that others have.
- 2.12 Excellent arrangements for pastoral care and for the welfare, health and safety of pupils strongly support pupils' personal development. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils is excellent. Pupils know to whom to turn if they have a concern; a message box enables them to communicate in writing if they prefer. Safeguarding and anti-bullying policies are comprehensive and detailed. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire are in place. Educational visits are planned with great care. Admission and attendance registers are well maintained; any unexpected absence is carefully checked. School meals are ample and nourishing. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and opportunities for physical exercise are frequent.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.13 Strong governance ensures the continuing development of the school in line with its aims. Governors offer a wide range of expertise and experience. The structures of governance are clear. A head's report each term and staff presentations to governors on particular aspects of education ensure that board members are kept well informed. Governors exercise prudent financial management and are fully involved in long-term development planning. All legal responsibilities are implemented carefully. A governor sits on the health and safety committee and a named governor has responsibility for all child protection matters. The programme of governor training is excellent.
- 2.14 Leadership and management are highly effective. The senior management team, led with energy and great thought, provides strong educational direction and a clear awareness of school needs. Staff at all levels show strong commitment. Middle management roles are well developed; however, the inclusion of the two Reception classes within the organisation of the Lower School causes a blurring of roles and responsibilities between the head of the Lower School and the head of the EYFS. This sometimes adversely affects provision for pupils in Reception.
- 2.15 The system of appraisal is well developed and carefully linked to individual professional development and school needs. Development planning is thorough and detailed. Since the time of the last inspection, procedures for the monitoring and management of the curriculum have been strengthened significantly.
- 2.16 Recruitment procedures are rigorous; the central register is carefully maintained. The school buildings provide a stimulating learning environment. Excellent outdoor facilities are used well in many curriculum areas. However, some areas available for outdoor play in the autumn and winter are under used.
- 2.17 The school has an excellent relationship with parents. Information for parents is of high quality. Reports are detailed and informative. A fifth of parents responded to the questionnaire in advance of the inspection and were very supportive of the school's provision overall. Procedures for dealing with formal complaints are in place, but excellent communication and an 'open door' policy ensure that most matters can be dealt with on an informal basis.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Define clearly, and implement fully, the respective management roles and responsibilities of the head of the Lower School and the head of the EYFS.
 2. Ensure that all children in the EYFS have regular access to all areas of the outdoor provision throughout the year.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good with some outstanding features. It meets the needs of all children, including those who are under three years, very well. It fulfils its aim to provide a nurturing, caring environment that recognises and encourages individual achievement. High priority is given to children's personal and social development through good reward systems. Robust procedures strongly promote children's welfare, ensuring a safe and secure environment. There is a strong focus on developing key skills in literacy and numeracy. The school knows itself well and plans to improve the outdoor environment for the children in Reception. Partnership with parents is very strong. Since the last inspection, assessment has been used well to recognise the uniqueness of each child. Staff provide good support for the learning and development of children of all abilities.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Good leadership and management ensure that children are safeguarded at all times. Effective systems are in place for the required checks on all staff. Staff are appropriately qualified and staffing ratios are high. Policies are comprehensive and thorough, and are regularly reviewed. Thorough risk assessments ensure that children are safe. Staff are highly committed. Both Nursery and Reception staff work well as individual teams, though the split in management responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage means that they do not fully share ideas and resources and identify clear priorities for the development of the EYFS unit. Opportunities offered by the superb outside area in the Nursery are not fully exploited. Management has identified the need to develop outdoor provision for the Reception children. As at the time of the last inspection, partnership with parents is highly effective. The small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire were highly supportive of the setting. Close links have been established with the local authority.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The quality of provision is good with many outstanding features. The setting provides a stimulating and welcoming environment with some outstanding resources. There is an appropriate balance of adult-directed and child-initiated learning through a wide range of activities. However, use of the outdoor learning environment is not an integral part of the day. A generous adult to child ratio ensures high levels of individual attention, supporting children's good and often excellent progress. Relationships between staff and children are a strength of the setting. Children gain in confidence, responding well to high expectations. Staff guide and support children well, providing safe, clear routines in a secure environment. Healthy eating and regular exercise are promoted. The setting is highly inclusive of children of all abilities, and identifies and responds to individual learning needs most effectively.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 Children's achievements are outstanding. All children make good and often rapid progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Many reach the nationally expected goals by the end of Reception and some exceed them. Personal, social and emotional development is high. Progress in literacy, numeracy and creative work is particularly good. All children are effective communicators and active listeners. They are beginning to demonstrate their ability to problem solve and to make their own decisions. Children are happy, feel safe and approach all activities enthusiastically and confidently, responding well to high expectations of staff. Their behaviour is exemplary. They know how to keep safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. Relationships are strong. Children respect each other and work in harmony. They benefit from regular exercise, and learn about healthy eating, hand-washing and keeping themselves safe.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Complaints since the last inspection

- 4.6 There have been no complaints to Ofsted regarding provision for those under the age of three since the last inspection.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a (small) sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with a governor, 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 to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Jill Moore

Reporting Inspector

Mrs Jeanette Adams

Head of Department, IAPS school

Mrs Sara Robinson

Early Years Lead Inspector

Mrs Eleni Laws

Early Years Team Inspector (Head of Pre Preparatory Department, IAPS school)