



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST HILARY'S SCHOOL

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

INTERMEDIATE 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
Fax Number	01483 418325
Email Address	secretary@sthilarysschool.com
Head	Mrs Jane Whittingham
Chair of Governors	Mrs V Gillman
Age Range	2 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	239
Gender of Pupils	Mixed
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 19 5-11: 150 3-5 (EYFS): 70
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Ursula Hillery
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	10 Dec 2013 to 11 Dec 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspection occurs over a period of two continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2010.

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) (England) Regulations 2010. 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 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.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted informal discussions with children and examined samples of work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of before and after-school clubs and attended registration sessions. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Gillian Bilbo Early Years Lead Inspector

Mrs Yvonne Parry Team Inspector for Early Years (Former Nursery Manager, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Hilary's School is a non-selective independent day school for girls aged two to eleven years and boys aged two to seven. It was founded in 1927 and is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. The school places strong emphasis on the development of traditional moral values based on a Christian ethos. It aims to equip pupils with the qualities and skills required in school and beyond within a happy, nurturing environment
- 1.2 The school is situated in the heart of Godalming, close to the surrounding countryside. The original Victorian house has been extended to provide additional accommodation as the school has grown. The school grounds provide a range of environments for outdoor studies including the Young Explorers' trail in the woodland area. Pupils are drawn from Godalming and the surrounding area, with parents from a variety of business and professional backgrounds. A small proportion of children represent ethnic minorities.
- 1.3 The EYFS setting is housed in its own specialist area of the school building. Each classroom has direct access to its own play and outdoor learning area. Children in the EYFS share the facilities of the main school including the dining room, hall and the large indoor space in the Hiorns Centre.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, a new head of the school has been appointed. Changes to the leadership structure of the setting include the appointment of a new head of the EYFS to lead the team of managers responsible for each section. Two year progress checks have been introduced.
- 1.5 A total of 89 children are in the EYFS, of whom 19 are under the age of three. Boys and girls attend on a sessional basis until they enter Reception in the September following their fourth birthday. Twenty-four children attend full-time in Reception. The setting currently supports five children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and eight for whom English is an additional language (EAL). No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery(2-3)
Kindergarten	Nursery(3-4)
Reception	Reception (4-5)

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with statutory requirements

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

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Develop consistency in systems of tracking individual progress against the Early Learning Goals to suitably inform all transitions to the next stage of learning.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

3.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 3.1 The setting makes outstanding provision for the children who attend. Effective planning of educational programmes ensures that all children reach age appropriate levels of development in the prime and specific areas of learning. There is specialist teaching in ballet and French for children in Reception.
- 3.2 The good balance of adult-led and child-initiated tasks enables children to make independent choices in their learning from the topic based continuous provision. Direct access to exciting and stimulating outdoor learning areas facilitates free flow of activities and fosters imaginative play and active exploration, for example children in Reception produced a dramatic performance of the Nativity in the outdoor stable. Open questioning by staff develops critical thinking skills. Older children were fascinated by watching a melting block of ice and were able to suggest what might happen if they took it outside.
- 3.3 Children under the age of three make excellent progress in personal and emotional development. Gentle encouragement from the staff develops their growing self-confidence and language skills. They participate enthusiastically in their daily weather reporting and enjoy singing games.
- 3.4 Staff apply their strong awareness of each child's capabilities to plan appropriate levels of individual challenge. Focused observations ensure that, within each age group, progression against the early learning goals is accurately mapped. However, systems adopted for tracking pupil progress are not consistent across the setting and do not effectively inform transitions to the next stage of learning.
- 3.5 In their almost unanimously positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and in conversation with inspectors, parents expressed their strong support for the setting. They especially appreciate the regular feedback on their children's progress and the exceptional care taken by adults to help their children settle in quickly. Parents and key persons share the recording of the children's activities, providing a valuable link between home and school.

3.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 3.6 Provision for children's well-being is outstanding. Caring and committed staff help all children, including those who need additional support, to form appropriate bonds and secure emotional attachments with their key person and other staff.
- 3.7 The staff model their clear expectations for good behaviour, ensuring that the youngest children respect and care for one another and play happily together. Generous staffing ensures that the children know that they always have an adult to turn to.
- 3.8 Outdoor equipment provides challenging opportunities to develop gross motor skills and for taking controlled risks. Exciting creative activities promote acquisition of fine motor skills.

- 3.9 Staff promote self-help skills, for example encouraging children to find and put on their own coats. From an early age, they are taught to manage their own personal hygiene and understand the importance of exercise and healthy eating. Older children make independent choices of food at lunchtime and can carry their own trays. Water is freely available for younger children and older children can access their own water bottles at any time.
- 3.10 Excellent social programmes within the setting ensure that children are emotionally well-prepared for their transitions. However assessment systems are not planned consistently to inform the next stage of learning.

3.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 3.11 The leadership and management of the early years provision is outstanding. The governors provide highly effective oversight of the provision in the EYFS, implementing safeguarding and welfare requirements robustly and ensuring that they are fully briefed on developments within the setting by the dedicated EYFS governor.
- 3.12 Stringent adherence to health and safety requirements and comprehensive risk assessments ensure that children are cared for in a safe environment, for example daily checks are carried out on the safety of the outside areas. Careful checks ensure that staffing ratios are correctly maintained.
- 3.13 Highly effective self-evaluation informs comprehensive development planning incorporating staff suggestions for ongoing improvement and wider strategic planning for future development. Inclusion in local moderation events and visits to other settings provide an opportunity to share best practice and evaluate the success of the setting.
- 3.14 Regular supervision sessions enable staff to discuss any concerns about their key children. The well-established system for staff appraisal identifies individual needs for continued professional development, supported by whole school training days.
- 3.15 Strong partnerships with outside agencies ensure that children's individual needs are fully met.

3.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 3.16 The overall quality and standards of the EYFS are outstanding. Children make excellent progress relative to their ability and needs. Progress checks at the age of two demonstrate that children achieve very well, with most achieving or exceeding the early learning goals by the end of Reception.
- 3.17 Younger children answer the register confidently and can count how many children are present. They demonstrate good manual dexterity and observational skills when using the touch screen to match patterns in a computer game. Older children can sort and match items with numbers and enjoy learning to record their observations. On a Christmas walk, they noted their findings in writing or in pictures. In Reception, children can use simple punctuation and can make simple, written recordings of events. They confidently identify three dimensional shapes and are working with numbers up to twenty.

- 3.18 The children's personal and emotional behaviour is exemplary. Reception children learn to take their turn to use the computer by using a timer and even the youngest children respond quickly to the music signalling tidy up time.
- 3.19 Caring staff ensure that safeguarding and welfare procedures are strictly followed and as a result children feel safe and secure at all times.
- 3.20 Since the last inspection, the organisation of the EYFS has been restructured to include the appointment of a head of the EYFS, access to outside areas have been improved to facilitate free flow of activities and two year checks have been introduced. The comprehensive development plan reflects the setting's commitment to continuous improvement.