



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HOPELANDS PREPARATORY SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Hopelands Preparatory School

Full Name of School	Hopelands Preparatory School		
DfE Number	916/6051		
Registered Charity Number	2598202		
Address	Hopelands School 38 Regent Street Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 2AD		
Telephone Number	01453 822164		
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Email Address	enquiries@hopelands.org.uk		
Head	Mrs Sheila Bradburn		
Chair of Governors	Mr Richard James		
Age Range	3 to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	75		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (25 boys; 50 girls;)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 56
	3-5 (EYFS):	19	11-18: 0
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	75	Capacity for flexi-boarding: N/A
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Nina Prout		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	24 May 2011 to 25 May 2011		
	22 June 2011 to 24 June 2011		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The school had an accreditation inspection in May 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government 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*. 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 Standards 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 Hopelands Preparatory School is a day school which educates boys and girls aged between three and eleven. It was founded in 1954 on its present site, based in a Victorian house with modern additions, on the edge of the town of Stonehouse. It was registered as a company limited by guarantee in 1991, and became a charitable trust with a board of governors in 1992. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is an integral part of the school. The school aims to provide an education that enables pupils to achieve their academic potential in a caring environment with strong family values.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection there were 75 pupils on roll, 50 girls and 25 boys, 19 of whom were in the EYFS. The overall ability profile of the school is above the national average. Most pupils have an ability profile that is at least above average ability, with a significant proportion having an ability which is far above the national average. The majority of pupils come from professional families of British origin, who are highly supportive of their children's education. The school has identified ten pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). No pupil has a statement of special educational need.
- 1.3 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Fox cubs Nursery	Nursery
Fox cubs Reception	Reception

Preparatory Department

School	NC name
IN	Years 1 & 2
IIB	Years 3 & 4
IIC	Year 5
IVB	Year 6

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 From the EYFS, the pupils' overall achievement is excellent. They are extremely well educated in line with the school's aims. They are prepared thoroughly for the next stage of their education. Each year most pupils gain places to their first choice of senior school and many achieve places in highly competitive entry to grammar schools. In relation to their ability pupils of all abilities achieve high standards and make excellent progress. The quality of the pupils' presentation in their books is good, but this is not evident consistently, and some books do not always demonstrate that pupils take a real pride in their written work. The pupils' skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) are developing well, but they do not yet match the high standards achieved in other subjects. The pupils' success is strongly supported by their positive, mature attitudes to learning, and the outstanding quality of teaching that they receive. The quality of marking lacks consistency. The excellent curriculum has a beneficial impact on the pupils' achievement and they enjoy access to an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is outstanding. The core values of the school are reflected across the whole community, and the caring, family environment develops pupils who become mature, confident yet considerate and perceptive individuals. The pupils' experiences are underpinned by the excellent systems for pastoral care. Arrangements for welfare, health and safety work well so that pupils feel valued, with relationships across the school based on mutual respect. In their responses to questionnaires, the pupils and parents appreciated all aspects of the school. Pupils felt that any concerns that they had would be dealt with quickly and appropriately. Parents particularly valued the worthwhile values promoted by the school, and the ease of communication with the staff and managers. Inspectors support these views.
- 2.3 The governance of the school and the management and leadership are outstanding. Governors have ensured that the school is extremely successful in meeting its aims. They are effective in exercising a monitoring role which gives challenge and support to the school's leadership, and they are aware of their legal responsibilities. Strong, yet approachable leadership has a clear vision for the development of the school. This view is shared by all staff who work efficiently as a team for the good of the pupils. The simple yet effective management structure is greatly enhanced by the close working relationship between the academic and administrative teams. Whole school development planning is clear. In the EYFS, the action plans have appropriately identified that resources and their storage need improvement.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school was required to:
- ensure that the training for paediatric first aiders is kept up-to-date.
- 2.6 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified the above shortcoming, as noted in the text of the report.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure a greater level of consistency in the quality of marking and the pupils' presentation of their work.
 2. Improve the use of ICT across all areas of the curriculum.
 3. In the EYFS, ensure that a high priority continues to be given to implementing the setting's action plan, particularly in relation to resources and storage.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 From the EYFS the pupils' overall achievement is excellent. They are extremely well educated in line with the school's aims.
- 3.2 The pupils have excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across almost all areas of the curriculum. Their numeracy and writing skills are strong. They read well, are generally articulate and confident in speaking, and listen carefully. The quality of the pupils' presentation in their books is good, but this is not evident consistently, and some books do not always demonstrate that pupils take a real pride in their written work. Pupils think logically. They are efficient at applying their mathematical skills and their investigative skills are excellent. The pupils' creativity and physical skills are particular strengths. They sing with confidence and achieve high standards in sport, art, drama and dance. Excellent quality art and design and technology work on display enhances the environment. The pupils' skills in using ICT are developing well, but they do not yet match the high standards achieved in other subjects. Each year most pupils gain places to their first choice of senior school; many gain places in highly competitive entry to grammar schools.
- 3.3 Individuals and teams have been extremely successful in cross-country running, with a number of pupils representing the county. For three years, the school has won the small schools' cross-country running competition at Tewksbury, and during the week of the inspection they gained first place in the athletics competition. Pupils have gained awards in drama at the Cheltenham Festival, and the choir performed as part of the national 'Young Voices' project.
- 3.4 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average. In relation to their varied levels of ability, on the evidence available from discussions with the pupils, their work and lessons observed, it is judged to be excellent. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils with LDD progress well as demonstrated in the improvement in their writing and mathematical understanding. The most able pupils make extremely good progress and relish their additional challenges.
- 3.5 The pupils' attitudes to their learning are excellent. They are enthusiastic in lessons, co-operating extremely well in the compact classrooms. A particular strength is the way in which pupils adapt their approach to their work to match the requirements of the different subjects; to harness the energy required for sport or the considered thought necessary for written work. They research and work independently in project work undertaken in subjects including geography and science.

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

- 3.6 The excellent curriculum has a beneficial impact on the pupils' achievement. It nourishes all aspects of their personal development and strongly supports the school's aims. It is well balanced and sufficiently broad to give pupils of all ages and abilities experiences in a wide range of activities and subjects which prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education. The core of English, science and mathematics are covered extensively, preparing pupils thoroughly for competitive entry to senior school. Their linguistic skills benefit from learning French from specialists. A particular emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' creativity. From Year 3, they benefit from dance, music and drama lessons. Within the physical education (PE) curriculum, pupils are given as wide a variety of opportunities as possible. Their personal development is enriched by the excellent personal, health and social education (PHSE) programme. This is relevant to the pupils' needs, and for Year 6 it includes post-examination preparation for senior school. The pupils' academic development is enhanced by the small classes and efficient use of specialist teachers, strongly supported by experienced teaching assistants. The pupils' experiences are further enriched by an extensive range of subject-linked visits.
- 3.7 The pupils value the excellent range of extra-curricular activities. In interviews, they felt that they had plenty of choice to suit their tastes and talents. Many activities help to develop the pupils' sense of service, and an understanding of the local community. They have visited the local church and Stroud courthouse. Pupils regularly undertake a joint production with a local school for pupils with special educational needs, and the choir and drama groups perform for senior citizens. A particular strength is the pupils' awareness of global issues, supported through internet links with their peers in schools abroad such as South Korea, and an annual whole school focus on a particular foreign country. The residential activity holiday for Years 5 and 6 fosters their independence and spirit of adventure.
- 3.8 The systems for identifying and supporting pupils who need extra help or those who would benefit from additional challenge in their work are excellent. Pupils have individual action plans which are used most efficiently by teachers when planning lessons. Appropriate activities are provided and pupils are supported sensitively by teaching assistants when necessary. The most able pupils benefit from additional activities and interesting challenges in lessons, as well as specific enrichment in mathematics, to ensure that they can achieve at the highest level.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.9 The overall quality of teaching is outstanding and reflects the school's aims to enable pupils to achieve their academic potential and enjoy their learning. Teaching is extremely sensitive to the pupils' varying needs and abilities, and demonstrates great care to select tasks and activities to suit these needs. A variety of teaching methods is used imaginatively; these take account of the different ways that pupils learn. This can include the creative use of the outdoor learning environment, research using live specimens, exciting dance routines, the practical use of French and mathematical challenges relevant to the pupils' lives. A particular strength is the use of targeted questions in appropriate language to match the pupils' individual abilities. Pupils benefit from the enthusiasm and knowledge of their teachers, and the way that they make learning enjoyable. All teaching uses praise and encouragement well to support individuals. Pupils felt that they could ask for help and knew that they would receive it. Teaching has high expectations, sets a brisk pace and encourages pupils to think for themselves. ICT is used well in many lessons, although at times the teaching lacks confidence in exploiting it fully for the benefit of pupils. Lessons are planned meticulously, and use the good resources efficiently. Using lively displays which are informative and demonstrate that the pupils' work is valued; teachers have made classrooms interesting learning environments.
- 3.10 Thorough assessment systems, which are easily accessible to staff, have been developed to provide a detailed understanding of each pupil's progress. This information is used carefully by teachers when planning lessons. Managers use the information from assessment to track individual pupil's progress and attainment meticulously, and to review their overall progress against national norms. Target setting is used frequently to assist pupils so that they know how they can improve their work. All pupils' work is marked, but the quality of marking varies. Much is excellent with constructive comment and guidance for pupils. A small amount is limited in scope, and comments made to pupils are not followed up consistently.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is outstanding. The core values of the school are reflected across the whole community, and the caring, family environment develops pupils who become mature, confident yet considerate and perceptive individuals. Pupils of all ages, beginning in the EYFS, are well-behaved and courteous.
- 4.2 The pupils' spiritual development is strong. Their understanding of the non-material world is nurtured within the curriculum in art, dance and music, and in assemblies where pupils sing hymns and respond with conviction to the prayers and issues raised. On a visit to the local church, pupils demonstrated sensitivity to the nature of the sacred place. They show respect to each other and their teachers, and their sense of self-worth is greatly enhanced by the celebration of their successes throughout the school community.
- 4.3 The pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and sense of fairness. This is strongly supported by the strong role models demonstrated by the teachers which is reflected in the atmosphere of mutual trust and respect that pervades the school community. The pupils have an awareness of the needs of others and value their opportunities to fund raise for a variety of charities.
- 4.4 The pupils are well developed socially. They enjoy fulfilling formal responsibilities as house captains or as members of the school council. This is an effective and open body which considers issues that are of concern to the community and makes sensible suggestions for their resolution. They are beginning to have an understanding of public institutions. The house system gives pupils opportunities to work together across the age range. A natural culture of friendship exists between pupils of all ages which is apparent within the classroom and at playtime.
- 4.5 The pupils develop a strong sense of their own and other's cultures. They are aware of European and British traditions through the curriculum, taking part in local arts festivals, creating their own newspaper and studying current events including the Royal Wedding. Their understanding of other cultures is greatly enhanced by the annual focus on a foreign country, currently India, which gives pupils a detailed understanding of all aspects of its customs.

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

- 4.6 The school's arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. They fulfil the school's aims to provide a family environment in which pupils can flourish. The systems for pastoral care work extremely well. Staff provide clear and effective guidance for their pupils whose individual needs are carefully considered. Pupils benefit from the support provided by class teachers. In this family atmosphere, all staff share in the care of each and every pupil. The anti-bullying policy and behaviour policies are clear and work well. A strong emphasis is placed on listening to the pupils, so that if there are any difficulties, the school is swift to act. In interviews, pupils stated that they felt safe and secure in the school. They know that they can turn to any teacher for help if they have concerns, and that they will be dealt with appropriately. Pupils understand the system for rewards and sanctions and feel that it is fair. Detailed records for the pupils' academic and pastoral care are kept. Concerns about individual pupils are regularly discussed by staff and managers. Relationships across the school are excellent and parents are appreciative of the pastoral support given to their children.
- 4.7 Efficient systems, underpinned by proper documentation, are in place to ensure the health and safety of the school community. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are in place and regularly reviewed. A good system is in place for reviewing accident records to improve on any areas that are presenting problems. The policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils are appropriate, work well, and staff have received the necessary training. All school trips are carefully planned and the systems for ensuring the pupils' safety when walking to the playing field are well thought out and effective. Arrangements for the care of sick pupils are good, and the school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for those with special educational needs or disabilities. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle through a range of physical activities, and lunches provided at the school are nutritious. Admission and attendance registers are maintained and stored correctly.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 The governance of the school is outstanding. It has ensured that the school is extremely successful in meeting its aims. The governors, many of whom are current or past parents, are extremely committed to the school. They have a good spread of skills to support the school. Governors have ensured that prudent financial planning has enabled the school to make appropriate investment in staff, resources and accommodation in order to maintain high educational standards.

5.2 The governors have an excellent understanding of the education that they wish to provide for the pupils. They are effective in exercising a monitoring role which gives challenge and support to the school's leadership. They are kept extremely well-informed about the work of the school through regular reports at their formal meetings, and frequent informal visits and communication. The well-maintained premises, although compact, have been carefully developed to give as much flexibility as possible to support the curriculum and the pupils' education. Development plans are clear and informative, and significant focus is given to the imaginative future development of the school site.

5.3 The governors maintain effective oversight of all aspects of welfare health and safety, and are aware of their legal responsibilities. A governor takes a specific interest in child protection matters, and the governors have reviewed the policy and procedures for safeguarding pupils. Recruitment systems are thorough.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

5.4 The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. Strong, yet approachable leadership has enabled the school to achieve its aims. A simple management structure provides excellent support for the school. This is greatly enhanced by the close working relationship between the academic and administrative teams. While some monitoring of pupils' work has taken place, this has not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the standard of marking and presentation of pupils' work is of a consistent standard. Management has ensured that policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils work well, and that staff have the appropriate training.

5.5 Senior leaders have a clear vision for the development of the school, to ensure that pupils achieve well and become confident individuals, eager to start the next stage of their education. Regular meetings and efficient communication are in place to ensure that all staff, many of whom are part-time, share this vision, that they are included in planning for the future, and work efficiently as a team for the good of the pupils. General policies have a strong, caring thread, reflecting the school's aims. Whole school development planning is clear, appropriately underpinned by subject action plans provided by efficient co-ordinators.

5.6 Staff development is given a high priority. A rigorous appraisal system is underpinned by regular and frequent lesson observations by senior managers. This is linked to staff training as appropriate. Induction procedures for new staff are efficient, and they value the positive support that they receive. Thorough systems are in place to check the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers, and the central register is correct and properly maintained.

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

- 5.7 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is outstanding. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed overwhelming satisfaction with all aspects of the education provided for their pupils. They particularly value the way that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes, the provision of extra-curricular activities, the availability of information, and ease of communication with the quick responses they received on all matters. The inspection evidence supports these positive views.
- 5.8 The school actively promotes the small, family environment in which parents are welcomed. They have plenty of opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children at a formal level with regular parents' evenings. Informally, parents attend class and school events and share in learning situations such as speaking French during a café style breakfast. Efficient email contact ensures easy contact can be maintained between school and home, and an active Friends' Association strengthens these links.
- 5.9 The provision of necessary information to parents is excellent. Comprehensive details are provided on the website and in parent packs, so that parents are well aware of social, pastoral and educational matters. They received excellent end-of-year reports which are perceptive, detailed and specific to each child with clear targets for improvement. Governors hold an annual meeting with parents to keep them abreast of school development. The school takes great care to assist parents in their choice of senior school for their children so that they can continue to be successful individuals. The complaints procedure is clear and conforms to regulatory guidance. It has not been invoked in the last year.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding. It is a nurturing and caring environment where high priority is given to meeting the needs of each child. Achievement in all areas of learning and development is consistently high. Effective safeguarding procedures are in place. A proactive and reflective approach exists for continued improvement. Staff and senior management share a commitment to consolidate strengths and address areas for development through a detailed action plan.

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

6.2 The leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. Records, policies and procedures necessary for efficient management, for the promotion of equality and the elimination of discrimination, and for safeguarding the children are in place. However, the requirement to ensure that staff paediatric first aid training is up-to-date was not met at the time of the initial visit, but had been achieved by the final visit. Excellent relationships exist with parents, who have a high regard for the setting. They have access to a wide range of opportunities to be involved in their child's progress, which impacts positively on children's learning and well-being. Strong links are in place with external agencies. Staff are well qualified and deployed effectively. High quality self-evaluation provides an excellent basis for improvement. Children are listened to and their opinions are used to improve the provision. Staff use the satisfactory resources most creatively.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. High quality curriculum planning is appropriate to the needs of each child. Staff work together effectively and use observation and assessment efficiently to guide practice. The balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities is excellent, with a high priority given to learning through play, both in and outdoors. Staff use the available space in the setting creatively. Children are given daily opportunities to develop their thinking, imagination and creativity, and to talk about what they have done. Resources are satisfactory, but their storage is not very efficient. These have been identified as matters for improvement in the action plan. Staff promote the health and welfare of children effectively through appropriate routines, and by modelling good practice to encourage independence. Robust and rigorous risk assessments ensure the provision is suitable and safe.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for children are outstanding. They make substantial progress from a wide range of starting points, so that by the end of Reception most achieve high standards. They are articulate, independent, creative and enthusiastic children who are confident to make choices, experiment, explore and evaluate learning. Children can sort by length and subtract through practical application. They can write for a purpose and enjoy listening to, and re-telling stories. Excellent relationships exist between staff and children, consequently children feel safe and confident. Children take the lead in show and tell sessions, and are eager to share their achievements. They willingly take on responsibilities within the classroom. Children understand how to stay safe, know the importance of personal hygiene and are aware of the value of exercise. They behave well and understand the importance of teamwork through working collaboratively. Pupils are well prepared for transfer to Year 1.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors reviewed 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

Lady Fiona Mynors

Reporting Inspector

Mr Paul Moss

Principal, ISA school

Mrs Jane Short

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector