



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

RIDDLESWORTH HALL SCHOOL STANDARD INSPECTION

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Riddlesworth Hall School

Full Name of School	Riddlesworth Hall School		
DfE Number	926/8600		
EYFS Number	EY296492		
Registered Charity Number	N/A		
Address	Riddlesworth Hall Preparatory School Diss Norfolk IP22 2TA		
Telephone Number	01953 681246		
Fax Number	01953 688124		
Email Address	rhps@riddlesworthhall.com		
Headmaster	Mr Paul Cochrane		
Principal and Proprietor	Col Keith Boulter		
Age Range	2 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	110		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (54 boys; 56 girls)		
Numbers by Age	2-4 (EYFS):	12	5-11: 74
	4-5 (EYFS):	6	11-13: 18
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	91	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 30
Number of Boarders	Total:	19	
	Full:	16	Weekly: 3
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Dominique Goodin		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	12 Jan 2011 to 13 Jan 2011		
	07 Feb 2011 to 09 Feb 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 previous ISI inspection was in January and February 2007.

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 boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in December 2008 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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 Riddlesworth Hall School was founded in 1946 as a preparatory boarding and day school for girls up to the age of thirteen and for day boys up to the age of eight. The school's Nursery, for children from the age of two, opened in 1994. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Pre-Prep (Years 1 and 2) now occupy their own buildings in the courtyard of the school. The Prep and boarding accommodation are situated in the school itself and in its associated buildings, all in grounds covering 30 acres. The school became proprietorial in 2000, the current proprietor being also the school principal and major shareholder of Riddlesworth Hall Preparatory School Limited. In 2007, on the arrival of the new headmaster, the school became fully co-educational. The day-to-day running of the school's education and its administration, maintenance and support functions are the responsibilities of the headmaster and his wife, supported by other senior teaching staff and by the joint bursar of the principal's two preparatory schools.
- 1.2 The present roll numbers 110, of whom 54 pupils are boys and 56 are girls. Nineteen pupils between the ages of eight and thirteen board; sixteen of these board full-time and three are weekly boarders. In addition, older day pupils often take advantage of the school's capacity to accommodate occasional boarding. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds within the local area and from service families at home and abroad. Pupils also include among their number those from overseas, particularly the Far East, where the school has a close relationship with a school in Thailand, and a number of pupils are from Spain, Italy and China.
- 1.3 The school aims to create a stimulating and happy environment in which all pupils can reach their full potential both personally and academically, whilst offering a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to each pupil's needs. It seeks to foster self-respect, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for others in a caring community where pupils are supported and support each other. It sets out to equip pupils with the skills and understanding to fit into an increasingly complex multi-cultural society, and to give them an eagerness to continue learning throughout their lives. The school encourages respect for the environment and promotes a close partnership with parents, neighbouring schools and the local community.
- 1.4 Pupils' ability profile, measured by standardised verbal, non-verbal and quantitative reasoning tests, is a little above the national average. The range of ability is quite wide, although most pupils are of average or above average ability. Currently, twenty-eight pupils are on the school's list of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and nineteen receive extra support; three pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Thirteen pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and one currently needs extra language support.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The overall quality of pupils' achievement is good. Outcomes in the EYFS are outstanding. In the main school, pupils' attainment relative to their ability is good across a broad and well-chosen curriculum. They are successful in gaining places and scholarships to their chosen senior schools. They do well in drama and music, and in many of their sports and activities. The most able and those with LDD make good progress and gain success. The quality of pupils' learning is good and their attitudes to their work and activities are, with only few exceptions, positive and enthusiastic; this is the result of much good teaching, combined with the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in some subjects. The organisation and provision of learning support are particularly strong, although time for the head of learning support to engage with classroom teaching and in staff training is limited.
- 2.2 Throughout the school, pupils' personal development is outstanding, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The very high standard of pastoral care ensures a happy and secure environment, where pupils quickly grow in confidence, make friends and become strongly committed to their school. They are very supportive of each other, behave well and are keen to take on responsibility at their level in the school. Day pupils and boarders are very well integrated, the latter benefiting from an excellent boarding experience which also helps to support the ethos and family atmosphere of the whole school. Some boarding accommodation remains in need of refurbishment.
- 2.3 The school is well led, both at proprietorial and senior management level, and effectively managed, so that teachers are supported in their work, and succeeds in its aim to enable all pupils to reach their academic and personal potential. Pupils' welfare, including their safeguarding, and health and safety, is assured. Regulatory requirements are fully met and all staff are appropriately vetted for their suitability to work with children. However, in all areas of the school, staffing levels are tight. Nonetheless, since the last inspection, recommendations to improve marking and monitoring of pupils' work, to instigate effective appraisal and training, to support more the most able pupils, and to focus more on medium- and long-term planning have all been met or at least a start has been made. Parents and pupils were overwhelmingly positive in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, particularly about the quality and range of the curriculum, the high level of pastoral care and the very positive attitudes the school encourages. Parents show considerable goodwill and a high level of support for the school. Close contact is maintained with parents, and the school strongly encourages their involvement. However, the present website is limited as a means of communication between home and school.

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.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Consider ways to enable staff, both in the EYFS and in the main school, to receive more training, including in the use of ICT and teaching approaches for pupils with LDD, and to have time for peer review and the sharing of good practice.
 2. Develop an overall strategic plan, through collaboration between senior management and the principal.
 3. Extend and improve the website, as a more effective means of communication with parents and others.
 4. When funds are available, complete the refurbishment of the school's boarding accommodation and the necessary work to incorporate the woodland garden and its access in the EYFS secure area.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils reach good standards in their learning, attitudes and skills. They are well educated, and the school fulfils its aim for them to reach their full potential and develop an enthusiasm for learning.
- 3.2 Pupils are articulate and express themselves with confidence in both writing and speech, and creatively through art and music. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in at least one of the school's drama productions each year. Pupils have well-developed numeracy skills for their age and ability which they use across the curriculum, for example with graphs and statistics in science, and which they apply to extension problems in mathematics. They show good skills in their use of ICT, both in specific lessons and in some subjects across the curriculum, as for example in a design exercise in technology. They have good research skills, and increasingly learn to work independently as they move up the school and to argue a position with confidence; by Year 8, analytical and debating skills are strong.
- 3.3 Pupils are successful in gaining entry to their first choice of senior school, with some awarded scholarships each year. They are also highly successful in drama and music examinations as well as in individual and team sports, some at national level; individuals have recently reached finals in netball, swimming, athletics and riding. The choir performs to a high standard within school, locally and further afield, for example at cathedrals and, later this year, at a planned event in London.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment is judged to be above national age related expectations from their written work, and work in class from an appropriately demanding curriculum, and from their success in entrance and scholarship examinations for senior schools. Results in nationally standardised tests confirm that pupils make good progress over time in relation to their abilities, including those for whom English is an additional language and pupils with LDD or statements of SEN. All pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively, achieving well in lessons and completing their written work with care and in detail.
- 3.5 The pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly excellent. They listen attentively, and participate with enthusiasm and interest. They work well in co-operation with one another, and also individually. Pupils enjoy the variety of subjects offered, and are generally well behaved and co-operative. They concentrate and persevere in tasks set, and display a strong desire to learn.

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

- 3.6 The excellent curriculum in both the Pre-Prep and the Prep is broad and well balanced. It offers an extremely wide range of opportunities through its extended activities, through a variety of educational visits for all age groups, and through music, and speech and drama, in which all participate. At each stage the curriculum successfully meets the needs of the pupils, who largely enjoy their lessons and are enthusiastic about their work. Since the last inspection, the overall continuity of the curriculum and the links between subjects have been improved. The ICT provision is greatly improved, with interactive whiteboards and projectors in most classrooms, and more extensive, and better focused, use of ICT to support teaching and learning in many classes. However, the school is aware that continued training and development are needed in this area. The academic curriculum is further enhanced by a varied programme of activities.
- 3.7 The school places emphasis on literacy and numeracy in the lower years but science, French, music and ICT are all taught from Reception upwards. The syllabus for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is wide ranging. PSHE lessons are much appreciated by pupils, as are those times when the subject is taught through other lessons, for example in religious studies (RS), where stories from the Bible are carefully and imaginatively related to pupils' own lives and experience, or in 'circle time' in Years 1 and 2.
- 3.8 Planning of the curriculum, both short- and long-term, is well undertaken and carefully set out in subject guides. As well as establishing realistic aims for development in each subject, plans ensure appropriate progression across different years in the school as well as suggesting links and relationships with other subjects, often including ICT. They also cover curriculum extension outside the classroom, through visits and other activities.
- 3.9 The provision for pupils with LDD and those with statements of SEN is excellent, including thorough identification of their needs and carefully planned individual programmes, with specialist one-to-one help where appropriate. The school liaises with the local authority over those with statements of SEN. However, with nineteen of the twenty-eight pupils on the school's learning support list receiving extra one-to-one lessons, the head of learning support has insufficient time for direct contact with classroom teaching or to contribute to the support of other pupils, for example those with EAL or with particular talents and abilities. Meanwhile, help is available when needed for the occasional pupil with EAL requiring extra support. Similarly, the most able and talented pupils are identified by the school, and usually supported with extra challenge in the classroom or in their particular area of ability.
- 3.10 The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent. While some sports, such as the very popular ju-jitsu, are run by outside coaches, many activities are provided by the enthusiastic and committed staff. As well as a good range of sports, crafts, board games, French, choir and 'puzzle club' are on offer. In addition, an extensive range of outdoor activities, including orienteering competitions and expeditions to Derbyshire, North Wales and Scotland, is provided. These activities are greatly appreciated by both pupils and parents, and provide opportunities for a wide variety of experiences, skills and team work.
- 3.11 The school has wide links in the local community and further afield. As well as regular educational trips for all ages, local community involvement for pupils and

staff includes work with local charities, choir visits to churches and care homes, activities with other schools – in particular the preparatory school under the same ownership - and participation in local competitions such as a county music festival, and drama and public speaking competitions. Good links are established with three local churches, one of which provides the chaplain to the school. Overseas, there have been trips to France and the school has a very productive cultural link with a school in Thailand and another in Spain. The school has charitable links overseas, sponsoring the education of a child in South Africa and one in Paraguay, as well as 'pen pal' arrangements with a school in France.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.12 Most teaching is good and some is excellent, but occasionally a lesson is unsatisfactory, lacking discipline and a sense of purpose. Teachers are well qualified, are experienced and know their pupils very well.
- 3.13 Lessons are well planned; for example in mathematics, a well-chosen variety of written and oral tasks helps pupils to concentrate throughout the duration. A good range of teaching methods is used, including group and individual work, and efficient use is made of resources. Teachers provide different tasks and lesson content for groups of varying ability within the class when needed, and appropriate extension work for the most able pupils. However, pupils are not always encouraged to use the well-stocked library and, although a good resource, the ICT room is underused in some teaching to support pupils' work in other subjects.
- 3.14 Effective lessons show pace and challenge, motivate the pupils and encourage good behaviour; for example, the imaginative use of resources such as a dark tunnel, torch and various glitter materials intrigued Year 1 in a science lesson on the reflective properties of different materials. Well-focused questioning was used to ensure that every pupil in class understood the lesson. In another class, a well-planned and managed project to design and make hats for an occasion enabled pupils of very different abilities to improve their skills and achieve good results. Just occasionally, a lack of pace and unambitious aims for the lesson lead to restlessness and failing interest. Particularly in the older years, teachers consciously encourage pupils to learn independently, for example on tasks requiring research and analysis.
- 3.15 The school uses a range of assessments, including regular internal examinations and, each year, a number of nationally standardised tests in verbal, non-verbal and quantitative reasoning, spelling and reading. Teachers and senior management therefore have good data on pupils' attainment and progress, in addition to their own close observation of pupils' written work and progress in the classroom. Increasingly, this information is being used by teachers to inform their expectations of pupils and to encourage them in their learning.
- 3.16 Marking of pupils' work is now consistently undertaken well. Marking is always thorough and follows the directions in the school's marking policy, which encourages dialogue with pupils and expects teachers to provide comments to show how pupils may correct and improve their work. Particular examples showed detailed explanations of possible improvement alongside words of praise, and a practice of ending a comment on a pupil's piece of work with a question to which a response was expected. In other cases, opportunities are taken to mark work with the pupil.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' personal development is outstanding, and is underpinned by both their strong relationships with staff and amongst the pupils themselves. Pupils are friendly, open, polite and caring, reflecting fully the school's aim to foster self-respect, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for others. In their pre-inspection questionnaire, pupils expressed their enjoyment of school, the support they receive from their teachers and the ease with which they make friends.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual awareness is very well developed. They feel valued as individuals and show high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. Their spiritual development is also evident in their response to the excellent range of art, music and drama experiences that are provided. Pupils are praised for their skills and successes, and show appreciation of others in awards assemblies. They reflect on a range of faiths in RS, and take part in meaningful worship in assemblies and in the estate church. Pupils also enjoy and greatly appreciate the school's beautiful setting and grounds.
- 4.3 Pupils show excellent moral awareness. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, and of fairness, which is strongly reinforced by the PSHE programme and by the school's rules and sanctions. They understand why rules are needed and are eager to accept responsibility, for example as prefects, librarians and form captains, and also within the boarding community. They respect the needs, interests and feelings of others and this is encouraged from an early age. In lessons observed, pupils considered issues of friendship and jealousy, and of bullying within a context of individual rights and responsibilities.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent social development. They are confident and outgoing, and polite and considerate to visitors. Pupils are aware that others may be less fortunate than they are, and are enthusiastic in their support for a range of charities, including the NSPCC, ChildLine and Macmillan Nurses. Older pupils relate well and are helpful to younger ones. These relationships are fostered through the house system, which brings pupils of different ages together for a variety of competitive events as well as at lunch, and in celebrating group and individual achievements. The opportunity to take part in the school's drama productions each term enables pupils of different ages to work together.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural awareness is strong. They learn about their own and other cultures in lessons and assemblies, and through friendships with pupils from overseas. They gain insight into western culture through music, drama and art, taking part in school productions, and on trips to concerts and the theatre. Their awareness and appreciation of other cultures are also enhanced through their support of children's education in South Africa and Paraguay. Residential trips abroad heighten their knowledge of Europe, and the study of other faiths and visits to places of worship help their understanding of cultural diversity in the world today.

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

- 4.6 The standards of pastoral care continue, as at the previous inspection, to be excellent. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, mutually respectful and caring. Almost all pupils said, both in discussion and in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, that they would readily turn to an adult in the school for help in case of need, and all acknowledged their teachers' support for their progress and learning. The school successfully creates a stimulating and happy environment and a community in which all pupils feel secure and valued. A Year 7 pupil commented that the school 'feels just like home, but without my mum'. A boarder from overseas said that Riddlesworth was his English home.
- 4.7 The key person in the EYFS, the form teacher in other year groups and the matrons in boarding provide the focus for pastoral care but, in this small school, staff know all the pupils well and combine to ensure a very high quality of care. Parents appreciate the close contact they can maintain with the teaching staff. The house system has a significant role for pupils within the wider school community, being a unit to which they feel loyalty and where they can enjoy team work and co-operation, as well as the opportunity for older pupils to help and encourage the younger ones. A good example is the inter-house drama competition, where houses put on a fifteen-minute performance involving all ages. All staff are responsible for encouraging high standards of behaviour and where necessary maintaining appropriate discipline.
- 4.8 The arrangements for pupils' welfare and their health and safety are now comprehensive and robust. Shortcomings noted at the previous inspection have been remedied, and the school now has a comprehensive set of appropriate policies, fully implemented and regularly reviewed. The procedures for promoting good behaviour are effective, and parents and pupils indicated that bullying, on the rare occasions when it occurs, is dealt with quickly and well. Safeguarding is a priority and all staff have regular training in child protection. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and the school has been prompt in meeting any recommendations following local fire officer visits. The health and safety committee is chaired by the bursar, and a health and safety professional works in the school on a regular basis. Risk assessments are very well carried out both within the school and for trips away. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained.
- 4.9 The provision for pupils who are ill or injured at school is appropriate, and the school regularly updates its plans to improve its access and education for pupils with disabilities. All staff have first aid training, including some in paediatric care. Pupils take plenty of exercise, in formal games and physical education as well as in playtimes during the day. Lunches are varied and nutritious, and pupils are conscious of the need for healthy eating.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.10 The excellent boarding experience plays a very valuable part in the education and personal development of those pupils who board. The boarding element also has an influence on the structure of the school, in terms of its weekly and daily programme. It also has a very positive effect on both the community and on relationships within the school as a whole. Boarding forms the basis for the family atmosphere of the school.
- 4.11 The boarders occupy two floors of the main house. As well as the full-time and weekly boarders, room is available for the large number of day pupils who take advantage of the opportunity to board occasionally, either following a school event or to meet home convenience, an experience they greatly enjoy and which helps to integrate the boarders with the day pupils in the school.
- 4.12 The boarders are very well cared for by the headmaster and his wife, acting as effective house parents, and supported by qualified matrons and GAP Year students. The boarding accommodation is generally good but still in need of some refurbishment; this, together with some re-planning of washing and toilet facilities, continues at the present time. All the boarders spoken to said that they enjoy boarding and feel that they benefit personally from the experience. Almost all said that the boarders get on well together, and they appreciate the range of activities and school facilities available to them during the week and at weekends. They also enjoy the regular trips and excursions organised for them.
- 4.13 The small number of recommendations from the last Ofsted report have been addressed or, in the case of the refurbishment, are in hand.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The school is well led, under the effective and firm governance of the proprietor and principal. He has direct control of financial matters, and so of investment in staff, accommodation and resources. Finances, and the maintenance and improvement of the hall and the estate are capably managed. The educational provision of the school is very well run, as is the day-to-day provision of catering, housekeeping and routine maintenance.
- 5.2 The principal has a very clear understanding of the workings of the school and its successes. Through direct involvement with the choir, in games coaching and with the outdoor activities, he is well placed to monitor the school's progress and is fully aware of parents' concerns and appreciation. The principal's good relationship with the headmaster facilitates his overall strong support, as well as challenge for the school's growth and improvement. Although useful planning for the curriculum, for the EYFS and for other aspects of the school is undertaken and reviewed regularly, no formal overall strategic planning has been carried out, linking proposed ways forward to achieve the school's mission and aims. It is not clear to the staff and the parents how a number of projects and initiatives, useful in themselves, combine to meet the long-term goals for the school, or how the implementation of their own plans will contribute to those goals.
- 5.3 The principal fully discharges his responsibility for child protection, welfare, and health and safety throughout the school. Policies and implementation of procedures are reviewed regularly and the required staff training provided.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Leadership is effective and energetic, and management is good at all levels, so that the school is well on the way to achieving its aims. Management has greater depth than at the previous inspection and, in particular, the arrangements for appraisal and training have improved. The headmaster's leadership is supported in the first instance by the deputy head, with responsibility for the curriculum and day-to-day staff matters, the senior mistress, with responsibility for the house system, and the EYFS co-ordinator. The EYFS is particularly well run. Together, these staff form an effective senior management team that meets occasionally under the chairmanship of the principal but, in different combinations and more informally, with the headmaster on a weekly basis. The operational side of the school is also managed very effectively, by the bursar in financial, building and administrative matters, and by the headmaster's wife, well supported by the other administrative staff.
- 5.5 Helpful job descriptions exist for senior teachers, for form teachers, and for heads of department, who have an important role in developing their subject in the school. Meetings are held from time to time for teachers of a particular subject, providing an opportunity, amongst other things, to share good teaching practice. In this small school, much communication is informal but nonetheless effective. Staff meetings for communication and training, including in health and safety and child protection, are held regularly throughout the term.
- 5.6 Planning at subject level and in some other aspects of school life is undertaken well; for example, a comprehensive and detailed development plan has been completed

in the EYFS. However, this detailed planning is isolated without a strategic plan co-ordinating the whole and giving an indication of likely implementation.

- 5.7 Administration and day-to-day school management are good. The non-teaching, administrative and housekeeping staff offer loyal and effective support for the welfare of teachers and pupils. They are very much part of the Riddlesworth Hall family and are much appreciated for the work they do. Parents have a high regard for both the staff and management of the school. Communication with parents is good although the school's website is limited in this respect.
- 5.8 The teaching staff and the teaching assistants form a well-qualified, mutually supportive and experienced team, very strongly committed to the school and pupils. They work extremely hard; as well as supporting extra-curricular activities and sport, they are often involved at weekends with boarding. In some cases the workload of staff, though willingly taken on, is high. For example, there is now too little flexibility in staff timetables to encourage the take-up of training opportunities or to enable effective internal monitoring, peer review and the sharing of good practice to maintain and raise standards. A thorough and helpful induction programme is run for new members of staff, and a new formal appraisal system is recognising the good work undertaken by staff while seeking to support their professional development.
- 5.9 Recruitment procedures are robust for checking the suitability of staff to work with children, and all staff receive appropriate training for their roles in safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety.

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

- 5.10 The school maintains an increasingly strong and constructive relationship with parents, building on the excellent standard at the time of the last inspection. Links with parents are strong and many opportunities exist for parents to be involved in their children's education.
- 5.11 The responses of parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire were extremely positive. Parents of children in the EYFS and in Years 1 and 2 were full of praise for the introduction to education their children are receiving. In the rest of the school, parents praised particularly the range and content of the curriculum and excellent extra-curricular activities, as well as the quality of pastoral care together with the ethos and attitudes encouraged by the school. Further highlighted were the commitment of the headmaster and staff, and the happy family atmosphere established at the school. The only issues raised by a significant proportion of parents related to the structure of school governance and management but inspectors found that the current proprietorial arrangements meet the school's needs well.
- 5.12 Communication with parents is comprehensive, ranging from a detailed 'welcome' booklet to regular newsletters. A basic school website has been established and the school intends to use this increasingly to communicate with and inform parents. Parents receive detailed and helpful reports on their children's progress twice a year and parents meetings are held at least once a year. Effort and attainment marks are sent out each half term, and additional meetings have included the 'principal's forum' providing, for example, information and an opportunity for discussion about the curriculum.

- 5.13 A parents association has been formed to hold social events, to support the school and to provide occasional working parties in the school grounds. Parents are welcome at church services and at a number of assemblies, concerts and other events. Large numbers turn up to support their sons and daughters at matches. Contact with the school and with teachers is straightforward, both on a daily basis and, for example, at the weekly Friday tea for parents. Considerable support for the school exists amongst parents.
- 5.14 The school takes seriously any concerns expressed by parents. In their pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were all but unanimous in saying that their concerns were handled expediently and well. The school has an appropriate and comprehensive complaints procedure, well publicised and available to parents.

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 provision is outstanding. Children make significant progress in their learning and development within the happy and caring family atmosphere. Their individual needs are met through a broad range of activities based on the six areas of learning. Staff work together as a very successful team and identify areas to improve. Excellent partnerships between staff and parents ensure that children are provided for according to their interests and stage of development, and that the education on offer continues to improve and grow. Robust safeguarding procedures strongly promote children's welfare. Since the previous inspection, accurate records of attendance have been kept and drinking water has been made readily available for children. A stimulating woodland garden has been developed, and thorough assessment procedures have been successfully applied. The recently implemented appraisal system has established the process of self-evaluation.

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

6.2 Leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. The setting is run as a highly successful unit. The implementation of policies and procedures is meticulous. Children's welfare is of the utmost importance and thorough, ongoing risk assessment ensures that they are safe. Excellent team work and regular meetings result in an ambitious vision and a detailed development plan that supports continuous improvement, although opportunities for staff training are limited. Dedicated, conscientious, efficient and suitably qualified staff make excellent use of the attractive, stimulating and well-chosen resources in this creative environment. An outstanding relationship with parents ensures that they are fully involved in their children's learning. Highly effective links with the local authority and wider agencies add a further depth to the quality of education provided.

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

6.3 Provision is good overall, with many outstanding elements. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the children in their care and provide them with a good balance of challenging adult-led and child-initiated activities across each area of learning. Children have 'free flow' access to an outdoor courtyard area with a wide variety of stimulating resources that promote learning through play. However, the creative and imaginative woodland garden is not yet directly linked to the EYFS classrooms and so cannot be accessed spontaneously by the children. Children benefit from daily one-to-one teaching. Planning and assessment are thorough and those who need extra help are supported well. The behaviour policy is implemented fully, leading to a calm and happy atmosphere, which is conducive to learning. Provision for the welfare of all the children in the EYFS is exemplary, including those under the age of three.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children in the EYFS are outstanding. Achievement is high in relation to the children's ages and abilities, and they are beginning to develop valuable skills for the future. They are happy, independent learners. Rapid progress is made in phonological awareness, reading and calculation. Reception children can build simple words and write them independently. Nursery children use a computer mouse confidently. Children learn to share, take turns and make decisions. They are confident and articulate, and enjoy sharing their enthusiasm with adults. They listen well and learn to follow instructions. They respect each other and enjoy sharing their 'learning journeys'. Children are very well behaved and respond to the high expectations of the staff. They understand about keeping safe and are aware of the need to maintain good hygiene. They enjoy the many opportunities to increase their knowledge of the wider world.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 6.5 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

- 6.6 Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

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 proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding accommodation and 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

Mr Michael Higginbottom

Mr Jonathan Carroll

Mrs Bridget Forrest

Mrs Alison Edwards

Reporting Inspector

Headmaster, IAPS school

Early Years Lead Inspector

Head of Individual Learning, IAPS school