



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ST IVES SCHOOL

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St Ives School

Full Name of School	St Ives School
DfE Number	936/6231
EYFS Number	EY37483
Registered Charity Number	312080
Address	St Ives School Three Gates Lane Haslemere Surrey GU27 2ES
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Email Address	registrar@st-ives.surrey.sch.uk
Head	Mrs Kay Goldsworthy
Chairman of Governors	Mr Graham Harvey-Browne
Age Range	2 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	118
Gender of Pupils	Boys 2 to 4; Girls 2 to 11
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 10 5-11: 70 3-5 (EYFS): 38
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Lesley Whittle
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	16 Jun 2015 to 19 Jun 2015

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous full ISI inspection was in June 2010. The Early Years provision was last inspected in October 2012.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mr Timothy Holgate	Reporting Inspector
Ms Teresa Dunbar	Team Inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Miss Patricia Griffin	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Ives School was founded in 1911 and moved to its present location on an eight-acre site in Haslemere in 1965. It is a day school for girls, aged two to eleven, and boys are also accepted into the Nursery classes. The school has, for the last five years, worked closely with the nearby Haslemere Preparatory School for boys, sharing facilities and engaging in joint enterprises. In 2013, St Ives became part of a group of schools operated by the United Learning Trust, which now owns St Ives Haslemere Ltd. Directors of this latter body contain five appointees of the United Learning Trust, act as the school's board of governors and are the registered proprietors. A new head was appointed in September 2014.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a secure and happy environment in which children are encouraged to work and play with enthusiasm and commitment. It also sets out to maintain a tradition of academic excellence whilst offering the fullest possible range of experiences through a broad and balanced curriculum. It seeks to promote a spiritual and moral awareness in the pupils, based on strong family-orientated principles, and to ensure a friendly and supportive atmosphere in which pupils' individual abilities and potential are fully appreciated and nurtured. To this end, it aspires to promote at all times the qualities of integrity, kindness, charity and good manners.
- 1.3 The school currently provides education for 108 girls aged between 2 and 11, and 10 boys who attend the Nursery classes part-time. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises 48 children under 5 years of age, the majority of whom are in the Nursery classes for those aged 2 and 3 years. There are 23 girls in Years 1 and 2 of the Pre-Prep, and 47 in Years 3 to 6, known as the Prep. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but the school has identified 12 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive specific support for their learning. Pupils are drawn mainly from professional and business families in the local area. One pupil has English as an additional language (EAL) and receives additional support. A range of standardised aptitude and ability tests indicates that the ability profile of the school is broadly above the national average, with around one-quarter of pupils having ability that is well above.
- 1.4 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 school is very successful in fulfilling its stated aims. Pupils' achievements and the quality of their learning are excellent and they demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge and understanding. Standards of written and spoken English are particularly strong. The pupils' attainment is at least above national age-related expectations. Pupils, including those with SEND and the most able, make good progress and, for some, progress is excellent. Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding and they show a genuine desire to work hard and enjoy their lessons. Pupils' high standards are enhanced by the broad and stimulating curriculum, supported by many extra-curricular activities and trips. The excellent teaching makes a strong contribution to the pupils' achievements.
- 2.2 Pupils demonstrate excellent personal development and show high levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Their relationships with each other and with staff are strong, warm and supportive. The school provides excellent pastoral support and guidance, and arrangements to promote their welfare, health and safety are highly effective. Governors provide good oversight and support for the school, although they do not, as yet, show sufficient formality or structure in their monitoring of the school's policies to evaluate their consistent implementation. Leadership and management across the school are good. Clear targets for continuing school improvement have been identified, although the school development plan contains too many tasks, including those on a small scale, and does not identify priorities sufficiently clearly to facilitate regular evaluation of progress. The leadership promotes a clear educational direction and generates a strong sense of purpose among the staff. The monitoring of the standards and provision across the whole of the EYFS setting is inconsistent and formal professional development and sharing of good practice are limited. The school has formed an excellent partnership with its parent body.
- 2.3 The school has made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous full inspection in 2010 and the EYFS inspection in 2012, by strengthening procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and working with governors to identify areas for school improvement. Ensuring that managers have sufficient time to discharge their responsibilities has been partially resolved by creating new middle management posts. In the EYFS setting, increased use is made of parents' views, children now have better access to outdoor areas, and lesson planning achieves an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.

2.(b) Action points**(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2014.
- 2.5 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Refine the school development plan to include a smaller number of manageable priorities to enable the efficient evaluation of their implementation.
 2. Create a formal system for governors to regularly review policies and monitor their implementation.
 3. Monitor regularly the effectiveness of the whole EYFS setting, and provide relevant training and opportunities for the sharing of good practice.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are very well educated in successful fulfilment of the school's aim to create an environment in which they are encouraged to work and play with enthusiasm and commitment, and to maintain a tradition of academic excellence. They exhibit high levels of subject knowledge and understanding for their age, being able, for example, to speak knowledgeably in Year 2 about the habitats of different bugs, being familiar in Year 4 with the co-ordinate geometry involved in the translations of two-dimensional shapes and creating a modern interpretation of the Ten Commandments in Year 5.
- 3.3 Standards of pupils' written English and their speaking and listening skills are high. They highly enjoy reading aloud, and do so expressively. They apply mathematical concepts and mental arithmetic well in a range of subjects. Their competence in information and communication technology (ICT) is well developed and applied. Pupils use many computing applications to enhance their learning, such as simple coding, graph plotting and presentation software, as well as online mathematics applications. Pupils show high levels of creative skill, seen to excellent effect in their free writing and in art, particularly ceramics. They demonstrate strong physical and performance skills. More able pupils show significant reasoning and analytical skills.
- 3.4 In extra-curricular activities, pupils show great enthusiasm and initiative, and have performed at a high level in recent years in a range of different sports, such as netball, running and swimming. They have gained recognition and success in various external competitions in art, music, speech and drama, dance, spelling, mathematics and science.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be at least above national age-related expectations. Pupils' achievement in standardised tests in mathematics, English and spelling, and inspection evidence gained in interviews and from pupils' work, confirm this judgement. The pupils follow a demanding curriculum and those leaving the school at the age of 11 have a high level of success in gaining places and awards to local independent senior schools, many of them with selective entry. Pupils' improvements over time in tests and their gains in knowledge and understanding indicate that they make good progress, and for some progress is excellent. Those with SEND make similarly good progress, shown by the improvement in their spelling and written work. The most able pupils achieve at a high level, and many make rapid progress.
- 3.6 Pupils' attitudes to their work and learning are outstanding. They are keen to work hard and perform well. They enjoy their lessons and embrace with overt enthusiasm the varied learning tasks and opportunities provided. Pupils think for themselves and enjoy opportunities to work independently and embark on projects. Older pupils use existing knowledge well to make intelligent predictions about unfamiliar situations. Pupils show strong collaborative learning skills and enjoy working in teams and groups, and supporting each other in house events and competitions.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The coverage of the required areas of learning is highly effective. The curriculum is well planned and organised. It fully supports the aim of the school to maintain a tradition of academic excellence whilst offering the fullest possible range of experiences through a broad and balanced curriculum. The specific needs of pupils are imaginatively catered for across the whole age range. Provision challenges the more able pupils as well as supporting the less able and those with SEND. The responses to the parent pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the range of subject areas offered by the school.
- 3.9 Reading, writing and mathematics are central to the curriculum. Specialist teaching of physical education (PE), music and French takes place from the Nursery to Year 6 and Spanish has been introduced for pupils from Reception to Year 4. Another recent addition has been the inclusion of education in the spacious wooded grounds, to which all year groups have access either through their timetable or through an extra-curricular club.
- 3.10 Well-planned personal, social and religious education (PSRE) lessons include topics such as the development of social skills to help pupils form effective, supportive friendships, and to prevent and tackle bullying, as well as helping them to set goals and find practical ways of achieving them. These topics are complemented by a study of major world religions. 'Learning for Life', for Years 2 to 6, is a programme which includes areas such as cooking, presentation skills and examination preparation. It also provides opportunities for pupils to undertake meaningful independent projects, such as researching the life and work of Shakespeare or designing a new invention. The course also includes a consideration of British values and democratic government, presented in a coherent and balanced way. The timetable includes an allocation for computing for all pupils, which is also promoted in many other subjects.
- 3.11 Provision to support the learning needs of pupils with SEND is well organised. A clear assessment of these pupils' needs is made and specific intervention plans drawn up. These ensure that parents and class teachers are aware of the strategies identified to meet specific learning needs. The effectiveness of the support provided in class, in small groups and through individual sessions is regularly reviewed so that progress is closely monitored. Able and gifted pupils are well catered for, including through extension work and projects. The orchestra, choir and specialist events in sport and art challenge pupils talented in these areas.
- 3.12 The curriculum is well supported by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities for all year groups. These include off-site trips and residential visits, which develop pupils' awareness of the local community, stimulate their interest and learning, and provide valuable cross-curricular links. Clubs in school provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their physical, creative and performance skills and interests. The annual school musical is a highlight of the year for many pupils. The school arranges many cross-curricular festivals with, for example, a cultural or technological theme, and regularly hosts external speakers, some of whom are parents.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.14 Teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement and progress, and stimulates their positive attitudes to learning. The high quality of teaching supports the aims of the school to strive for academic excellence and to nurture individual abilities and potential.
- 3.15 Teaching is characterised by careful and thorough planning, and responds well to the differing learning needs and styles of the pupils, including those with SEND. Lessons nearly always contain an interesting sequence of different activities and tasks, most of which are designed to give the pupils themselves many opportunities to contribute to the learning process. Pupils say that lessons are fun and this promotes effort, enthusiasm and a desire to perform well. Teaching methods are very well matched to the ability and needs of the pupils, and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' achievement. Teachers know their pupils very well, and the strong rapport and relationships established are key factors in promoting the pupils' learning and progress. The great majority of teaching provides a well-managed blend of challenge that stimulates independent thinking and support for those who need it. Teachers have suitably high expectations of their pupils, and different tasks of an appropriate level of difficulty are available for the more able pupils. Teaching employs resources well to explain and illustrate the material covered. The use of ICT and other technological resources is particularly effective. The pace of lessons is brisk, ensuring that pupils' attention and interest are sustained, and that the 30- and 60-minute time allocations are efficiently used.
- 3.16 In a small amount of less successful teaching the pace of lessons is slower, and pupils lose attention and focus. On such occasions, pupils have fewer opportunities to contribute to the lesson. Tasks are occasionally not well matched to pupils' ages and abilities.
- 3.17 Teaching makes particularly effective use of class discussions, enabling pupils to state their opinions and, in the case of older pupils, to explain their thinking and reasoning. Good use is made of open questions designed to assess pupils' understanding. Teaching employs group and paired activities effectively, thus developing collaborative approaches to learning. A few parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that some homework set is not appropriate. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Inspectors found that homework tasks are suitable and worthwhile, and discussions with pupils confirmed this.
- 3.18 Pupils are aware of the learning intentions for lessons and, as appropriate to their age, understand clear success criteria; they nearly always assess their own mastery of the topics and skills developed. Teachers also take many opportunities to enable pupils to assess and evaluate each other's performances and contributions.
- 3.19 Marking of pupils' work is regular, thorough and frequent, and the good quality seen is consistent across subjects and year groups. Highly effective use is made of helpful annotations in pupils' exercise books. These combine comments on aspects of work which have been completed well, with specific pointers for improvement. Pupils find this process very helpful and they understand what they need to do to improve. The school is implementing a comprehensive data assessment system. This collects information on pupils' performance over time and is starting to prove

very useful in tracking their progress, and in identifying under-achievement and the need for intervention and support.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual awareness is well developed. They are confident and thoughtful, and take pride in their personal achievements. They enjoy exploring religious beliefs through role play and discussion. They benefit from visits to local places of worship and listening to visiting speakers on a variety of topics, which prompt them to consider their place in the world. Pupils have a well-developed knowledge of the core beliefs and values of a number of world religions. They appreciate the vast cosmic scale of the solar system in science and respond sensitively to the stillness of the school's wooded area. Many pupils develop a very personal response to art and music as appropriate to their age.
- 4.3 Pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong. The school succeeds in its aim to promote at all times the qualities of integrity, kindness, charity and good manners. Pupils are quick to point out the code of conduct, which is clearly displayed around the school and which they understand. They regularly demonstrate their concern for each other in their daily interactions, and for those less fortunate than themselves through charitable events. The behaviour of the pupils is excellent: they are polite, helpful and respectful of all they encounter. They readily identify the moral messages in the fables they read and write themselves, and thoroughly supported the triumph of good over evil in a study of traditional fairy tales.
- 4.4 The social awareness of pupils is strong throughout the school. As they move through the year groups they become increasingly aware of their strengths and areas for personal development. They are sensitive to the needs of others and particularly take pleasure working with younger members of the community and with visitors to the school. Pupils enjoy the social experience of lunch, involving those of all ages and staff, and is another illustration of the family nature of the school. Year 6 pupils voluntarily spend time supporting children in the Nursery and in this capacity also act as excellent role models. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed producing talking books so that blind children can appreciate their stories. Pupils affectionately refer to house days where charitable events support causes chosen by them, such as projects to provide water, protect wild animals and support research into cancer. They benefit from and enjoy the planning and giving as much as participation in the fund-raising events themselves. Older pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility for others as house, form and team captains and, from Year 2, representatives on the school council.
- 4.5 Pupils are very interested in other cultures and they have a growing awareness of these as well as the traditions of Western European culture through their art and music. They gain a clear understanding of aspects of citizenship and the key values of individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs, through PSRE and 'Learning for Life'. Pupils appreciated and learnt from a visit from a Bollywood dancer during a themed day. They share and explore cultural knowledge and experience in assemblies.
- 4.6 By the time they leave the school pupils achieve an excellent degree of personal development, in line with the school's aims. They become confident public speakers, are considerate, thoughtful and respectful of their peers and others, and can express

their views coherently and politely. They acquire a good understanding of the nature of British society and English public institutions.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The pastoral arrangements successfully meet the school's aim to provide a secure and happy environment in which pupils are encouraged to work and play with enthusiasm and commitment. Relationships among pupils and with staff are mutually respectful and caring, and a key feature of the school's pastoral care. The supportive atmosphere enables pupils to settle in quickly when joining the school and they can identify people to turn to should help be needed. Class tutors know their charges well and provide effective support and guidance. Weekly pastoral staff meetings enable full discussion of the needs of all pupils in each class. Non-teaching staff also play a significant part in the care and support of pupils. Support and advice for the selection of senior schools are provided to parents and pupils by senior leaders.
- 4.9 The school is highly effective at promoting good behaviour through its clear expectations and positive behaviour management systems; there is little need for formal sanctions. A very small minority of pupils' questionnaire responses suggested that the school does not always deal quickly with bullying. Pupils spoken to reported that incidents of bullying are rare. They stated that if these arise they are dealt with effectively by staff. Inspection of school records did not identify any undue delay in dealing with relationship concerns or conflict among pupils. The school's policy to guard against bullying, including cyber-bullying, is implemented effectively. In response to the questionnaire, a few pupils indicated that teachers are not fair in the way they give rewards. Inspection evidence from scrutiny of school records did not support this view, and pupils spoke highly of the various systems used to reward good behaviour. Pupils learn about key influences affecting self-esteem and the development of effective social skills, which they recognise are significant factors in regulating behaviour.
- 4.10 The school encourages pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices. A well-balanced menu includes a wide choice of nutritious, freshly cooked meals and vegetarian options, together with salad and fruit. Ample opportunities are provided for regular exercise to be taken by all pupils within the sporting and other activities.
- 4.11 The school has a suitable plan to widen access to the premises and the curriculum for pupils with SEND.
- 4.12 Pupils have several formal opportunities to express their views and opinions. They do this directly to their class tutors, through the school council or by using various 'worry boxes'. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the school council and the changes it has achieved, which include a selection of raised beds in which 'eco-warriors' grow vegetables, a refurbished toilet block and a store house for outdoor equipment.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 Provision to safeguard pupils and promote their well-being supports the school's aims and makes a significant contribution to their emotional and social development, and to pastoral care. The school's safeguarding policy has regard to the latest official guidance. Staff have undergone the required training in child protection and are aware of the correct channels for reporting concerns about pupils' welfare.
- 4.15 Arrangements to minimise the risk of fire and other hazards are highly efficient, well organised and documented in detail. Regular checks are made of many different aspects of the school's health and safety provision and are clearly recorded to ensure safe premises and working practices. Systems and procedures are regularly reviewed and monitored by governors and senior staff. Risk assessments for different areas of the school and off-site trips and visits are effective and include appropriate risk management strategies. All staff are trained in basic first aid, and some to a higher level. Suitable policies and procedures for pupils' health and medical care are well implemented.
- 4.16 The school records pupils' attendance electronically, and maintains efficient and accurate admission and attendance registers that are stored for the required period.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing body oversees the work of the school in line with its aims, and provides strong impetus to enable the school to succeed. The board of nine members gains a thorough oversight of the school's work through committees that focus on finance, health and safety, and, recently established, education and pastoral matters. In this, governors are greatly assisted by the experience, expertise and specialist knowledge of the trustees and central support services of the United Learning Trust, with whom they work closely. However, policy documentation does not identify sufficiently clearly the division of responsibilities and accountability of the two bodies. Governors exercise prudent financial control and planning, enabling the school to secure adequate physical, human and educational resources. They promote a clear vision for the school and have worked with senior leaders to produce comprehensive plans for future development and improvement. In some respects, these plans do not yet identify sufficiently clearly the key strategic priorities within which school staff can plan and implement specific targets.
- 5.3 Governors gain an excellent insight into the life and work of the school through reports and presentations, and visits to school to attend events, meet staff and pupils, and observe lessons. They provide strong support to the school and its leaders, and appropriate advice and challenge for the school's continued success. Governors have access to a wide range of professional training opportunities offered by the United Learning Trust.
- 5.4 Governors take their statutory responsibilities seriously and approve many of the school's policies at regular intervals, although they do not yet have a formal system to monitor the effectiveness of their implementation. The board monitors health and safety and the safeguarding of pupils' welfare carefully and regularly. However, the minutes of its meetings are not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate the breadth and depth of its statutory annual safeguarding review.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 The work of leaders and managers at all levels enables the school's aims to be particularly well met, conspicuously so in respect of academic standards and pupils' personal development. School leaders provide a strongly pupil-centred education in which tolerance and respect for others thrive, and they actively promote pupils' well-being. The school has recently emerged from a period of considerable change, and the new leadership has made excellent progress in generating a corporate sense of purpose, clear educational direction and renewed commitment among staff at all levels.
- 5.7 The school has made good progress in implementing nearly all of the recommendations of the previous inspections in 2010 and 2012. The creation of additional time for managers has been partially achieved through a restructuring of

posts of responsibility. Many new initiatives have been introduced during the last two terms, and are gradually becoming embedded into the culture and life of the school. Staff have embraced such changes wholeheartedly. A new middle management team has been created. This provides opportunities for staff to take on responsibility to co-ordinate the work of the Nursery, Pre-Prep and Prep sections of the school. However, monitoring of the standards and provision across the whole of the EYFS setting is inconsistent. The school deploys its relatively small workforce efficiently so that a broad range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities can be offered, and school organisation and administration efficiently achieved.

- 5.8 Prior to the inspection, a number of key policies did not have full regard to regulatory standards and guidance, but these were corrected before the end of the inspection. Educational and pastoral policies are generally well suited to pupils' needs and effectively implemented by staff. Staff are steadily developing a stronger culture of reflection and self-evaluation. Their views are carefully considered by the leadership and contribute to identifying targets for improving the academic life of the school. Including many other whole-school issues, the school development plan identifies over 200 tasks. Some of these are relatively small-scale, such as the cleaning of windows, and the plan currently lacks a clear sense of priority or importance. This makes effective, regular evaluation of progress a challenging task. Improved systems have been created to monitor the quality of teaching through the appraisal process, and when time permits staff observe each other's lessons and share good practice. The school now uses an increasing amount of assessment data to track pupils' attainment and progress.
- 5.9 Procedures for carrying out the required pre-appointment recruitment checks are rigorous, and all staff and other adults working with pupils have undergone a criminal records check. A new appraisal process for staff has recently been completed and enables a reflection on the effectiveness of their work in school. New staff undergo a thorough induction process, and they are suitably trained in safeguarding children and undertake other welfare-related training. Opportunities for continuing professional development are carefully managed.
- 5.10 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. The school fosters positive and constructive relationships with parents through its effective communication systems and the many opportunities to be involved in school life. The exceptionally strong partnership that is developed with the parents of the youngest children is maintained as they progress through the school. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of almost all aspects of the school. They are particularly appreciative of the way their children are happy and feel safe and well looked after at school, the good range of extra-curricular activities offered and the provision for the most able pupils.
- 5.11 Staff are readily available to parents at the beginning and end of each day. They can be contacted by email and they respond promptly. The school's 'open door' policy allows the vast majority of queries or concerns to be dealt with swiftly and informally. However, a few parents responding to the questionnaire were unhappy with the speed with which some concerns have been dealt with. Inspectors found that, occasionally, concerns or complaints are taken directly to the leadership instead of being made known to the form tutor in the first instance, and that this may have contributed to their opinion. The policy for handling complaints meets all regulatory requirements. The school handles any formal written complaints sensitively and appropriately.

- 5.12 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children. They are welcome to share particular expertise and help on trips. Parents attend sporting fixtures, assemblies and school productions. The numerous and varied information evenings held throughout the year for all age groups give parents helpful insight into the curriculum, teaching and learning. At the end of the summer term, parents receive a full and very informative report on the progress made by their children, but many contain limited advice about how further improvement may be made. In addition, Year 6 parents receive a full report at the end of the autumn term. A very small minority of parents expressed in response to the questionnaire dissatisfaction with the provision of information about their children's progress. Inspection evidence does not support this view of insufficient progress information, however the half-termly report cards sent to parents indicate an effort and attainment grade only, without comments for further clarification.
- 5.13 The thriving Friends of St Ives group organises varied social and fund-raising occasions that enhance the family atmosphere throughout the school. These events have enabled the purchase of tablet computers and have contributed to the acquisition of minibuses and Reception's outdoor classroom. These initiatives greatly benefit the school.
- 5.14 The helpful school website, still developing further, contains the required items of information. The school prospectus and handbooks provide the parents of current and prospective pupils with detailed and relevant information about the life and work of the school. Weekly newsletters, bulletins and other forms of communication are much appreciated by 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) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 6.1 The setting makes good provision for meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. The committed and caring staff know all children very well and cater for their individual needs. Consistently, good standards are achieved through the varied and interesting educational programmes provided, which help most children to reach, and sometimes exceed, age-appropriate levels of development. All children are well supported, including those under three and those with additional needs, and they are well prepared for each stage of their learning. Relevant planning and regular assessments enable individual next steps to be identified and implemented. A suitable balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning fosters high levels of independence. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the prime areas of learning for the youngest children in order to ensure that firm foundations are set for future learning. Specialist teaching in music, French, PE, ballet and swimming significantly enhances the curriculum for all children. Learning in the woodland environment provides many opportunities for active learning and appropriate risk taking. Two year olds benefit from the appropriate choice of wheeled toys, for example. Reception children enjoy attending whole-school events, assemblies and belonging to the school house system.
- 6.2 All adults have high expectations and enthuse and motivate children through a wide variety of learning opportunities both indoors and outside, but open questions to extend and challenge learning are not consistently used. Since the previous inspection the outside area for Reception has been extended and developed, ensuring that all age groups are provided with relevant opportunities to investigate, explore and pursue independent activities outside. Relationships with parents are strong and a genuine partnership is established, which has a beneficial impact on children's learning and development, as seen in individual reading records and 'home-link' books. Parents were very positive about the setting in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Detailed reports give helpful information to inform parents about their children's progress in all areas of learning. Home visits, 'taster' days and good communication between parents and staff ensure that the children settle easily into the setting.

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

- 6.3 Provision for children's well-being is outstanding. Their welfare is given high priority and they are extremely well known and well cared for, including the youngest children and those with additional needs. Staff act as excellent role models and promote the standards of behaviour and courtesy expected. Great importance is placed on the children's happiness. Key people are most effective in ensuring that all children form strong relationships with all staff, which helps the children to feel confident in new situations and in different areas of the setting. Children behave very well and play co-operatively and imaginatively. They are taught how to keep themselves safe. From a young age they are encouraged to manage their own personal hygiene and they are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Reception children form good relationships with older pupils, creating a strong sense of community, and this, in addition to their increasing independence, prepares them well for their next class.

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

- 6.4 Leadership and management of the EYFS setting are good. Governance is effective and enhanced by an appropriate knowledge of the requirements of the early years framework. The children's well-being and safeguarding are given high priority at all times, creating a warm, welcoming and stimulating learning environment for them all. The relatively new leadership team is establishing new systems to ensure that the learning and development of all children are further supported and catered for. An appraisal system for staff operates within the setting, and formal arrangements for professional supervision are becoming more effectively established. These systems enable staff to be better supported in their roles. Due to timetable constraints, senior staff have few opportunities to observe and monitor colleagues at work, and this, in addition to limited training opportunities, means that there is little formal professional development or sharing of good practice, including questioning styles. A clear vision is established for the further development of the setting, though regular and rigorous evaluation and the identification of challenging targets are in their infancy. Excellent partnerships with parents and external agencies have been established, and these greatly contribute to all children's achievement and well-being.

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

- 6.5 The overall quality and standards in the EYFS are good. Much of the setting's success is due to the work of the dedicated and enthusiastic staff. Children of all abilities and needs generally make good progress in relation to their individual starting points because of the encouragement and support they receive. All children enjoy attending the setting and are particularly enthusiastic when they can be active and creative learners, as was seen in the outdoor classrooms. Children express themselves clearly and confidently in their conversations, for example when young children pretended to call the fire brigade or those older described the qualities of air and water. Children listen attentively. The youngest enjoy stories, rhymes and songs; they are beginning to count and enjoy painting and making things. Older Nursery children are beginning to form letters and write their own names; they know some initial sounds and are able to count the number of children in their group. Reception children have an extensive knowledge of phonics which they use well in their independent writing. They are starting to read well. Children work confidently with numbers to 20 and beyond, and can perform simple addition and subtraction sums.
- 6.6 The personal development of all children is outstanding. Children are able to share, take turns and be highly independent. They develop good relationships with their friends and the adults who care for them. They are beginning to show respect for each other and know right from wrong. Excellent support systems enable children to build trusting relationships with staff. Welfare and safeguarding procedures are appropriate. Risk assessments and fire procedures are well known and promote the children's safety. The setting shows good capacity for continuous improvement, and the recommendations from the previous EYFS inspection have been fully met. The setting provides all children with firm foundations and gives them opportunities to learn in a happy environment.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.