



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

## **INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

### **DOLPHIN SCHOOL (INCORPORATING NOAH'S ARK NURSERY SCHOOLS)**

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## Dolphin School (Incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools)

Full Name of School	<b>Dolphin School (Incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools)</b>
DfE Number	<b>212/6387</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY461043</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1145113</b>
Address	<b>Dolphin School (Incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools) 106 Northcote Road Battersea London SW11 6QW</b>
Telephone Number	<b>020 7924 3472</b>
Fax Number	<b>020 8265 8700</b>
Email Address	<b>stpa@dolphinschool.org.uk</b>
Principal	<b>Mr James Savile</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Jeremy Sharman</b>
Age Range	<b>2 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>314</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (163 boys; 151 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>2-5 (EYFS): 163    5-11: 151</b>
Head of Nursery School	<b>Miss Annette Miller</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>19 to 22 May 2015</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. This is the first ISI inspection.

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](http://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 chair of governors, 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**

Mrs Elaine Brook	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Paula Hobbs	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mrs Deborah Buckenham	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years
Mr Chris Manville	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years
Mrs Anne Oliver	Team Inspector for Early Years (Head of Pre-prep, IAPS school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Dolphin School, incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools, offers an independent education for boys and girls between the ages of two-and-a-half and eleven. Established in 1986 to provide a broad education firmly rooted in Christian principles, the main school expanded to include three nurseries in 2002 and retains its strong Christian heritage. Dolphin School is located in a church building in Battersea. The nurseries are collectively entitled Noah's Ark Nursery Schools and operate from three additional halls attached to local churches, all within 5 to 15 minutes walking distance from Dolphin School. All four schools operate as a single charitable trust overseen by two trustees and administered by a board of seven governors. The principal is the head of Dolphin School who has overall responsibility for all four settings, although each nursery operates independently on a day-to-day basis, reporting to the head of Noah's Ark Nurseries.
- 1.2 The school aims to find and release children's potential in academic work, creative endeavour and sporting pursuit and to develop their character according to a Christian understanding of what it means to be human. In so doing, it believes that pupils will be well prepared to meet the personal and intellectual challenge of secondary school.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 314 pupils on roll. Children join one of Noah's Ark Nurseries from the age of two and a half. In Cobham Close, 18 boys and 21 girls are registered. In Endlesham, 17 boys and 16 girls attend, whilst in Westside, 17 boys and 22 girls are on roll. All three nurseries offer up to five morning sessions in term-time only. In the summer term, two afternoon sessions are available to prepare those children who will attend full-time school in September. In the academic year in which they are five, approximately half of these children transfer to Reception class, which has 27 boys and 25 girls and forms an integral part of Dolphin School. Between Years 1 and 6, 84 boys and 67 girls attend the main school. The majority of pupils come from professional and business families and are of white British origin. There are 38 pupils who originate from overseas, mainly from Europe. The majority of pupils are Christian, although the school welcomes pupils from all major religions or of none. Most pupils live within a ten mile radius of the school. At the age of 11, most pupils transfer to a wide range of independent schools, with a small number moving into the maintained sector.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, Dolphin School has added four classrooms, a designated science and information and communication technology (ICT) room and additional offices within the existing buildings.
- 1.5 The overall ability of the pupils is above the national average, with a notable proportion being of well above average ability. There are nine pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), all of whom receive additional support to improve their command of English. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but 31 pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities receive specialist learning support.

- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table(s).

***Early Years Foundation Stage Setting***

School	NC Name
Noah's Ark Cobham Close	Nursery (age 2 to 4)
Noah's Ark Endlesham Road	Nursery (age 2 to 4)
Noah's Ark Westside	Nursery (age 2 to 4)
Reception Diamonds	Reception

***Dolphin School***

School	NC name
Year 1 Pearls	Year 1
Year 2 Sapphires	Year 2
Year 3 Rubies	Year 3
Year 4 Emeralds	Year 4
Year 5 Topazes	Year 5
Year 6 Aquamarines	Year 6

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent, fulfilling the school's aims. From the EYFS onwards, pupils make excellent progress in understanding, knowledge and skills. Standards of literacy and numeracy are particularly high. The quality of teaching is excellent, enabling pupils to progress at a pace appropriate to their ages and abilities. Lessons are well planned and delivered in a way which makes the learning experience stimulating and enjoyable. Pupils with SEND and EAL progress well because of the targeted support they receive which meets their needs. Similarly, the most able attain high standards because they are offered challenge and stimulus in most subjects. Standards of provision in the EYFS are outstanding, contributing effectively to children's well-being. From Year 1, curricular and extra-curricular provision is good, supporting effectively pupils' excellent achievements. The curriculum is broad and balanced, covering the requisite range of experiences. Provision for technology, including information and communication technology (ICT) is insufficiently developed because ready access to a range of media useful for independent research is limited. The school has fully met the recommendation from the previous inspection to ensure that the quality of questioning enables all pupils to engage and have their opinions heard but little progress has been made in mapping the relevant use of ICT in schemes of work. Pupils of all ages, including those children in the EYFS, enjoy their learning and apply themselves diligently.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent, reflecting the values expressed in the school's aims. In the EYFS, children share and co-operate well. As they mature, their behaviour towards one another is characterised by courtesy and kindness. They have excellent opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. By Year 6, they acquire a broad general knowledge of, and respect for, traditional British values, and understand how a democracy works because they are encouraged to express their views freely and to take on positions of responsibility without fear of discrimination. The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good. Pupils thrive in a warm and welcoming environment, with resources and accommodation maintained to a high standard. A small number of required amendments to policies regarding welfare and the safeguarding of pupils were rectified by the end of the inspection. The policy concerning the recruitment of staff, including those in the EYFS, contains the requirement to make all necessary checks prior to appointment but procedures are insufficiently rigorous so that some personnel files and records are incomplete. The school's practices at the day-to-day level ensure that pupils were not placed at risk.
- 2.3 Governors are strongly committed to the school but have insufficient knowledge of the requirements of regulatory policies. They bring a good range of expertise to their roles but no governor has a specific background in education so that oversight of standards, including those in the EYFS, is insufficiently informed, relying heavily on reports from senior managers. Leadership and management of Dolphin School is good because staff are provided with clear educational direction and are united in their desire to maintain the school's ethos. This collective vision has a significant impact on pupils' well-being because each pupil knows that they are valued. Governance, leadership and management of the EYFS requires improvement. Some policies did not meet the most recent regulatory requirements; the school responded rapidly in order to remedy deficiencies. Each of the four settings works



well as an individual unit but there is no clear management of the overall quality of provision and few established links, so that common policies are inconsistent and few opportunities exist to share good practice. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the education and care of their children. In interviews and in the questionnaire, pupils agreed that they are happy at school.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that recruitment checks concerning background history, qualifications, medical fitness, references and prohibition checks are carried out on all staff before they begin work at the school and that where enhanced disclosures are not received before the start date appropriate safeguards are taken and regularly reviewed (Part 4, paragraphs 18.(2).(c)/(d) and 18.(3) and paragraph 21.(3).(a).iv/vi under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraph 7.(a) and (b) under Welfare, health and safety).

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Establish a formal system for the timely review of regulatory policies, including those with specific requirements for the EYFS and rigorously monitor their implementation.
2. Strengthen the school's leadership and management structure, including in the EYFS, ensuring that all areas of the curriculum benefit from clear direction and oversight of standards of provision and care.
3. In the Nurseries, extend opportunities for outdoor learning through the creative use of external space.

### **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 well educated in accordance with the school's aims, demonstrating excellent levels of understanding, knowledge and skills across the full range of the curriculum as well as in extra-curricular activities. They are articulate, able to express their views clearly from an early age. They listen carefully, think logically and understand the need to allow other people to express an opinion which may not agree with their own. High standards are achieved in literacy and numeracy. Pupils write confidently for a range of genres and can reason and work independently towards finding a solution to a problem in science or mathematics. They are highly creative, as seen in the excellent displays around the school. Pupils enjoy performing in drama productions and musicals so that they have a growing aesthetic appreciation of art and music. Almost half of pupils learn a musical instrument and are successful in obtaining high grades in external examinations. Their physical abilities are well developed through a range of team sports, although opportunities for older pupils to develop individual skills in some areas are limited. Their ICT skills are sound but the use of technology as a tool to support their learning and to aid independent research is currently limited.
- 3.3 Pupils are successful in a wide range of activities and this has a significant impact on their personal development in terms of growing confidence and self-belief. Pupils have gained success at a high level in a range of sports which include golf, football, swimming and ice-skating. Other pupils have exhibited their artwork in national galleries. The school participates in a variety of matches with other schools and has achieved particular success in cross-country running and football. A good number of pupils achieve distinction in speech and drama examinations. Almost all pupils are successful in gaining places at their first choice of senior school because they are well supported to recognise their individual talents so that they can demonstrate these well during interview. Each year a small proportion of pupils receive scholarships to senior schools.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Results in national tests at age 11 are well above the national average for maintained primary schools. Results in 2013 were well above the national average and remained high in 2014. This level of attainment, supported by curriculum interviews, observation of learning in classrooms and a scrutiny of pupils' work supports the inspection's findings that pupils make good progress relative to those with similar abilities; many show excellent progress. Pupils who need additional support achieve well through the individual help that they receive from specialist teaching, although targeted support within the classroom is less consistent in quality. The most able pupils have frequent opportunities to make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics because they are offered sufficiently challenging activities, well-matched to their abilities, but this is not invariably done across the curriculum as a whole.
- 3.5 Pupils' attitudes to their learning are excellent. Pupils are most commonly diligent, eager to undertake new challenges and take a great pride in presenting their work well. A particular strength of their approach is the way in which they settle to work very quickly.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.7 The curriculum enables the school to meet its aims. It is broad, covers all the requisite areas of learning and meets the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities, thereby making an effective contribution to pupils' excellent achievements. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost all parents believe that the school provides a suitable range of subjects and activities. Pupils identified as having SEND are supported well in specialist sessions and together with the able, in most, though not all, subject lessons. Older pupils are grouped according to their prior attainment in numeracy and in literacy, which allows the most able to work to an advanced level, meeting their needs appropriately.
- 3.8 Most of the provision in the morning sessions is focused on the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, which is a contributory factor in the achievement of high standards in these areas. Afternoon sessions cover an appropriate range of other activities. Most lessons are taken by class teachers who are able to plan the content to suit the abilities and interests of all pupils because they know them so well. Specialist teaching in Spanish, music, drama, art and physical education enhances the programme, adding interest and variety. The addition of Latin in the Year 6 curriculum offers pupils an opportunity to experience another language unfamiliar to most, which adds to the richness of their educational experience. Creative arts are a strength in the school because pupils are given excellent opportunities to acquire and develop their skills and interests. For example, pupils were observed singing in harmony and with obvious enjoyment in preparation for the forthcoming musical. The exciting and interactive displays are evidence of strong provision for art. The curriculum plan for technology, including ICT, is less developed so that appropriate skills are not always being covered within the school. The ICT room is used regularly by all classes but ready access to multi-media technology for research and independent work within the classrooms is restricted. The school recognises the need for an increase in technological resources. A review has been undertaken and plans are well advanced to increase these.
- 3.9 Access to a variety of sporting experiences is good for pupils in Years 1 to 3 but more limited for older pupils. Younger pupils engage in a range of different sports, which include gymnastics and dance as well as team games. Older pupils are offered specialist teaching within the curriculum in a wide range of team sports such as netball, football, rugby, rounders, cricket and athletics but regular opportunities to develop physical skills in gymnastics, for example, are not routinely included in the present programme.
- 3.10 The curriculum is carefully planned to allow daily and frequent access to the nearby common. Pupils are safely escorted there and were observed to enjoy and benefit from these opportunities to play freely or engage in team sports so that a healthy spirit of competition is evident.
- 3.11 The programme for personal, social, health and economic education fully meets the school's aim to prepare pupils securely for the challenges they will meet when they leave the school. The curriculum includes a daily timetabled session called *Relationship Time* which encourages respect for people and an acceptance of differences and effectively prepares pupils for their later experiences as a member of British society. For Year 6, a programme of talks by visiting speakers from a range

of professions enables pupils to think about their future and what qualities or qualifications they might need to achieve their aspirations.

- 3.12 There is an excellent variety of extra-curricular options available for pupils. In their responses to the questionnaire, all pupils stated that they enjoyed the clubs and activities and responses from parents confirmed this. Educational visits which include regular trips to places of cultural interest support learning effectively. The school has developed strong links with the community which deepen pupils' understanding of the world in which they live. During interviews, older pupils talked enthusiastically about their regular performances to local senior citizens and their links with a local Jewish school. The school also has a well-established link with a school in Kenya. In recent years, pupils have involved their parents in support for this project which resulted in a visit overseas by some families to see, and report back, the impact of their contribution. Such links add a richness to the curriculum because pupils gain a real understanding of other lives and cultures very different from their own.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.14 Teaching supports the aims of the school and enables pupils to progress at a pace appropriate to their ages and abilities, thereby making an excellent contribution to their overall achievements. Teaching is non-partisan in its approach.
- 3.15 Teaching is well planned, takes careful account of the pupils' learning needs and demonstrates high levels of subject knowledge. It promotes a good pace of learning in most lessons, includes a good variety of learning activities, and makes learning a challenging, yet motivating and enjoyable activity. In their responses to the questionnaire, all pupils confirmed that the teaching helped them to learn. Pupils respond well to their teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects; for example, in a Year 2 physical education lesson, pupils spontaneously applauded their teacher for demonstrating the required technique. Most teaching encourages children to ask questions, reason with others, think for themselves and to make links in their learning. The school has made good progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous report with regards to ensuring that the quality of questioning in all lessons is as high as in the best. This was evident in a Year 4 science lesson where the teacher's clear understanding of the wide range of needs enabled pupils of all abilities to make good progress because they were asked to respond to targeted questions which challenged their understanding.
- 3.16 Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and encouraging, contributing effectively to progress because pupils are prepared to take risks and to ask questions until their understanding is secure. Praise and encouragement are significant features.
- 3.17 Teachers make good use of the resources available to them though their teaching is sometimes restricted by the limitation of these, most particularly within ICT, where few lessons are able to fully integrate technology into the teaching and learning experience. Pupils' work is marked regularly but lacks consistency across the school because there is no agreed marking policy. At its best, marking provides clear recommendations for improvement by distinctly identifying strengths and areas for development. In these cases pupils confirm that marking supports their progress. In some subjects and year groups, marking is congratulatory rather than evaluative

so that encouraging comments are not accompanied by guidance for improvement. A large amount of academic data is collected on a regular basis. In most cases, this is well used to set targets in order to raise achievement.

- 3.18 Good individual support is given to pupils with SEND or EAL by specialist teaching, which contributes well to their progress. While the formal planning of lessons to meet the needs of pupils is limited in many lessons, it is clear from observation that individuals' abilities are well known; appropriate support is freely given. In most lessons, able pupils are consistently challenged to question and reflect so that they progress well.

## 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 This high standard of personal development reflects the active promotion of the expectations expressed in the school's aims that their education should teach them what it means to be human.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Their self-esteem is evident in the harmonious relationships, evident both in class and during recreation, where their thoughtful behaviour demonstrates an understanding and willingness to empathise. From a very young age, pupils express their innermost thoughts and feelings through art, music, literature and crafts so that they have a well-developed appreciation of the natural world and an enhanced sense of awe and wonder. For example, pupils were visibly moved when listening to music during a class lesson and communicated their emotions confidently. They are eager and self-confident learners, encouraged to question when they do not understand. They understand the value of a community spirit and that their behaviour can have a profound impact. For example, a pupil who was distressed by failure to complete the set task in an extra-curricular activity was told that the class believed in her ability and that they would all help her to achieve success. They are very aware of their Christian tradition and make good use of the many opportunities to deepen their understanding of their own faith, knowing that other people have different beliefs. Pupils in Year 6 spoke with assurance about the range of world religions and were adamant that no-one experiences discrimination in their school.
- 4.4 The moral awareness of the pupils is excellent. From a very young age, they demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong and an ability to think through the consequences of their actions. Pupils in Year 3, for example, agreed the need to listen to the views of others before arriving at a decision. Pupils of all ages understand the importance for the community of all members abiding by the rules of conduct. They are able to express their views on ethical issues such as the protection of the environment and, through their acceptance of sanctions as well as rewards, they have a growing understanding of the need to abide by the laws of England.
- 4.5 Pupils work well together because their social skills are extremely well developed. They use their *Relationship Time* to discuss matters of concern and how they might offer support as a group to cope with issues as wide-ranging as conflict in their friendships or the passing of a family pet. They take on positions of responsibility appropriate to their age. Older pupils act as role models for younger members, either by greeting them as they arrive in school and taking them to class or through shared reading sessions, much enjoyed by all. Pupils of all ages have an excellent understanding of how they can help others through a varied programme of fund-raising for charities both locally and internationally. Their involvement in a range of charities promotes a wider awareness of life outside their school. For example, pupils collected tins for the local food bank, demonstrating a real understanding of the effects of poverty in our society. Younger pupils understand the principles of democracy through the recent establishment of the school council. Pupils in Year 6 showed an understanding of the main public institutions and services in England. They were able to name the major political parties and their leaders and talked knowledgeably about the issues of public health and housing needs.

- 4.6 The cultural awareness of pupils is excellent. Pupils have a strong appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures. Pupil diversity and the importance of accepting our differences is evident throughout the school. They learn about other faiths through religious education lessons and in assemblies. Pupils gain considerable benefit from their location close to the centre of a city because they enjoy an excellent programme of visits to places of cultural interest, such as museums, galleries and theatres.
- 4.7 Pupils are well prepared for their transfer to secondary school. The high quality of their personal development equips them well to be active members of their new school communities and of the country in which they live.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 In line with the school's aims, the school provides excellent support and guidance for the pupils. Staff know their pupils well; their care is evident in the prevailing atmosphere of gentle encouragement to pupils to believe in themselves and to do their best.
- 4.10 Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are excellent and foster a strong sense of community within which pupils feel safe and valued. Both pupils and parents acknowledge the high quality of the support and care they receive. Pupils are polite and courteous and show considerable empathetic and thoughtful behaviour towards one another.
- 4.11 Pupils of all ages are encouraged to be healthy and eat sensibly. They bring a packed lunch to school which is eaten in the classroom in a relaxed and convivial manner. Parents are given clear guidelines about what constitutes a healthy meal and children know that certain foods are allowed only rarely as an occasional treat. They have good opportunities to take regular exercise through the sports programme and because they visit the nearby common regularly during recreation times.
- 4.12 The school actively promotes good behaviour by a simple set of rewards and sanctions which is understood and supported by all. In their responses to the questionnaire, a few pupils stated that sanctions were not awarded fairly. From the evidence obtained during pupil interviews and from a scrutiny of records of misdemeanours, inspectors found no evidence to support this. The school keeps meticulous records of the very small amount of poor behaviour. Pupils speak confidently and proudly about their school in which they feel safe and report that instances of bullying are rare because they receive frequent instruction about the need for consideration of one another's feelings. Pupils with SEND or who have special talents or abilities report that differences are accepted and their gifts celebrated in class and assemblies.
- 4.13 The school actively seeks the views of pupils through the recently formed school council. Pupils take turns in groups to share a weekly *hot chocolate* session with the principal; this is valued by all, giving excellent opportunities for senior managers to understand the pupils' experience and to discuss a range of topics, ranging from sports day to snacks.
- 4.14 The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.16 The school has appropriate policies in place to promote pupils' safety and well-being which are carefully implemented. Most are up-to-date but a small number have not been updated sufficiently quickly to reflect the most recent requirements, although in these cases, the school's practices at the day-to-day level do so. The paperwork has lagged behind implementation. All policies met requirements by the end of the inspection. All staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and useful links have been developed with local agencies.
- 4.17 The school has proper arrangements to reduce and manage the risks from fire and other potential hazards. Fire drills take place regularly. Careful risk assessments are carried out for all facilities and off-site visits. Highly efficient supervision of pupils walking to the nearby common for recreation and sports purposes ensures that they can benefit from this ready access to the external environment. Provision for sick pupils and those with SEND is well managed and a good number of staff have received appropriate training. Regular and thorough checks of site safety are undertaken by senior staff and any cause for concern receives attention. The site is complex and includes four separate locations. Great care is taken to maintain high standards of facilities and accommodation so that the physical safety of pupils receives due attention.
- 4.18 In the past, staff have sometimes been appointed before all required checks have been carried out. For example, although all staff had barring list checks prior to taking up their appointment, in a small number of cases, checks from the Disclosure and Barring Service had not always been received in time. Pupils were not placed at risk as a result of these shortcomings, as those in question were accompanied and supervised by other staff. In isolated cases, staff files lacked key details such as the record of the check of qualifications.
- 4.19 Admission and attendance registers contain the required information, are suitably maintained and are properly stored for the required time.



## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 Governors are strongly committed to fulfilling the aims of the school by maintaining its special ethos and qualities. Each governor has a designated area of responsibility covering the continuance of the school's heritage, safeguarding, finance, property and marketing. They bring a broad range of expertise to their roles which is used well to provide effective oversight and guidance of the school in most respects. A number of governors live locally and have children who attend Dolphin school. This enables a clear and informed view of future development needs. Governors meet at least termly or more often, as required. Minutes of meetings are detailed and demonstrate that key issues are analysed and debated carefully. In this way, governance ensures that senior managers within the school are offered support, challenge and stimulus for improvement. In the present structure, there is no governor who has specific expertise in education meaning that oversight of educational standards is insufficiently informed and relies heavily on reports from the principal. Evidence from a meeting with the chair of governors and a scrutiny of minutes show that plans to address this by increasing the composition of the governing body to include members with a background in education have already been agreed.
- 5.3 All governors undergo a careful induction to their role so that they understand their responsibilities for child protection, welfare and health and safety. Records show that appropriate training is regularly undertaken. The annual review of safeguarding policies and procedures is carried out appropriately. However, the monitoring of the content of regulatory policies and their implementation is insufficiently rigorous or timely, particularly in relation to policy content and the required checks on the recruitment of staff. Governors have not ensured that personnel with responsibility for maintaining these files have the requisite training to complete the records effectively.
- 5.4 Since the previous inspection, governors have invested heavily in the improvement of facilities to accommodate the planned expansion. In close consultation with the newly appointed principal, the governing body has drawn up a comprehensive strategic plan which will drive forward future development also. It has given careful consideration to all aspects so that good provision has been made for suitable investment in staff, accommodation and learning resources.

### **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 Senior leaders are united in their determination to preserve the school's ethos. They work well together, providing clear educational direction which ensures that all staff commit to the challenge of finding and celebrating the excellence in every pupil, thereby fulfilling the school's central aim. This shared common purpose has a significant impact on the pupils' well-being; they thrive in a warm and caring environment in which each pupil knows that they are valued. In conversations and

in their responses to the questionnaire, pupils confirmed that they were happy at school.

- 5.7 Each morning begins with staff meeting together in a short act of collective worship and a thought for the day which focuses on the personal contribution each staff member can make to the success of the community as a whole. In this way, the school runs extremely well on a day-to-day basis. Responses from parents to the questionnaire show that the overwhelming majority feel that the school is well led and managed.
- 5.8 The principal, although new to the school, has a clear vision for future improvement and a well-informed understanding of the school's current stage of development. The structure of the senior leadership group has been reviewed with governors and will be completed by a second deputy, already appointed but not yet in post. An additional role has been created, giving specific responsibility for the continuance of the school's ethos. With the governors, the existing leadership team has formulated a comprehensive school development plan with the core aim being to formalize the role of middle managers who will be tasked with implementing formal structures in the assessment of teaching and learning so that self-assessment and reflection as a tool for school development becomes an embedded practice. At present, a great deal of information about each pupils' educational welfare is collated and discussed during staff meetings or more informally. However, there are few formal systems to analyse the overall effectiveness of new curriculum initiatives or to set targets and analyse pupil progress against potential. Little progress has been made in meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection to complete the process of mapping the relevant use of ICT in schemes of work. The development plan sets out the need to appoint subject leaders with specific expertise so that the delivery and content of the educational provision and care can be formally evaluated as part of the drive for on-going improvement.
- 5.9 The school has appropriate policies in place which are reviewed and implemented effectively in the main, although scrutiny of these prior to the inspection showed that the management has not been sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that they all reflected the most recent requirements, although practice did so. Once identified, the school took immediate action to deal with shortcomings.
- 5.10 The school is successful in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff. The centralised register accurately records the recruitment checks concerning references, qualifications, medical fitness and professional background but in a few cases the requirement to complete all checks before the successful applicant begins work has not been followed. Pupils were not at risk, however. All staff receive appropriate and regular training in safeguarding and in welfare, health and safety. A careful induction process ensures that new staff quickly become part of a committed and mutually supportive team. Teaching assistants and non-teaching staff report that they feel well supported within a caring community so that they make a strong contribution to the efficient running of the school. Senior management responds positively to requests for professional development opportunities and records show that training in how children learn best is frequent, contributing to the personal development of the pupils.
- 5.11 The school has excellent relationships with parents; all those who responded to the questionnaire felt that their child is well cared for and the overwhelming majority confirm their satisfaction with the degree of communication between home and school. Parents appreciate the comprehensive range of information available to

them through the weekly newsletters. An increasing amount of communication by email and through the parents portal on the website is making a positive impact in maintaining high standards of easy communication. By the end of the inspection, access to regulatory policies was made available to the parents of prospective pupils as required.

- 5.12 Personal contact between staff and parents is frequent, characterised by an understanding of individual needs and genuine care for the well-being of the family as a whole. Parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns and most report that issues are swiftly and sensitively addressed. Scrutiny of records show that complaints are infrequent, receive due attention and are handled in accordance with the school's policy.
- 5.13 Excellent opportunities exist for parents to be included in the life of the school through invitations to attend the weekly prayer group or school assemblies and a wide variety of organised social events. There is an active parents association, with an elected representative from each class forming the committee. Social events are well attended, which fosters a strong sense of community. The strong relationships that exist between home and school create a stable and supportive environment for pupils and make a positive impact on their personal development.
- 5.14 Regular formal and informal feedback is provided through two parents meetings and an annual report. Families are greeted by senior managers at the start and end of the day, so that opportunities to access information are immediate. Written reports are detailed and tailored to the individual, identifying progress and setting targets for improvement.

**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 settings make outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend.
- 6.2 Staff know the children extremely well so that they are able to ensure that planning of activities matches the needs of all. Educational programmes for children under the age of three are carefully structured so that excellent progress is made in their communication, language, social, emotional and physical development. For older children, a rich, varied curriculum enables every child, including those with SEND and EAL, to reach and frequently exceed the level of development typical for their age.
- 6.3 Children are well supported to acquire the skills and capacity to learn effectively so that they are well prepared for the next stages of their learning. Stimulating environments within each of the four settings provide many opportunities for active learning, whilst the broad curriculum provides a wide range of experiences, delivered through a well-structured balance of child-led or adult-initiated activities. Opportunities to explore the external environment are inconsistent across the EYFS. In Reception, children make daily trips to the nearby common which offers excellent opportunities to learn about nature and to experience a wide range of natural resources. Younger children have more restricted opportunities to use the outdoor space available to them, which is not always a sufficiently-stimulating environment. Within each of the settings, resources such as puppets and inter-active games are plentiful and well-used to stimulate interest and promote. Staff use spontaneous events well, such as a thunderstorm, to stimulate children's interest in the world around them.
- 6.4 Staff have high expectations for the children. They take great care to present activities which motivate and enthuse. Continuous reflective practice, based on highly effective observation and assessment, results in careful adaptations to activities, teaching strategies and expected outcomes based on the needs of individual children of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND or EAL.
- 6.5 Parents of children in the EYFS were overwhelmingly positive in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meetings with parents during the inspection confirmed a high level of satisfaction. Parents report that they feel welcomed and appreciate the efforts made to understand their child's care needs and level of development so that children settle quickly and happily. They remain well informed about their child's progress throughout their time in the EYFS because consultation, both formal and informal, is encouraged. An excellent range of general information is also provided to parents, who also have opportunities to attend *Parental Involvement* workshops to learn about ways to support their children at home.

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

- 6.6 The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being is outstanding.
- 6.7 Each child is welcomed warmly so that a secure emotional attachment to a key person begins from their first days in the EYFS. Once they are settled happily, they are gently encouraged to form strong bonds with other staff also. Clear, regular routines provide a sense of security so that children separate happily from their parents and join in activities eagerly.
- 6.8 Priority is given to children's personal, social and emotional development, with high expectations for behaviour. Staff act as role models, so that children learn how to speak courteously to one another and to share and take turns. Simple classroom rules and special helper responsibilities encourage consideration for others and co-operation. Children were observed to talk and play happily and readily ask for help from other children as well as adults.
- 6.9 As children mature, they are encouraged to become increasingly independent. Children in the nurseries put on their coats and change their shoes whilst older children take responsibility for their belongings and are encouraged to use the classroom resources carefully and safely. Weekly dance classes and regular sports activities promote an understanding of the importance of physical exercise. Fresh drinking water is available at all times, healthy eating is actively promoted so that they understand which foods are good for them. Children are very well supported as they develop independent personal hygiene habits.
- 6.10 Nursery staff are sensitive to the children's emotional needs as they prepare to move on to full-time school. Extended stay sessions for older children in the nurseries prepare them well for the longer day but there are few opportunities to visit the main school prior to transition. Children in Reception class at Dolphin School have many opportunities to mix with older pupils within this close-knit community, preparing them well for the transition to Year 1.

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

- 6.11 Leadership and management of the EYFS requires improvement.
- 6.12 Oversight of provision and care by governors is insufficient because they are not fully conversant with their responsibilities under the EYFS regulatory requirements and to date, have had very limited involvement with the settings.
- 6.13 Oversight by managers of the nursery schools and Reception is effective in monitoring the quality of assessment and planning so that they fulfil their responsibilities to meet the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. However, senior leaders have a limited oversight of the EYFS provision as a whole because there is no overall management responsibility and few established links between staff in the various settings. Systems, policies and procedures are not always used consistently between the nursery schools and Reception to create a uniform provision which meets current regulations. Recruitment processes are insufficiently secure, so that the requirement to complete all necessary checks or to obtain statements of disqualification by association has not been followed in a small number of cases.

- 6.14 The day-to-day running of each setting is well managed. Evaluation of practice by staff with management responsibility is a strength; activities are amended based on an assessment of their success in meeting the children's needs. Within each setting, risk assessments are comprehensive and daily safety checks are rigorously implemented to ensure potential hazards are swiftly removed. Staff are highly successful in creating an environment which is welcoming, safe and stimulating, in which children are happy and thriving.
- 6.15 Staff report that they feel well supported in their professional development and records confirm that they are given appropriate access to further training which has a positive impact on care practice. Separate policies for performance management of staff in the nurseries and Reception are in place but formal systems to appraise and evaluate practice have not yet been fully implemented for all staff. A review is currently underway to unify these systems.
- 6.16 Close partnerships between parents and staff ensure that children's needs are recognised, including those with SEND. Good links have been established with external agencies to secure appropriate interventions, so that children receive additional support where necessary.

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

- 6.17 The overall quality and standards of the EYFS require improvement.
- 6.18 Children of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND, make good and most frequently excellent progress in their learning and personal development. Assessment data are carefully collated and confirms that almost all children reach and many exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the foundation stage. Those few children who do not make the expected progress are carefully monitored and receive appropriate support, including from external agencies, where required.
- 6.19 Children display the characteristics of effective learners. They are highly inquisitive, eager to participate and confident to share what they have learnt with others. They listen attentively, developing excellent listening skills from a young age. In the nurseries, children can recognise sounds, and some begin to recognise familiar words. By the end of Reception, the more able children are reading fluently for their age and can write independently for a variety of situations such as creating shopping lists in the role play area or giving an account of a visit to a local park. They made plausible attempts to spell complex words when devising signs for a garden centre in the role play area. The youngest children use language confidently to say what they can do; they recognise colours, and can count accurately up to five, with the most able encouraged to go further. Older children have a secure understanding of mathematical concepts and use this to solve well-presented, challenging problems such as discovering which container has the greater capacity. Children develop familiarity with ICT, confidently controlling a mouse when working independently on a computer.
- 6.20 Provision for all children, including those with SEND and/or EAL is good. When children with additional needs are given sufficient support to participate fully, they make rapid progress in relation to their starting point and ability.
- 6.21 Children thrive in this caring, supportive environment; an atmosphere of calm and order prevails which promotes their overall well-being. Children feel safe because staff understand their need for security and consistency of daily routines. Evaluation of practice within each setting is a strength but there is no overall assessment of the

quality of care and links between settings are few, which limits the opportunities to share good practice. Welfare policies are implemented well within each setting, but systems for checking the suitability of staff before appointment have not been sufficiently rigorous.

- 6.22 In response to the recommendations of the previous reports, Noah's Ark Nursery Schools have successfully introduced opportunities for children to grow and tend plants, and has developed the teaching of shape and measure through investigation and purposeful play.

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