

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Millfield Preparatory School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	Millfield Preparatory School
DCSF Number	933/6115
Early Years Number	EY395459
Registered Charity Number	310283
Address	Edgarley Hall, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8LD.
Telephone Number	01458 832446
Fax Number	01458 833679
Email Address	office@millfieldprep.com
Headmaster	Mr Kevin Cheney
Chair of Governors	Mrs Judith Derbyshire
Age Range (of the whole school)	2 to 13
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	23rd to 26th November 2009
Head of Early Years Setting	Mrs Lynne Mitchell
Early Years Age Range	2 to 5
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	23rd to 24th November 2009

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. The inspection was carried out by ISI, a body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting EYFS provision in schools belonging to the ISC Associations. Section 7 of this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the Statutory Framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate. The Ofsted report is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Millfield School was founded in 1935 as a very small school in Street in Somerset. The school developed a strong reputation for helping children with learning difficulties. In 1946 the same founder opened Edgarley Hall School, which is now known as Millfield Preparatory School. It is part of the Millfield Foundation and both it and its senior school counterpart, Millfield School, are overseen by the same board of governors. In 2003, the Pre-Preparatory (Pre-Prep) department moved from its site elsewhere in Glastonbury to its current accommodation at Edgarley Hall.
- 1.2 Currently the school has 468 full-time pupils of whom 252 are boys and 216 girls. Numbers at the school have fallen by about seventy pupils since the last inspection. The Pre-Prep department has 25 part-time and 14 full-time pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and 48 in Years 1 and 2. In the main part of the school there are 168 pupils in Years 3 to 6 and 237 pupils in Years 7 and 8. One hundred and fifty four pupils are boarders. About fifteen per cent of the pupils have some form of bursary or scholarship funded by the school's own resources, and a number of pupils are supported by the Ministry of Defence and other organisations. The school has five boarding houses. A small number of pupils are from overseas, and for 26 pupils English is not their principal language.
- 1.3 The school is primarily non-selective but its policy is to take pupils who it feels will be able to progress to study for the GCSE at the senior school. The ability range is wide, with a number of academically able pupils and two pupils with a statement of special educational need. Overall the ability profile of the school is in line with the national average. More than a quarter of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and receive specialist learning support. The school does not take part in national tests.
- 1.4 The school aims to be '...an outstanding school which provides individual pupils of wide ranging abilities and different social and cultural backgrounds with the challenges and resources to achieve their very highest standards in academic, cultural, physical, moral and spiritual fields within an international, co-educational and boarding environment.' It also aims to '...provide individual pupils with the pastoral care, the challenges and resources to enable them to achieve their very highest standards in all aspects of their lives within a framework of an international, co-educational boarding and day school.'
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.
- 1.6 See Section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided by the school is outstanding, and is consistent with its aims and philosophy. In the Early Years Foundation Stage a well balanced curriculum makes excellent provision for the six areas of learning.
- 2.2 Since the last inspection the school has built upon and improved an already extensive curriculum. A number of new initiatives has led to this improvement. A forest school and wildlife area have been created and drama has developed as a result of the conversion of a sports hall to enable its use as a theatre. The very well set up Learning Development Centre (LDC) has been fully re-equipped and is now located in the main building and endorses the school's strong commitment to meeting the individual learning needs of pupils. The educational experience provided by the Pre-Prep department is outstanding and mirrors the vision of the school as a whole.
- 2.3 Pupils are given abundant opportunity to fully develop their linguistic, speaking and listening skills with the introduction of literacy work and French from Reception onwards. Their mathematical, scientific and technological development is well supported throughout the school, as, for example, when Year 2 pupils learned about the inventions of Leonardo da Vinci in an inspirational lesson which led to them designing their own inventions. Year 8 pupils in an outstanding cookery lesson made bread, learning about both science and food technology.
- 2.4 Considerable investment has been made in the development of facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) and all pupils benefit from this in the development of their ICT skills. The humanities subjects, and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHE) contribute significantly to the pupils' very successful human and social development. Work in physical education (PE) and games makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' physical development. Highly effective provision for music, and for art and craft, ensures pupils' aesthetic and creative development. The school has a tradition of musical excellence, and the very good provision for pupils to enjoy music-making was evident in a rehearsal by Years 3 and 4 for their end-of-term performance of a children's version of Handel's Messiah. The employment of an Iranian sculptor as an artist in residence and part-time teacher of ceramics and sculpture gives pupils a unique insight into how an artist works.
- 2.5 Pupils are well prepared both academically and socially for the transition to the next phase of their education. The curriculum is designed to allow pupils throughout the school to have ready access to the high quality facilities and specialist staff. A strong link exists between the tutors of Millfield Preparatory school and Millfield School, the senior school to which most of the pupils progress, and this increases in the term prior to their departure to ensure a seamless transfer for Year 8 pupils.
- 2.6 The school makes outstanding provision for extra-curricular activities and offers a very broad range of options to all. Pupils' experiences are enriched through an extra-curricular programme that is a key part of the school's ethos. Sport plays a central role in the lives of most pupils, and the new sports hall and squash courts greatly enhance sporting opportunities. Pupils enjoy and benefit from a huge range of physical activities including mainstream sports such as cricket, rugby, swimming and tennis as well as more specialist activities such as aerobics, climbing, fencing and riding. A very wide range of tastes and talents is catered for in an eclectic range of other activities on offer including, for example, archery, canoeing, caving, chess, pottery, golf, photography and dramatic speaking. Pupils' choices are carefully monitored to ensure that they all have a range of experiences. The Pre-

Prep curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of activities such as riding, chess, gardening and needlework.

- 2.7 The provision of individualised learning support offered in the LDC is integral to the school's aims and is an outstanding feature and strength of the school. Pupils' learning needs are exhaustively evaluated and detailed programmes set up for individual pupils to help them overcome learning difficulties. Pupils are aware that the well-trained and very skilled staff of the centre play a key role in ensuring that they progress and grow in confidence in reading and writing. The school timetable is organised in such a way that pupils who work with the LDC are able to gain suitable access to the rest of the curriculum. For those pupils who arrive with English as an additional language, an individualised programme is devised to accelerate their acquisition of English, easing them gradually into the wider school curriculum. The school also provides 'refresher' lessons in pupils' native tongues to ensure that it is not forgotten in the process of acquiring good English. Gifted and talented pupils' learning needs are identified to ensure that every child meets his or her true potential using a programme which is effective in spotting potential, academic and curricular excellence.
- 2.8 Curriculum policies and schemes of work are thorough and boys and girls have equal opportunities to study a broad range of subjects. The school's commitment to inclusion is exemplified by a carefully planned rugby practice skills session which enabled a pupil with mild cerebral palsy to join in with the rest of the group.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 The standards of learning and achievement are good overall with some outstanding features in achievement, maintaining the standards seen at the last inspection. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are keen and successful learners and are proud of their considerable achievements. The quality of learning largely meets the school's aims and aspirations, although not all pupils are enabled to meet the aspiration to achieve the very highest standards of which they are capable across the full range of academic subjects. The ethos of the Pre-Prep department promotes very positive attitudes towards learning in a nurturing environment where pupils show confidence and a love of learning. From the youngest in the Pre-Prep department pupils show high levels of independence and self-motivation.
- 2.11 Pupils demonstrate good creative and critical thinking skills. In art, Year 7 pupils thought creatively in a lesson involving technical skills in printmaking, and as part of National Poetry Day Year 8 pupils used ICT graphics to lay out poems. Unusually, the pupils learn chess in timetabled lessons and this makes a positive contribution to logical and independent thinking. Robust critical thinking and understanding are also developed, for example, when Year 8 pupils in an English lesson were encouraged to imagine themselves as participants in a 'walk for life' in a future world. Thinking skills are studied explicitly within the gifted and talented programme in Years 4 and 5.
- 2.12 Pupils listen attentively and their speaking skills are strong. They are articulate and can express their ideas clearly. Speaking confidently in front of others is encouraged by the many lessons where extended question and answer sessions are used to build and reinforce learning, and where opinions are sought, as for example in English and history. In the school library the librarian encourages creative thinking and speaking by organising storytelling sessions. The regular involvement of many of the pupils in competitive dramatic speaking helps to develop their speaking skills.

- 2.13 Progress in reading, writing and mathematical skills is good. The development of reading and writing is very good in the case of pupils who are supported by the LDC, and for overseas pupils who arrive at the school with limited English. Pupils' knowledge and skills in mathematics are secure and good progress is made at all levels of ability across the year groups. Pupils make effective use of ICT for learning throughout the school. Its use is embedded in the Pre-Prep curriculum, where pupils use ICT daily as part of their mathematics lessons and research through the intranet. In art, digital photography is used by pupils as an integral part of a self-portrait project.
- 2.14 There is no significant difference in the relative attainment of different groups of pupils. There are equal opportunities for boys and girls, and for those of differing abilities. Although pupils are very keen learners and their learning is good, there are lessons where less effective teaching strategies limit the level of learning.
- 2.15 The school is non-selective and the range of abilities is very wide, from pupils with learning difficulties to those who are academically gifted. The school does not participate in national tests but a range of standardised tests are used and confirm that pupils make good progress overall, and that pupils with learning difficulties who are supported by the LDC make very good progress. In addition, departmental topic tests used to track progress made in individual subject areas indicate good progress.
- 2.16 Achievement at the school is outstanding in many areas. The many activities on offer give pupils the scope to achieve both individually, in groups and in teams, and they have numerous opportunities for success which contribute to the development of their confidence and their understanding of shared responsibilities.
- 2.17 The pupils are justifiably proud that their school has twice been awarded the Green Flag Award for environmental awareness. Many pupils are successful in the instrumental and music theory examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) often gaining merits and distinctions with some achieving up to grade 8 and beyond. Others take the examinations in speech and drama of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). Pupils often participate in local festivals, for example, the recent Taunton Festival where 33 pupils gained awards for dramatic recital. Such successes are frequently celebrated in the twice weekly assemblies. The Pre-Prep department also has a weekly assembly dedicated to the celebration of achievement.
- 2.18 Pupils regularly participate in many drama productions and music concerts. The school devises its own drama productions to ensure that large numbers of pupils can be involved, as for example when 130 pupils from Years 7 and 8 all have speaking parts in a play. Pupils achieve high levels of success in the nationwide Junior Mathematics Challenge, one pupil qualified for the Junior Mathematical Olympiad and another won the national individual chess championship of the Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS).
- 2.19 Millfield pupils achieve numerous sporting successes both individually and in teams. They excel at athletics, swimming, tennis, hockey, rugby, cricket, golf, riding, netball, football, fencing and much more. Pupils at the school are national champions in a variety of sports.
- 2.20 Pupils are able to take notes effectively and organise their work independently. In a Year 7 Science class, pupils took very good notes on solids, liquids and gases while a Year 3 class made good use of their planners to organise their work. During their final term, Year 8 undertake project work requiring independent study, and this stands them in good stead for their transition to the senior school.
- 2.21 Pupils study and work well together, and many examples of successful paired and group work were observed during the inspection. There were numerous instances of cooperation on

the sports field. In addition, in a Pre-Prep science lesson pupils worked in groups of three on an investigation into magnetism, while in Year 8, an English lesson involved a highly effective whole class reading of Romeo and Juliet.

- 2.22 Pupils arrive promptly to lessons and settle quickly and quietly. They concentrate well and are keen to participate in discussion work. They persevere with their work, are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy their learning. In a Year 7 music lesson pupils particularly enjoyed reading lists of railway stations in rhythmic unison.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.23 Throughout the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, there are outstanding opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The school fully meets its aims in this respect and has maintained the very high quality noted in the last inspection.
- 2.24 Pupils' spiritual development is very good. The starting point for spiritual development is the school's beautiful setting with inspirational views over the Somerset countryside. A carefully structured PHSE programme, provided throughout the school, gives pupils opportunities to consider matters of conscience and to discuss ways in which spiritual beliefs affect society. There are regular assemblies, in which pupils participate fully, providing good opportunities to think about values and develop spiritual awareness. In an excellent assembly on the theme of 'Tolerance', pupils were actively involved in discussion and role-play when considering figures such as the Good Samaritan, Ghandi and Martin Luther King. The assembly's spiritual dimension was enhanced by a high quality performance of classical piano music by a Year 8 pupil. Group tutor lessons are used to reinforce assembly themes.
- 2.25 Pupils develop a healthy sense of self-identity, self-worth and personal insight. They are encouraged in this, for example in Year 3, by creating posters entitled 'Eight things that I like about me'. Pupils take evident pride and pleasure in their achievements. This is helped by receiving awards for a variety of activities, be they Headmaster's Commendation for academic work, music certificates for success in Associated Board exams or for success in sport. Pre-Prep pupils' achievement is celebrated each week in assembly and pupils are given every encouragement to do their best.
- 2.26 Pupils have a good moral sense and an understanding of right and wrong. They behave well both in and out of class and they appreciate and understand about the system of awarding red or green slips which count towards house points for good or bad behaviour. This understanding is reinforced, for example, in a Year 3 PSHE lesson where pupils discussed why the school has rules. The link between teachers' expectations and the good behaviour of pupils is exemplified by one pupil's comment: 'We like to behave well, because the teachers are nice to us and we do not want to let them down'.
- 2.27 Pupils develop very good social skills in a wide variety of situations including playing in musical ensembles, singing in choirs and participating in sporting teams. The appointment of Year 8 pupils as monitors gives them opportunities to take responsibility and to develop their ability as leaders. Each class from Year 3 upwards has one class and one year representative. The year representatives are members of the School Council which gives them the chance to have their say in the development of the school. In addition pupils can join a Green Council which promotes ideas about care for the environment, including developing awareness of how resources such as food can be conserved.
- 2.28 Provision for pupils' cultural development is excellent, with plenty of opportunities for them to widen their experiences of art and music and to learn about other cultures. The school

displays a number of original works of art, including inspiring large-scale outdoor sculptures designed to work with the natural and built environment of the school. Together with the high quality displays of pupils' art around the school, these enhance the richness of cultural life for the pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils to hear and participate in music of a high standard, both in lessons and after school. Awareness of other cultures develops consistently as pupils move through the school, with good references across the curriculum to the celebration of cultural differences. In some assemblies, prayers from other religions are used and festivals from different religious traditions recognised. Pupils learn about other children from other countries and the difficulties they face through initiatives such as the support the school organises for a child from Africa, and the regular provision of help for an orphanage in Romania.

- 2.29 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the school [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.30 The quality of teaching is good and often outstanding throughout the school, meeting the school's aims for the most part and maintaining the quality of teaching seen at the last inspection. In the Early Years Foundation Stage teaching is outstandingly well organised and provides suitable challenges for pupils.
- 2.31 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress. The school has a very dedicated team of teachers and coaches, who have genuine passion for their subjects. Lessons are well planned to meet the learning needs of pupils with different levels of ability. In particular, teachers' planning in the LDC ensures that pupils' learning needs are identified and progress carefully monitored. The comprehensive pupil-level information gathered by the LDC is shared with other staff enabling the needs of the pupils to be met on an individual basis. The teaching of English as an additional language gives priority to ensuring that pupils have functional English, then precisely targets areas of need such as confidence in using language rules, enabling pupils to fulfil their potential across the curriculum and to move on smoothly to their next stage in education. Teaching is usually well suited to the needs of the most able who are often challenged by a range of teaching strategies to achieve to their full potential. Pupils are tested by good questioning and are trained to observe, comment and develop reasoning skills.
- 2.32 The best lessons are taught at a brisk pace, with well-planned and sustained question and answer sessions to check pupils' understanding and plenty of opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. These lessons are so industrious because teaching consolidates prior learning, makes sure that pupils are fully involved and learn through interesting and varied activities, and ensures that their knowledge is comprehensive and sound. In a Pre-Prep lesson pupils were given good opportunities to plan and organise experiments in science.
- 2.33 The quality of teaching in the application of physical skills is outstanding. Teachers' expertise and confidence in mainstream and less familiar games, sports and PE activities, and the excellent facilities for these activities, encourage pupils of all levels of physical ability to think and learn quickly, and to strive for the highest standards. Teaching in art, music and drama is also very effective and is geared to inclusion, enabling all pupils to better understand and participate in the arts. Intellectual skills are generally well developed, although in a minority of academic lessons not enough pace or challenge are provided. This weaker teaching does not make enough demand on pupils and lacks awareness of the full range of teaching strategies through which pupils can make the most of their abilities.

- Although pupils settle and work well, the pace is slower, the activity less focused and not so much is done to fully exploit pupils' curiosity or prompt further enquiry.
- 2.34 The good rapport teachers have with their pupils and the variety of activities they can offer helps to promote good behaviour and the enjoyment of learning. Teachers' planning is good and reflects their strong subject knowledge and skills in their subjects. Teachers gain a good understanding of the operation of the whole school as a result of working outside their main subject or age group, for example in ICT or coaching school teams.
- 2.35 The use of well-established teaching strategies within lessons is seen in the best lessons so that, for example in food technology and in the Pre-Prep department, teachers ensure that pupils work to clear learning targets and objectives, they use brief plenaries to check on progress and they enable pupils to evaluate their own work against criteria, helping them to understand how to reach the next step or improve their work.
- 2.36 A strength of the teaching provision is the regular meetings held by all subject departments to monitor pupils' progress, reflect on their learning needs and plan the curriculum. Teachers of PE, for example, monitor closely pupils' commitments and adjust their physical activity workload as necessary, particularly in the light of a regular flow of information from the school's surgery about pupils who are receiving treatment. Heads of subject scrutinise pupils' work and review the quality and style of teaching in their departments, with good practice shared well in some but not all departments.
- 2.37 The school has good and often exceptional teaching resources as, for example, in sport and PE, art, design and technology and music. The resources for ICT have been extended considerably and remain very good.
- 2.38 Marking of pupils' work is regular but it varies in quality. Much of the marking rewards pupils for good work and tells them clearly what they need to do to achieve the next steps as, for example, in English, science and food technology. Other marking relies too much on ticks and marks, and does not give enough feedback for improvement.
- 2.39 The school has put in place a range of measures to evaluate pupils' performance by using standardised tests and is using these to good effect, particularly in the Pre Prep department.
- 2.40 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The good quality of pastoral care noted in the last inspection has been further improved and is now outstanding. The quality of pastoral care in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with provision for the rest of the school and is outstanding. Staff provide very effectively for the well-being, safeguarding and safety of the pupils, see their welfare as a priority and are supported in this by a good management structure for pastoral care. This excellence in pastoral care is fundamental to the school's aims, which seek to enable the discovery and development of unique talents and abilities in each pupil.
- 3.2 The first line of support and guidance is provided by group tutors and heads of year who ensure the welfare of pupils and provide excellent care for each individual. Staff are given clear guidance in what is expected of them, and what they can expect from pupils. Pastoral work is well supported by the pastoral co-ordinator, house parents and liaison tutors, a fully qualified medical team, a counsellor and a school chaplain. This range of allocated pastoral responsibilities builds a well co-ordinated network of care and supports the welfare of pupils very effectively. Both day and boarding pupils are aware that they are well supported by staff. The pupils know they can invariably turn to the staff for help; one pupil said: 'there is always someone cheering you on'.
- 3.3 The LDC plays a significant role in providing pupils with an additional layer of support, and they value the personal confidence they gain from making often excellent progress in reading and writing.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is outstanding. Mutual trust and respect are enshrined in the school's mission statement and are very much in evidence. Staff speak warmly to pupils, and courtesy is the expectation. Pupils also have very good relationships with each other. They are ready to support one another as, for example, when in a swimming lesson a high achiever helped less experienced swimmers under the guidance of the teacher.
- 3.5 Staff and pupils are clear about expected behaviour and the system of rewards and sanctions is clearly understood. Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with quickly and appropriately. Pupils show a very good understanding about what constitutes bullying and say that prompt action is taken if it occurs.
- 3.6 Secure safeguarding and child protection measures are in place. There is a child protection officer for the whole school as well as a governor with responsibility for child protection, and appropriate training is undertaken. There is a comprehensive policy for child protection in the staff handbook and staff are well aware of this aspect of their work. They understand the need to be vigilant, know the procedures to invoke in the event of a disclosure or a concern and know about the need for confidentiality. Two members of staff involved in ICT provision and teaching have had training in children's safe use of the internet, and parents are offered advice on internet safety.
- 3.7 The school takes health and safety matters very seriously, and has due regard for health and safety regulations, with concerns being anticipated, reported and acted on. Suitable measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Each teaching block and boarding house has a fire officer. Equipment is regularly checked by a designated health and safety representative and hazardous materials are safely stored. Regular fire drills for the whole school and for the boarding houses are carefully introduced to ensure that all pupils,

including those newly arrived from overseas, understand procedures without feeling threatened by the alarm. The school maintains suitable attendance and admission registers.

- 3.8 A qualified health and safety advisor monitors compliance with legislation, reviews documentation and guidance and organises training, for example for new staff who undergo health and safety training as part of their induction. Risk assessments are devolved to departments and there is a matrix of line management detailing the checking of these. The health and safety committee provides ample expertise and oversight.
- 3.9 Healthy eating is successfully promoted throughout the school. The school dining room offers a good range of healthy food, prepared in a way which keeps the interest of pupils, with the catering staff often preparing themed menus based on different cultural traditions or annual events. From the Early Years onwards pupils are urged to make choices for a balanced meal and they also show good signs of knowing what that means. Good hygiene is promoted, with carefully supervised hand washing before meals. As part of their work on the environment pupils are asked to think carefully about what they choose to take on their plates to avoid too much waste. There are ample opportunities for pupils to take exercise. The breadth of provision means that pupils can always find an activity to enjoy and which gives them regular exercise.
- 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.11 The school fulfils its aims to forge good partnerships with parents and the community. The improvements made since the last inspection, including meeting all recommendations in relation to regulatory matters, mean that these links are now outstanding.
- 3.12 An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to a questionnaire distributed in advance of the inspection expressed high degrees of satisfaction with the school. There were no areas of significant dissatisfaction, and although a small number of parents thought that pupils were given too much homework, the inspectors found that an appropriate level and amount of homework was set.
- 3.13 There are numerous opportunities for parents to be involved in activities in the school. The Parents and Friends group has a committee that meets regularly to organize various functions at the school. These functions are well attended and not only do they raise money for the school and for charitable causes, but also allow parents and staff to meet informally and thereby help strengthen links between them.
- 3.14 In the Pre-Prep department parents are encouraged to come into to the classroom in the mornings to help settle the pupils, and all parents are always invited to attend matches, concerts and dramatic productions. These essential early links between school and home provide the beginnings of a lasting partnership which is central to the success of the school as a whole.
- 3.15 Parents appreciate the very wide range of helpful information that is available to them. There is a detailed handbook that informs them about all aspects of school life. Parents may also access the school's website which contains much useful information. The website, for example, not only supplies parents with the school's weekly newsletter, but also gives details of the lunch menus to help avoid repetition at home for the day pupils. Twice a year, full reports about a pupil's progress are sent to parents. These give details of topics covered, any examination results where appropriate and helpful advice on how to improve. Parents are also made aware of their child's progress through grades that are sent out each half term, and

they may also discuss pupils' progress with teachers at the annual formal parents' evening. Group tutors make contact with parents before the start of the year to establish a working link between them. Good use is made of pupil planners in which members of staff write to inform parents or house-parents of current issues. This provides a further line of communication and dialogue because parents and house-parents can and do respond in the planners.

- 3.16 There have been no formal complaints during the last academic year and any concerns by parents are dealt with promptly by the group tutor, house-parent or head of department. Details of who to contact are available in a parental handbook, as are full details of the procedure to follow if a complaint is to be made.
- 3.17 The school has established many excellent links with the community and shares its extensive sporting facilities with many local organisations. The annual local primary schools soccer tournament and the NSPCC tennis tournament are held here. The Recital Hall is used regularly for local concerts and also for national training courses. The school takes an active part in local events; for example, a pupil won the Wells Young Chef competition last year, and another pupil is in the final of this year's competition. The school choir has sung in different events in the local community, the most recent being the 'Light up a Life' service in the local Catholic Church. Each Christmas the chaplain organizes a 'shoebox appeal' for children in Eastern Europe.
- 3.18 The school has worked hard to establish strong links with other local schools. The school recently hosted a workshop for local primary schools on the use of a movement programme for children with special needs. The school also provides mathematics in-service training for local teachers and is a member of a liaison group for local Early Years providers.
- 3.19 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.20 The quality of boarding education is outstanding and fully supports the school's aim to provide excellent pastoral care for its pupils. Pupils' education and personal development are supported by the outstanding quality of the boarding experience. The previous inspection did not inspect boarding.
- 3.21 Relationships within boarding are noticeably warm, supportive and positive. Pupils clearly value the friendships engendered by sharing a dormitory but also have excellent friendships amongst day pupils and in boarding houses other than their own. The boarding houses are seen by pupils very much as home rather than an extension of school, and rules are 'dimmed down', fostering a genuine family feel. With opportunities to take responsibilities and play a part in the smooth running of these 'families', the additional opportunities for personal development are excellent.
- 3.22 Boarders are enthusiastic about the activities they can enjoy and are appreciative of opportunities to take part in such a vibrant programme. They enthuse about organised excursions such as go-karting and paint-balling, but enjoy equally time spent in and around the boarding house, taking part in pool competitions, watching films, and playing table football. There is an excellent balance between structured activities and time made for simply relaxing with friends in the popular 'chill and chat' option. Children also love their 'own snacks' and this is another example of how the house parents work to make it feel like home rather than school.

- 3.23 The quality of accommodation and resources is outstanding. The layout, furnishings and resources, as well as the way the houses are managed and led by house parents and their teams, underpins the 'home from home' ambience. Access for boarders to learning resources and work spaces for prep is very good. Common rooms are cosy, with plenty of soft seating, books, DVDs and play equipment; quiet areas are attractive and inviting, and dorms are personalised. Boarders are justifiably proud of their 'house'.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Governance is good, supports the aims and objectives of the school and has maintained its quality since the last inspection. The governing body is common to both Millfield schools and this ensures that the needs of the preparatory school remain in focus as part of whole-school governance. The structure of the governing body provides for consistent and close attention to be given by governors to the needs of the school. The governing body has been successfully guided by the headmaster in matters of educational management in the prep school and is fully aware of its responsibilities. The governing body has good insight into the needs of the school. It has acted with appropriate care in planning for the future of the school, mindful of recent and imminent changes in leadership at the senior and prep schools and of the implications of the current financial climate. Governors are effective in discharging their responsibilities for the welfare, safeguarding and safety of pupils. A designated governing body member is linked to the school and provides the governing body with a good overview of the school's work. Plans are in place for the further development of governors' knowledge of the school through more regular and focused visits.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.2 The quality of leadership and management has remained good since the time of the last inspection and ensures that the school's expressed aims are fulfilled well. The experienced headmaster leads the school with calm authority and sense of purpose. His imminent retirement and the recent retirement of a long-standing deputy head, together with the appointment of a new headteacher, mean that the current management team structure is subject to review; the existing provision is, however, appropriate. Management arrangements are clearly defined and responsibilities are accepted willingly. The support the headmaster receives from his deputy head and other managers is very effective. Key personnel with academic, pastoral and boarding responsibilities are fully involved in the day-to-day operation of the school and, following the recommendation of the previous inspection report, the head of the Pre-Prep department is now also fully involved in the senior management team. Consultation is extensive and purposeful and the time provided within the week for regular meetings allows for all aspects of the school's provision and the welfare of its pupils to be constantly under review. All those involved with school management show great care and commitment for both pupils and staff.
- 4.3 Managers successfully form, implement and review policy and practice to ensure the smooth and successful operation of the school across all stages. Heads of year, heads of department and staff with boarding responsibilities have well-defined roles and meet regularly. Annual development plans identify short-, medium- and long-term priorities. These include appraisal and professional development. Some plans are very comprehensive and useful, incorporating worthwhile target setting, but this is not uniform across all subject areas. Good practice in linking departmental development, staff appraisal and training opportunities is seen in several departments, for example in both learning development and science. Longer term future development planning of the whole school being linked to Millfield's overall strategic plan and the impending new management of the prep school is, understandably, partially on hold.

- 4.4 The school has a substantial number of good quality policies and procedures covering all aspects of school life; these are available electronically and readily accessible to all staff. The comprehensive staff handbook provides a useful guide for all staff, and enables teachers to have a sound understanding of what is expected of them. Evaluation of procedures and policies is regular and efficient.
- 4.5 Though the school's appraisal system has been improved since the last inspection, it is still not fully implemented throughout the whole school nor is it consistently linked with the continuing professional development of teachers in every department. The recruitment of well qualified staff, incorporating all required checks, is successfully managed, and the school provides a very supportive working environment for its employees, borne out, for example, by the number of long serving members of staff in all aspects of school life. The school takes part in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQT), meets the requirements of the scheme and provides good and effective support for NQTs. There is a thorough mentoring process in place to allow new staff to settle into the school quickly and confidently.
- 4.6 The school has in place appropriate arrangements for checking the suitability of staff. Financial resources are well managed. The school is exceptionally well resourced and much of the purpose-built accommodation, for both teaching and boarding, is outstanding. There are excellent resources in many subjects and to facilitate the broad range of activities and these greatly enhance the opportunities available for all pupils in line with the school's aims. The well-appointed, spacious grounds and accommodation are suitable for the educational needs of pupils and are very well maintained by the grounds and maintenance staff, many of whom are long-serving, and who clearly take a real pride in the school. The administrative support provided for teachers and pupils is strong and ensures the smooth operation of a busy school.
- 4.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Millfield Preparatory School is a vibrant and caring school which provides an outstanding range of educational opportunities. The resources and facilities of the school are world-class and fully reflect the educational philosophy of the school's founder. As a result pupils at Millfield have the time of their lives. A major strength of the school is the excellent start given to pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage setting and in the Pre-Prep department. Pupils learn well and achieve at a good and often outstanding level in the many activities they undertake. The pupils develop outstanding awareness in spiritual, social, moral and cultural areas. Teaching at the school is good and in some respects outstanding, but there is scope to develop teaching yet further to ensure that it matches the best quality throughout and makes full use of pupils' potential as learners. The safeguarding and care the school provides are excellent, and pupils are happy and feel secure. The school has established excellent links with parents and the community. Leadership, management and governance are good and have enabled the school to consolidate its position as a successful and well-regarded educational institution. The school reaches for the most part its aims and aspirations, and pupils really value the scope they are given to experience a uniquely wide range of educational activities.
- 5.2 The school has improved in a number of areas since the last inspection. It has met the recommendations of the previous report in most respects, reflecting the school's ability to evaluate and develop its provision. The management of the Pre-Prep department is now integrated into that of the rest of the school. The teaching rooms are now all of good quality. The provision of information to parents is now very good. The school has introduced an appraisal system but there is still work to do on its full implementation.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school succeeds in many of its aims, but there is scope for outstanding teaching to be more widespread so as to further enhance pupils' learning and achievement. To that end the school should:
1. put in place measures to identify and extend the qualities of existing best practice in teaching to ensure that pupils learn and achieve to the best of their abilities throughout;
 2. ensure that the appraisal system is fully implemented to support this improvement.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.
- 5.6 Any failures to meet EYFS requirements are detailed in Section 7.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 23rd to 26th November 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the sanatorium. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 23rd and 24th November 2009 by two inspectors. The inspectors observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff and governors. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.3 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of three Ofsted inspectors over three days.

List of Inspectors

Mr Peter Jones	Reporting Inspector
Mr Richard Balding	Former Head of Department, IAPS school
Mrs Susan Butcher	Head of Department, IAPS school
Mrs Sylvia Chetwood	Deputy Headteacher, IAPS school
Mr John Coakley	Headteacher, IAPS school
Mrs Tricia Fisher	Headteacher, IAPS school
Mrs Tessa Smith	Former Headteacher, GSA school
Mrs Ann Stranack	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Sally Gray	Early Years Team Inspector

7. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage setting includes 25 part-time children and one full-time child in Pre-School for 2 to 4 year-olds and 13 full-time children in Reception. These classes, including spacious outdoor areas, are within the Pre-Preparatory department. Twenty-seven receive government nursery funding. One child has a statement of special educational need and fourteen have been identified as needing learning support. The last Ofsted Nursery inspection was in 2008.
- 7.2 This is a highly effective setting. Outstanding knowledge of each individual child by every member of staff and good communications ensure that the setting's aim, to educate the whole child who will engage as an active participant in learning, is fully met. The teachers' high expectations and the excellent advice offered by the learning support department cause the significant progress made by all children whatever their abilities. The department has recently reorganised from four classes into two groups to more accurately implement the Early Years curriculum.
- 7.3 The leadership and management of the department are good. Comprehensive documentation and practices now meet the Early Years and out-of-school care requirements. Regular assessment of individual children is rigorous. Staff understand their responsibilities for safeguarding, child protection and safety; pastoral care is outstanding. Comments in the parents' questionnaire highlight confident, happy children and excellent communications between home and school. Good relations with the local authority have attracted funding which has enhanced the already excellent resources throughout the departments. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently established to identify areas for improvement and training needs. The department development plan lacks implementation detail. Regular staff meetings and informal discussions ensure that day-to-day management is effective and efficient.
- 7.4 Through carefully planned observations and excellent organisation of resources, staff provide challenging work for each child. Staff, including specialist teachers, liaise outstandingly well to create an excellent balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning. Suitable activities for all abilities in the six areas of learning are provided inside the classroom. Woodland activities are a strength of the setting, but further planned, adult-led outdoor learning opportunities are limited. The children's welfare is always strongly promoted and reinforced by the well established 'Golden Rules'. Individual learning needs are identified quickly and sensitively monitored. Risk assessments are thorough and dangers highlighted. The warm, caring environment is an outstanding feature of the whole setting. Appointment checks ensure that adults are suitable to work with children.
- 7.5 The children are enthusiastic about all aspects of the school day and are proud of their considerable achievements. Their personal development is outstanding. The children enjoy answering questions and make observations confidently. Letter formation and early writing skills are advanced. They solve number problems enthusiastically. Progress in developing computer skills across the curriculum is less evident. Classroom displays illustrate very good creative work. From the youngest age children show high levels of independence and self-motivation when, for example, dressing, choosing healthy snacks and clearing away. They confide in their key person with confidence and work cooperatively with others. Their understanding of danger was clear when lighting Hanukah candles. Lunch time is an excellent social occasion with the need to wash hands fully understood. Children take great pride in successfully fulfilling their responsibilities during their 'Golden Day'.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.6 To improve still further the high quality of its provision the setting should:
1. increase the number of planned opportunities for the use of ICT and outdoor learning across all six areas of the curriculum;
 2. introduce a more rigorous and formalised system for the monitoring of teaching and learning throughout the department.
- 7.7 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Act 2006.

Complaints Since the Last Inspection

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