



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

KINGSHOTT SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Kingshott School

Full Name of School	Kingshott School		
DCSF Number	919/6102		
EYFS Number	EY 239678		
Registered Charity Number	280626		
Address	Stevenage Road St Ippolyts Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7JX		
Telephone Number	01462 432009		
Fax Number	01462 421652		
Email Address	pa2head@kingshott.herts.sch.uk		
Headmaster	Mr Iain Gilmour		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Nigel Baker		
Age Range	3 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	341		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (229 boys; 112 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 246
	3-5 (EYFS):	50	11-13: 45
Number of Day Pupils	341	Capacity for flexi-boarding:	0
Number of Boarders	Total:	0	
	Full:	0	Weekly: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Sheila Wearmouth		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection Dates	23rd and 24th Nov 2009 (main school); 23rd Nov and 2nd Dec 2009 (EYFS)		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in March 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection 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. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Kingshott School is a co-educational preparatory school for pupils aged three to thirteen. The mission is to provide an intellectual environment and to develop and nurture each individual child. The aims are summarised by wanting each child to become 'the best me I can be'. As a charitable trust, the school has a board of eleven governors. Some are past parents or pupils. Others are professionals from local businesses or are heads of senior independent schools. The school is set in 23 acres of countryside near Hitchin. Modern buildings enhance a Victorian country house, where the school opened as a boys' boarding school in 1931. Since 1964 it has been entirely a day school, admitting girls from 1983, although currently about two-thirds of pupils are boys.
- 1.2 Since the inspection in 2006 a new headmaster has been appointed. Alterations have been made to the curriculum, and the senior management structure of the school has changed. Extensive building work has taken place, including the construction of a new teaching block for pupils aged seven to ten and improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). A Nursery class has started this year. The school has 341 pupils, including 50 aged under five. The ability profile is above the national average, with the majority of pupils well above average. The school has a broad ethnic, religious and cultural mix, with the Church of England representative of the majority. Pupils live in surrounding towns and rural areas, mostly from professional backgrounds. Forty-nine pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and receive specialist support. The three pupils who have English as an additional language are given individual support.
- 1.3 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The positive attitudes of pupils of all ages, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), enable successful learning. Pupils are committed and focused, contribute purposefully and cooperate with teachers and each other while clearly enjoying their lessons. Good progress is made over time in relation to their abilities, while they acquire skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Expectations are high. All gain entry to appropriate senior schools, often achieving scholarships. Standardised tests verify their capabilities and measure progress, but much testing has been implemented only recently. This data, together with that from routine assessment, is intended to be of greater use when more is available and it is accessible to all staff. Pupils have achieved recent successes beyond the school, for example in a senior school science competition, a general knowledge contest and a national art competition. When pupils require learning support, it is effective. In one lesson, an assistant supported a pupil to enable understanding of mathematical questions. The library is a good resource, but open for limited hours. Pupils rarely use it for research or individualised learning.
- 2.2 The school has a broad curriculum, including thinking skills and enough time for a full range of non-examined subjects. The progression from most lessons taking place with the class teacher in the classroom for younger pupils, to specialist teaching and rooms for older pupils, is particularly well managed. Great care is taken to divide year groups by ability for certain subjects, taking into account the specific needs of the cohort. The school day is long, with ten lessons, but no time is wasted as pupils move purposefully between lessons. Hot drinks and healthy snacks are available mid-morning and before after-school activities so that pupils are refreshed. Extra-curricular provision is excellent. Year 7 pupils enthusiastically listed the myriad of activities they enjoy. Those at the astronomy club used a sophisticated computerised telescope to observe Jupiter and its moons. The overall quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and many lessons were excellent. Careful planning and preparation includes tasks for pupils of differing abilities, or extension material for the more able, but this is not universal. In some lessons all pupils attempted the same work, which was therefore too easy or too difficult for some. Interactive whiteboards are used imaginatively in many lessons.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.3 The school is a very caring community, with an excellent approach to the personal development of pupils of all ages. They take delight in the natural beauty of the extensive school grounds, enjoying opportunities to climb a tree or play on adventurous equipment. Spiritual awareness was evident as pupils prepared for the school's traditional Christingle service. The school is enhanced by art displays, often three-dimensional. Pupils clearly know right from wrong, and the staff are excellent role models. Poems on the theme of bullying by Year 3 pupils were read in an assembly, showing a mature outlook and genuine concern for one another. Pupils have excellent manners and look for chances to be helpful. They belong to one of four houses, to which they show great loyalty. Good-natured competition takes place. In a Years 3 and 4 house football match, enjoyment of the game was more important than the score. Although the school has far more boys than girls,

especially in the final two years, the imbalance has no adverse impact. Relationships between pupils were seen always to be harmonious, regardless of gender, race or age. Older pupils enjoy caring for the younger ones. Cultural diversity is celebrated, for example with a display by Year 2 pupils of four places of worship used by major religions. There have been no exclusions or serious disciplinary sanctions in the last year.

- 2.4 Although care is such a priority, currently nobody has overall responsibility for the pastoral needs of boys. This was mentioned by pupils and parents in the questionnaires. The school is already aware of this anomaly, as a member of staff does have a similar responsibility for girls. Statutory policies to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are all in place, and great attention has been paid to ensure they are thorough and practicable. All the required testing of electrical and safety equipment is carried out and recorded efficiently. Support staff, including the matron, make an invaluable contribution to the well-being and happiness of the pupils, as was recognised by many of them in the questionnaire.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.5 The school is governed well, with the governors taking a real interest. Presentations by staff at meetings keep them informed about educational matters. The chairman knows the school well, and gives a good lead, although only recently have the governors become aware of the full extent of their legal responsibilities. The governors have effective committees, playing a major role in the provision and design of an outstanding, award-winning building in the last decade. The expertise and experience of individual governors is put to good use. Checks are made on all those who work in the school in any capacity, and the required centralised register is in place. A few lapses were found in procedures, although in some cases the school had already identified these and begun remedial action. These shortcomings have not compromised pupils' safety, and one governor now has a specific brief to oversee the safeguarding of pupils.
- 2.6 The headmaster has been in post for a year. His leadership is dynamic and forward looking, with a clear vision for the school, and is ably supported by a senior leadership team to enable the school's smooth day-to-day running. The roles of the team are clearly defined, but some individual workloads are excessive. At the time of the inspection, one member was on long-term absence and not all tasks had been delegated to others, for example the publication of the weekly newsletter on the website. The new buildings have a significant impact in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, but some older buildings have lacked refurbishment for some time. Pupils mentioned the boys' changing rooms, showers and lavatories. These facilities are clean, but lack privacy and provide only the most basic amenities. The outdoor environment is well-maintained and imaginatively designed and used, including a recent extension to the artificial grass pitch. Links with parents are excellent. Six reports each year keep them fully informed about their children's progress and achievement. The Kingshott Association is successful, and has recently raised money for such facilities as the computerised telescope and outdoor play equipment. In the questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly supportive, with 211 responses received, the vast majority agreeing with the statements. The school has the required complaints procedure, but no formal complaints were made in the last year.

3. MAIN SCHOOL: ACTION POINTS

(a) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended, with the exception of those indicated below.

Under Standard 4 (The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors) it must:

- ensure that for all members of staff and volunteers appointed to a position at the school, the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person character references and where appropriate, professional references. [Regulation 4.(2)(a)];
- ensure that in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the UK, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. [Regulation 4.(2)(c)];
- ensure that for any governor appointed after 1st May 2007 an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check is obtained before appointment and a check is made of the person's identity [Regulation 4B.(4)(a) and (b)].

(b) Recommended action

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Review the management structure of the school to ensure that it functions efficiently at all times and that pastoral support is available for boys.
2. Build on existing good practice to ensure that pupils of varying abilities are given appropriate tasks throughout every lesson.
3. Extend the use of assessment and monitoring, so that pupils' capabilities are measured and fully understood, enabling all to achieve the highest standards.
4. Review the use of the library, which is currently under used, to encourage individual research and learning.
5. Refurbish parts of older buildings to bring them to the same high standards as facilities in newer buildings.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

- 4.1 The EYFS Department comprises one Nursery and three Reception classes providing education and care for 50 children aged three to five years. The classes form part of the Pre-prep building which provides direct access to the outside play area. Forty-one children receive the Nursery Education Grant. Three children have been identified as having English as an additional Language (EAL).
- 4.2 The overall effectiveness of the setting is good. Good staffing ratios and clear boundaries provide an effective continuity of practice. Each child is valued as an individual who is encouraged to be an independent critical thinker. Personal, social and emotional development is promoted through the excellent roles models of the adults and the older children. The children confidently communicate their motivation and enjoyment for learning. Various assessment and observation documents are in place to monitor the children's progress providing links to the EYFS profiles.
- 4.3 The school is extremely effective in meeting the overall needs of the children. Child initiated learning is especially prominent in the afternoon and staff effectively promote the children's awareness and discovery through linking elements with the planned curriculum. There is ample split between adult-led and child-initiated activities. The staff are a dedicated and passionate team, eager to embrace and implement fully all aspects of the EYFS.
- 4.4 The leadership and management of the EYFS are good. Required policies and procedures are all in place. Safeguarding procedures are secure and all but one of the regulatory requirements is met. This does not have a detrimental effect on the safety and well-being of the children. Regular staff meetings support and enhance the process of reflective and shared practice, but these are not promoted sufficiently. Communication with parents is good with several strategies in place for welcoming parental support, but there are insufficient opportunities to promote parental awareness of the underlying principles of the EYFS. For example, there is no parents' handbook or EYFS area on the school's website.
- 4.5 The quality of the provision in the EYFS is good with many outstanding elements. The newly developed "Learning Journeys" is work in progress but is not yet linked further to ensure a continuing and reflective cycle. The learning environment both indoors and outdoors is excellently resourced. It is well planned and effective practice ensures the positive use within each class. Individuality is evident in implementation to ensure it is based upon the child.
- 4.6 Outcomes for children in the EYFS are outstanding. All staff are committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for all children providing a learning environment that encourages critical, active learners. Staff are always challenging and supporting the children to clarify their thoughts and extend them for exploration and discovery. Spontaneous learning is embraced and used as a stepping stone for future planning. Opportunities are provided for children to work alone, in pairs or small groups. Children are constantly busy, regularly engaged and involved in their activities. They are confident, respectful and extremely responsible. They are able to make choices and have formed excellent relationships with adults and peers, valuing and respecting their individuality. All children, including those with EAL make excellent progress.

5. EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE: ACTION POINTS

(a) Compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements

- 5.1 In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:
- ensure that adults looking after children, or having unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so.

(b) Recommended action

- 5.2 To improve further the good quality of its provision, the setting should take the following action:
1. further develop an observational, assessment and planning process as a whole team, which will effectively promote a seamless move from Nursery to Reception;
 2. produce a handbook for parents which includes a full understanding of the EYFS and its implementation as an entity for Nursery and Reception; and
 3. develop a specific link on the school website to the EYFS.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman 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

Mr David Bunkell

Mrs Franciska Bayliss

Mrs Dawn Nasser

Reporting inspector

Junior Team Inspector (Former Headmistress, ISA school)

Early Years Lead Inspector