

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Reigate St Mary's Preparatory and Choir School

Full Name of the School	Reigate St Mary's Preparatory and Choir School
DCSF Number	936/6531
Early Years Number	N/A
Registered Charity Number	1081898
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Headmaster	Mr Marcus Culverwell
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Age Range (of the whole school)	3 to 11
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	16th to 19th November 2009
Early Years Age Range	3 to 5
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	14th to 15th October 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 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 Reigate St Mary's Preparatory and Choir School is a non-selective day school, set in fifteen acres of Surrey countryside, in the historic market town of Reigate. The school was established in 1950 for the education of church choristers, and admitted girls in 2000. In 2003, the school merged with the senior school, Reigate Grammar School. The school retains its autonomy and the headmaster is responsible for its day-to-day running. Together with the senior school, it forms a charitable trust managed by a board of governors. The schools collaborate in many areas.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a broad education and attain high levels of academic achievement, incorporating a tradition of choral excellence within a disciplined, happy and caring environment. In addition, it aspires to provide high standards of tuition in sport and the performing arts. The school believes in extending pupils to reach the best standards possible and wants them to feel valued for who they are and not just for what they achieve. In drawing on its Christian values, it aims to nurture in pupils the qualities of caring for one another, integrity, tolerance and mutual understanding.
- 1.3 The headmaster, deputy head, curriculum co-ordinator and bursar have been appointed since the previous inspection in 2003. The school has also created a post for a key stage one co-ordinator and Early Years co-ordinator. In addition, governors have supported numerous developments, including a ten-classroom teaching block connected to a sports hall and changing rooms. New, pre-fabricated classrooms accommodate specialist teaching rooms. The information and communication technology (ICT) suite has been upgraded, a computer robotics room set up and provision for ICT increased. Interactive whiteboards have been installed in all classrooms. The school has built a small nature reserve, expanded the pond and installed a 'trim trail', courtesy of the parents' association. In addition, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) have a new outdoor area, and the school has reorganised the entry arrangements for pedestrians and cars, with more space for parking.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, 299 pupils attended the school. A total of 61 children, almost equal numbers of boys and girls, including 30 who were part-time, were in the EYFS classes. There were 76 pupils, a quarter fewer girls than boys, in Years 1 and 2, and 162 pupils with almost one-third fewer girls than boys were in Years 3 to 6. Approximately two-thirds of pupils continue into the senior school, and one-third enter other senior independent and local maintained schools. Previously, the upper age limit of pupils was thirteen, but this changed from September 2004 to eleven. Pupil numbers, the highest in the school's history, have increased by more than two-thirds since the previous inspection.
- 1.5 Most pupils live within a one-mile radius of the school. Most are of white British heritage, and come from families with a variety of economic backgrounds. Pupils enter the Lower School, comprising the EYFS, and Years 1 and 2, following an interview with parents. From Year 3, entry to the Upper School is based upon pupils' ability to demonstrate that they can manage the pace of work.
- 1.6 Children entering the EYFS have a broad range of ability. The analysis of standardised test scores from Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 shows that the ability profile of the school is well above the national average. Seventy-three pupils are identified as needing learning support, mostly for mild dyslexia, and all pupils have English as their principal language.

- 1.7 National Curriculum 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 (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage

School	Age of children
Kindergarten	3 to 4
Reception	4 to 5

- 1.8 See Section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Lower School (includes EYFS above)

School	NC name
1B, 1C	Year 1
2G, 2S	Year 2

Upper School

School	NC name
3H, 3VP	Year 3
4G, 4R, 4T	Year 4
5H, 5W	Year 5
6H, 6F	Year 6

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a wide-ranging and successful educational experience for its pupils. This is in line with the school's aim for high academic standards and high quality tuition in sport and the performing arts, together with a commitment to extra-curricular activities. This is achieved in an atmosphere grounded in Christian values.
- 2.2 Since the last inspection, the school has undertaken a comprehensive curriculum reorganisation, improving the quality of the curriculum and its planning. Physical education (PE) lessons for Years 5 and 6 have been introduced, as have ICT lessons for all year groups. However, use of ICT across the curriculum is limited. Design and technology is appropriately incorporated into the art curriculum.
- 2.3 The curriculum is based around the National Curriculum, with further breadth and depth provided by specialist subject teaching, for example in French and religious studies, that also meets 11+ entry test requirements. The breadth of education offered gives pupils varied opportunities in sport, music and the performing arts. In the EYFS, children progress through the six areas of learning and make a good start in the acquisition of skills to achieve the Early Learning Goals. The provision for literacy, numeracy, creative and scientific skills is secure throughout the school. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills. Pupils acquire good ICT skills in specialist ICT lessons, but have few opportunities to use these skills in other lessons. Provision for PE and games is good for both boys and girls, and pupils are offered a good variety of sports. All pupils from Reception upwards attend swimming lessons.
- 2.4 The school has a well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that reflects its aims and ethos. The practical *Charter of Values* in every classroom is an important source of guidance for pupils, with regard to behaviour and attitudes to others. Assemblies and services play a central part in school life, promoting care for others and personal achievement. PE, extra-curricular sport and activities, such as Surrey's Walk to School scheme, encourage pupils to have a healthy attitude to living.
- 2.5 Extra-curricular provision, judged to be of good quality at the last inspection, is outstanding. The school offers an extensive range of more than 50 activities, including chess, computer programming and robot control. Pupils also have opportunities to enjoy a wide variety of educational outings, such as the Year 4 visit to a science festival organised by a local university. In addition, guest speakers are invited to address the pupils to provide further enrichment to the curriculum. The Summer Soirée is a major annual music concert and the Godfrey Searle Choir enjoys performing at national events. A whole-school drama production takes place biennially, as well as annual year group productions, giving most pupils opportunities to take part. All boys and all girls have the opportunity to represent the school in sport.
- 2.6 Pupils are well prepared for entry tests to Reigate Grammar School and other selective schools. Valuable formal and informal links with the senior school include sixth formers who assist with some mathematics activities, and GAP Year students who support sport and other aspects of school life. Pupils assume valued responsibilities throughout the school, for example as form captains from Year 1 upwards. School council representatives are elected by their peers. Staff elect house captains and prefects. Year 5 pupils talked keenly about their training to become peer mediators. Younger pupils clearly value this support.

- 2.7 Curriculum planning, unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, is very good and supports teaching and learning very well. It provides equality of opportunity and access for all pupils. Assessment is used successfully to inform teachers of what pupils need to focus on next in their learning and to inform planning. Good curriculum links with the senior school promote curriculum continuity and beneficial links amongst staff and pupils. Recently, the switch to longer, 50-minute lessons has been well received by both pupils and teachers. Subject balance is being carefully reviewed and the school is aware that excessive time allocated to games is at the expense of time for some foundation subjects in Years 3 to 6.
- 2.8 The school's provision to meet the curricular requirements of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is excellent. Assessment and tracking are thorough, and individual education plans are carefully prepared. The school has drafted a suitable policy for those pupils identified as gifted and talented. Provision for these pupils is in the early stages of development.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 The quality of learning is good, and pupils achieve well in their academic and broader education. As a result, the school largely meets its aim to educate pupils to the highest academic standards. Pupils enjoy their work and apply themselves well to it. They attain good levels of knowledge, skill and understanding in the subjects they study, as well as in activities outside the taught curriculum. The good standards of learning and achievement found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and successfully built upon.
- 2.11 Children in the EYFS achieve well in relation to the Early Learning Goals and basic skills are learnt successfully. Standards of literacy and numeracy are good throughout the school. Pupils consistently display very good listening skills, are articulate and confident, and talk easily with their peers and with adults. They read with assurance and their writing is thoughtful and interesting, as seen when Year 3 pupils used clever punctuation with muddled words to write a word-play poem. Mathematical competence was seen regularly in lessons and in the scrutiny of pupils' books. Effective teaching and well-planned lessons mean that pupils' knowledge and understanding are developed successfully. Essential skills are effectively developed in ICT lessons and pupils increasingly use interactive whiteboards in lessons. However, the use of computers is limited across the whole curriculum and in all age groups. Critical thinking and independent thought were occasionally evident, for example in a science lesson when pupils discussed predictions for the outcome of their investigation. Pupils in Year 2 were thinking logically to decide on the correct order of sentences to make a story. Encouraged by their teachers, pupils use their creativity and imagination successfully and apply these to many activities, particularly in subjects such as music and art.
- 2.12 As they move through the school, good teaching continues to enable pupils to make significant gains in their learning. Pupils do not take national tests, but in standardised tests in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, their achievements are high. By the time they leave for their senior schools, pupils at all levels of ability show themselves to have been well educated intellectually, aesthetically and physically, and well prepared for their future studies. In 2009, all were successful in their entry examinations to senior schools. The good number of scholarships and awards gained at the age of eleven has increased in recent years.

- 2.13 Achievement in individual and group activities is good, and excellent in chess, robotics and choral singing. The Under Eleven chess team achieved second place in the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools championships. Some pupils play regularly for the county and several were contenders for the British championships. Pupils were regional champions in a university robotics competition and qualified to enter the UK finals. Many pupils have individual music lessons and achieve highly in practical instrumental examinations. Pupils are represented in the National Children's Orchestra, and the choristers have recorded for film productions, a renowned figure in musical theatre and contemporary popular artists. By facilitating many successes, the school inspires and strengthens pupils' achievements.
- 2.14 Pupils display a positive attitude towards their learning. The best teaching encourages pride in their work. Opportunities for pupils to take notes are limited. However, they write extensively in a variety of styles. Their ability to persevere, to settle down successfully to their work and to concentrate is seen throughout the school and in all areas of the curriculum. This was evident in extra-curricular activities such as soccer and jazz club, when pupils concentrated and listened to instructions, and obviously enjoyed what they were doing. Little evidence was seen of opportunities for pupils to organise their work independently, although some had taken initiatives to research and produce interesting topic booklets. In addition, pupils co-operate competently and clearly enjoy their work. As a result, they achieve well as they progress through the school.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.15 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is founded on the warm and friendly relationships, enabling pupils to be open and comfortable in their environment. The personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS are good. The school's aim to nurture pupils who feel valued as individuals is fully met.
- 2.16 Pupils' spiritual awareness is outstanding. Christian values and the traditions of learning within a choir school environment help foster a natural spirituality, and strong sense of personal identity. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to develop personal faith and to explore values and beliefs. Evensong provides opportunities for quiet reflection. Pupils listen, show respect and are aware of the needs of those around them. The school's service and procession to the memorial stone for former pupils killed in the First and Second World Wars is a poignant occasion for pupils to develop a sense of their own identity and self-worth. Pupils' awareness is also developed through relationships, opportunities to exercise responsibilities for others and contributions to the well-being of the school community. Pupils have self-esteem and self-confidence. The house system helps to foster a strong sense of belonging.
- 2.17 The moral development of pupils is outstanding and from the Early Years, they are able to distinguish right from wrong. The *Charter of Values* encourages and supports pupils' social and moral development. Pupils recognise shared values as an intrinsic part of school life. Lively discussions take place in PSHE lessons and in religious studies. Older pupils discussed the need for rules, the concept of citizenship, and respect for the law and its enforcement. Pupils in Year 6 learn about rights and responsibilities. Staff set high standards to which pupils respond positively.
- 2.18 Pupils' social development is outstanding. They show respect, tolerance and consideration at all times. From the earliest age, pupils learn to exercise self-discipline, encouraged by opportunities to take on simple tasks of responsibility. The prefectorial and captain system is integral to the aims of the school. Boys and girls perform their leadership roles efficiently and with confidence, and contribute well to the smooth running of the school. Pupils relate

very well to others and work successfully as members of a team. In lessons, pupils cooperate happily to fulfil tasks. Older pupils discuss democracies and the manner in which Members of Parliament are chosen, and make comparisons with the school's council system. Pupils are well aware of the needs of others less fortunate than they are and have considerable interest in fundraising for good causes. For example, regular cake sales are held, the proceeds of which go to local, national and international charities including the RNLI and an organisation in support of leprosy sufferers.

- 2.19 Pupils develop a good sense of their own culture and those of others. Regular music concerts are held in the school and a large proportion of pupils learn a musical instrument, with many accomplished for their age. Artwork by the pupils is displayed effectively around the school. Pupils enjoy being creative and connect their experiences across subjects, as well as linking them to other cultures. The programme of educational visits and regular talks by outside speakers builds pupils' appreciation of their own traditions and cultures, and further enhances their understanding of the world and their place within it. Study of religions and participation in music from other parts of the world extend pupils' knowledge and respect for others' cultural traditions. The school sponsors the education of two children in Africa. In addition, participation in Love in a Box, where pupils donate a shoebox of Christmas gifts to children less fortunate than themselves in other countries, greatly aids their understanding of the circumstances of others in comparison with their own lifestyles. Pupils treat each other with respect.
- 2.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.21 Teaching is good overall and at times is outstanding, enabling pupils to succeed in their learning and encouraging them to fulfil their potential, in line with the school's aims. Since the last inspection, the good quality teaching found at that time has been maintained.
- 2.22 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities, including those with LDD, to make good progress. Teachers support pupils in a variety of ways, providing lists of key words and encouraging work on an interactive whiteboard. Staff know their pupils well and provide sensitive help when required. They create opportunities to enable pupils to expand their understanding of a subject or skill. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 1 mathematics lesson where good use of questioning and well-paced activities helped all pupils improve their skills in partitioning numbers.
- 2.23 In the EYFS, staff know the children well and provide good support for their learning and development. In many lessons, teaching fosters pupils' interest and application in their work. In games, teachers encourage pupils to practise essential skills before employing them in the game situation. Throughout all sections of the school, pupils' creative effort is displayed in a wide variety of media, including paintings, writing and models. Provision for pupils with LDD is excellent. Teachers ensure that, when appropriate, support is provided for these pupils. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to supporting pupils.
- 2.24 A purposeful, positive atmosphere was seen in lessons, meeting the aims of the school. In the best lessons, pupils are constantly encouraged to be creative, to think and to learn for themselves. For example, Year 5 pupils were challenged to set up an investigation to discover the volume of air in soil samples. In an excellent Year 1 lesson introduced by an Irish visitor, pupils dressed up, sang and danced to Irish music, and learned about Ireland's geography and culture.

- 2.25 Highly committed staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils behave responsibly. They display a good attitude towards their studies. The rewards system throughout the school, from house points to form treats earned through the 'marble jar', and certificates with some recorded in the achievement book, encourage pupils to emulate best practice.
- 2.26 Teachers' own subject knowledge is of significant quality. Teaching is well planned, employing a variety of effective methods, with suitable activities to meet the needs of all pupils and wise management of time. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk and the lesson moves seamlessly from one activity to the next, all of which benefit pupils' learning. In some lessons, the choice of activities was limited and the pace was rather slow. Opportunities for pupils to learn independently were limited. At times, teachers' over-directed activities restricted pupils' progress. In all lessons, learning objectives are clearly stated and success criteria are made known.
- 2.27 Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and based on mutual respect. Much of the teaching generates an atmosphere of enjoyment, where pupils' successes are celebrated and praise pervades. For example, in a Year 5 history lesson, pupils clearly valued their discussion about Anne Boleyn, and the encouragement for their role-play heightened their enjoyment and led to outstanding achievement.
- 2.28 The school is well resourced, and staff carefully select the resources needed to help individuals and groups of pupils grasp new concepts. However, teachers' limited use of ICT across the curriculum limits the potential diversity of sources of information to explore and pass on information, for example. The school is aware that the books in the library are too few and have limited appeal for pupils in order to help promote the enjoyment of reading and as a source for learning. Work has begun and useful plans are in place to organise upgrading and a system for borrowing books.
- 2.29 The school has a comprehensive assessment policy and employs a good range of assessment methods to gather information. The practical recording system to ensure that assessment informs future planning is excellent. As a result, teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of pupils. Data is used effectively and targets are set, enabling pupils to make progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Most teachers mark work according to the school's marking policy. In a few cases, marking is inconsistent. However, the best marking is exemplary. It is detailed, positive and supportive, providing good pointers for the improvement of pupils' performance. The colourful stamped information confirms pupils' level of success, which is rewarded appropriately with house points, for example. There are clear arrangements in place for pupils' performance to be evaluated using a range of standardised tests and examinations.
- 2.30 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 arrangements for pastoral care are outstanding and the school continues to maintain the high standards for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils found at the previous inspection. The school's aim of providing an environment that is conducive to learning through caring, well-disciplined and stimulating surroundings is well met. The welfare of children in the EYFS is promoted well.
- 3.2 The staff have a good understanding of the different needs of pupils. The school provides a warm, friendly atmosphere for its community. In discussions, pupils said they have someone to turn to if they need advice or help with school-related or personal issues.
- 3.3 Clear pastoral care guidelines are in place, and in practice, they work well. Communication amongst staff is good, and the systems of referral and form focus meetings support the school's aim of not having 'invisible children'. Minutes are made of meetings and these are efficiently circulated to all relevant staff to facilitate consistency of approach. The house system plays an important role through the referral of pastoral needs to heads of houses.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst pupils themselves, is high. Pupils are courteous, and they behave well in and out of the classroom. Staff have a healthy rapport with pupils, and interact and converse in a friendly way. They know them well and take a genuine interest in their lives and achievements. Pupils' relationships with each other are encouraged through the responsibilities with which they are entrusted.
- 3.5 Comprehensive pastoral policies outline rewards for good behaviour and sanctions for unacceptable conduct. Staff and pupils are fully aware of different levels of these measures. Pupils said that they respected this system because they have warnings before sanctions are imposed. Their behaviour is, however, excellent. Pupils of all ages showed themselves to be polite and considerate of each other's feelings. Despite a few pupils' comments in the pre-inspection questionnaires about bullying, no evidence of bullying was found. In interviews, pupils expressed the view that teachers would deal appropriately with all playground issues. The awarding of house points for good work and behaviour encourages pupils to work together as a class to achieve marbles that represent the effectiveness of teamwork during the lesson. Healthy competition is encouraged and pupils receive certificates in recognition of their efforts.
- 3.6 Child protection procedures are suitably stated in a good policy. Two child protection officers are named in the policy. All staff have had recent training in child protection and this is updated every three years. Statutory Criminal Records Bureau checks have been carried out on all staff and these checks are a consistent part of the recruitment process.
- 3.7 The school takes seriously the well-being of its pupils, and at all times has reasonable facilities and suitable resources available when any are taken ill. In such cases, they are reported to the office and cared for by qualified first aiders. The first aid policy is comprehensive. All teaching staff have training in first aid and some have had advanced training. Effective procedures are in place to identify pupils who have particular medical needs. A health and safety committee works to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained. All necessary and appropriate measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken, and fire drills take place regularly. Risk assessments are extensively carried out for an appropriate range of activities. Pupils move safely and respectfully around the buildings and premises. Levels of supervision are good throughout

the day, and the school's aim of improving the flow of traffic at the beginning of the school day has been achieved.

- 3.8 The catering department provides nutritional meals. During the inspection, complaints raised by pupils about meals were found to be based on personal preferences rather than the quality of the food. Pupils demonstrate a sensible understanding of healthy lifestyles and the need to take regular exercise. Year 1 PSHE work included views and suggestions for the Golden Boot Challenge, a competition concerned with 'greener' ways of coming to school.
- 3.9 Attendance and admission registers are completed correctly, and sensible arrangements are made to monitor attendance at clubs. The school has an appropriate plan for improving its accessibility to pupils with physical disabilities and conforms with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.
- 3.10 The school meets all of 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, including the EYFS, has established outstanding links with parents and good connections with the wider community. It has strengthened the good links reported at the last inspection.
- 3.12 Responses to the questionnaire, sent to all parents before the inspection, indicate a very high overall level of satisfaction with the education and support provided. Parents are particularly complimentary about the school's academic provision and the progress that their children make. They are strongly supportive of the high standards of behaviour and the attitudes and values promoted. A small minority of parents expressed concern about too much or too little homework given. Inspectors found no evidence to support these views. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school and the work of their children. The inspectors endorse these positive views.
- 3.13 The parental questionnaire indicated some concern that too little information is provided by the school regarding pupils' progress and too few opportunities are available to discuss this progress. However, information about their children's work and progress is shared with parents on a regular basis. Written reports are sent out at the end of each academic year containing detailed information on progress in all areas of learning. The best reports include targets for pupils to work on in the following year, but this was not evident in all reports. Two formal parents' evenings are held each year. Parents of pupils with LDD are kept well informed about their children's progress and planned educational development through pupils' individual education plans.
- 3.14 Parents are also able to communicate with teachers at the start and end of the day, when bringing in and collecting their children. If a teacher is not available, appointments are made through the school office. The homework diary and reading record book are useful means for parents to communicate regularly with teachers. The views of parents are effectively communicated through parent form representatives who raise issues with the headmaster at half-termly meetings. The school deals with any parental concerns with due care.

- 3.15 *The Parents' and Pupils' Guide* and the school prospectus contain detailed and useful information regarding school routines and policies for parents of current and prospective pupils. An informative *Weekly Bulletin* is produced and distributed electronically. The annual *Reigate Reporter* contains a good selection of material, including pupils' art, compositions and reports on the many activities that have been undertaken. Visitors to the school see pictures of activities on the electronic notice board in the school's entrance foyer and another in the Beech House entrance. A detailed termly calendar is given to all pupils and parents, which lists sporting fixtures and activities.
- 3.16 The school is keen to involve parents in PSHE activities. Parents enrich pupils' activities by giving talks that have included information on a variety of professions and on different cultures. For example, Hindu parents have discussed Diwali with pupils.
- 3.17 Parents are welcome to attend events such as Achievement Assemblies, church services, plays, concerts and sporting fixtures. The parents' Friends of St Mary's Association (FOSMA) organises social events for all parents, including those who are new in September. Generous funds are raised for the benefit of present and future pupils of the school. For example, through help from FOSMA, the school has purchased a mini-bus and the 'trim trail' playground. Events organised by parents include, for example, Summer luncheons and the Christmas Fair. An innovative scheme introduced by the headmaster is the Parent Library. The resource contains literature providing helpful advice on improving parenting skills and work-life balance. In addition, the school sets up for parents topical presentations, for example on internet safety and drugs awareness.
- 3.18 The school promotes positive links with the local and wider community. Pupils benefit from a range of visitors to the school, who enhance their knowledge and understanding of the local community. The police and fire brigade visit to explain their roles. Pupils have links with, and raise funds for, a local charity that provides support for children with severe disabilities. In addition, the school values its close links with a local residential home, and pupils sing carols to the residents and visit to sing on other occasions. The school has contacts with local firms, and the choristers provide music for their annual Christmas service and for the Guild of Cutlers. The choir is very active, providing public service at churches in the community. In addition, the choristers have recorded for three film scores this year. At appropriate times, the school makes available its playing fields and games facilities for the public to use.
- 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].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Good governance brings commitment and support to the EYFS and to the school as a whole. It contributes considerably to the school's success in meeting its aims. Governors' care for the future of the school can be seen in the many improvements made since the previous inspection. All the main recommendations from that inspection have been met.
- 4.2 The board, which is common to Reigate St Mary's and Reigate Grammar School, has seven sub-committees. These enable governors to assume their responsibilities for all necessary purposes. Reigate St Mary's sub-committee plays its part in taking responsibility for the school's more minor decisions. Meetings are regular and properly minuted, and the structure is known amongst staff.
- 4.3 Governors have a wide range of backgrounds and skills useful to the school's purpose. Several are parents of former and current pupils. A governor continues to take specific responsibility for child protection to provide useful additional support for the school in this important area.
- 4.4 The board understands well the principles of its role and responsibilities, and prudently takes advice from external agencies to help in decision making, for example with respect to legal matters. Governors share with the headmaster a clear vision for the school's future. The detailed three-year improvement plan sets targets and strategies for meeting development goals across the school.
- 4.5 Governors find out about the work of the school through regular reports from the headmaster, and occasionally plan a day in school to observe its work and to meet staff. Subject leaders attend meetings to inform the board about developments in their subjects and to answer any questions. This provides an excellent basis for giving support and challenge as appropriate. Governors visit the school regularly and the chair of the Reigate St Mary's sub-committee frequently meets with the headmaster. Governors thus have very effective oversight of the day-to-day life of the school, and keep very well informed about its academic and other achievements.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 Leadership and management are good, underpinned by a hardworking and dedicated staff team. The ethos of a disciplined, happy and caring environment, with its tradition of choral excellence and Christian values, pervades the school, fully supporting its aims. Progress since the last ISI inspection has been good.
- 4.7 Since the last inspection, the current headmaster and deputy head have been appointed. A curriculum co-ordinator who is also newly appointed has strengthened the senior leadership team. The clear direction provided by the team is reflected in the good quality education, the outstanding care and the happy community ethos that surrounds the school. Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. Heads of department and subject leaders have clear roles, and all staff are fully involved in pastoral care. The internal management structures of the school are clear and function effectively. The school improvement plan focuses on those issues which are recognised as important for the school's future development. The school's curriculum matrix is a useful reference, and provides a clear vision and planned opportunities to monitor and evaluate effectively.

- 4.8 Whole-school policies cover all aspects of school life. However, the system for policy review does not ensure that policies are up-to-date to reflect recent statutory requirements, or to confirm recent changes in procedures or practice.
- 4.9 The promising curriculum planning and associated assessment procedures reflect the success of the overhaul of both the curriculum and assessment policies. These are beginning to provide invaluable information in helping to track and maximise pupils' progress through the school. The systems for monitoring and recording all aspects of the school's work are developing well and when fully implemented have real potential to impact on aspects of teaching and learning. However, teachers have few opportunities to observe others to share and discuss best practice. Insufficient guidance is provided for monitoring to improve the work of teachers.
- 4.10 Across the school, teaching staff are deployed well. They contribute significantly to pupils' learning and welfare. Staffing levels enable good support to be given to pupils. The school has no current newly qualified teachers, but induction procedures for them and for staff new to the school are in place and in line with guidelines. The performance management system is well structured. Job descriptions reflect the current responsibilities of staff and successfully provide focus for performance management processes. Many in-service training opportunities are available; these are closely linked to the school improvement plan. The school's arrangements for checking the suitability of all staff are thorough and consistent.
- 4.11 Procedures for budgeting operate very efficiently. Since the last inspection, proficient management of funds has provided excellent new resources, such as interactive whiteboards. In addition, new buildings, for example the sports hall and ten-classroom teaching block, have greatly improved the facilities to meet successfully the needs of pupils in most areas. Good plans are in place, and work is continuing to upgrade and increase the library selection of fiction and non-fiction to provide valuable support across the curriculum.
- 4.12 Arrangements for the day-to-day management of the school work very well. Administrative and all support staff provide high quality assistance, and the school runs smoothly. Communication within the school is highly effective, and with parents is extremely strong. The premises and buildings are maintained well, and pupils' displayed work is a source of interest in all areas of the school.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Reigate St Mary's is a caring community that fulfils its aims well. Children enjoy a good start in the EYFS. The well-planned taught curriculum and outstanding extra-curricular programme enable pupils to make good and sometimes rapid progress, and to achieve good educational standards. However, pupils have limited opportunities to make use of ICT, and the Upper School curriculum imbalance does not allow sufficient time for some foundation subjects. Both issues limit pupils' progress. Pupils are articulate, have good listening skills and enjoy their studies. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is of exceptional quality. Teaching continues to be good, with some outstanding lessons seen. Overall, teachers' expectations are appropriate and teaching is mostly meeting the needs of all pupils. However, opportunities for independent learning are limited and some over-directed activities impact on pupils' progress. Provision for those with LDD is of high quality. Monitoring practices are insufficient to improve the work of the teachers. The system of assessment is excellent, including some high quality marking. The data generated is used very successfully to inform teachers of what pupils need to focus on next in their learning. Pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils are tolerant, considerate and respectful towards each other, the staff and their surroundings. The staff are able and provide very good support and guidance. The school enjoys successful links with the senior school and the community has the overwhelming support of parents. Good governance and management are well supported by hardworking and committed staff.
- 5.2 In the period since the last inspection, the development of senior management to include roles for managers of the curriculum and of assessment has ensured that the new, improved systems have been very well co-ordinated and are beginning to maximise pupils' progress through the school. Good leadership and thorough development planning have clearly identified the priorities. As a result, the governors and managers have supported numerous significant developments, greatly improving the quality of the premises and accommodation. In addition, a range of new resources, such as the play and learning area for the EYFS and interactive whiteboards in all classrooms, has benefited teaching and learning. The school knows itself well and has set a successful course for improvement.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses, but to improve further the quality of its educational provision it should take the following action.
1. Improve teaching by:
 - creating a regular and rigorous programme of lesson observations, enabling outstanding practice to be shared more effectively;
 - developing a programme of in-service training to improve the monitoring of teaching and to enable teachers to develop a wider range of methods.
 2. Increase pupils' opportunities for independent learning and for using ICT in all subject areas.
- 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 16th to 19th 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. 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 14th and 15th October 2009 by one inspector. The inspector observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work and held discussions with staff. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspector examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Sybil Warner	Reporting Inspector
Miss Caroline Froud	Head of Lower School, IAPS school
Mrs Elaine Hall-Freeman	Deputy Head, ISA school
Dr Simon Horbury	Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mr Gordon James	Head, IAPS school
Mr Tim Owen	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Susan Barnes	Early Years Lead Inspector

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

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting offers education for children between the ages of three and five. Sixty-one children, almost equal numbers of boys and girls, including thirty who were part-time, attended the setting at the time of the inspection. Those aged three to four are housed in a large, newly renovated, secure classroom, with access to an outdoor learning area on the ground floor of the Lower School classroom block. Reception has three classrooms, all with access to another outdoor learning area in a new building. No child has a statement of special educational needs. Although a small number of children speak another language at home, all are fluent in English. Children enter the EYFS following interviews with parents and have a broad range of abilities. The school aims to ensure that all children are valued as individuals, and not just for what they achieve.
- 7.2 This is an effective setting. Teachers' high expectations and good understanding of young children enable children with differing abilities and needs to make good progress. There are very strong links with parents and carers that help involve them in their children's care and education.
- 7.3 The leadership and management of the setting are good, with those in charge focused on helping all children make good progress in their learning and development. Parents' and carers' views have been sought through questionnaires and class representatives. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents were strongly supportive of the school, commented on the very caring staff and appreciated the opportunities to visit, such as for the Achievement Assembly. Since the last inspection, the accommodation and premises for the EYFS classes have been greatly improved. The very good quality resources include climbing frames, wheeled toys, role-play clothes and interactive whiteboards in all classrooms.
- 7.4 Good use is made of outside agencies, including the local Early Years and childcare service, to improve outcomes for children. The EYFS managers and staff have regular meetings to evaluate, and modify when necessary, their policies, planning and record keeping. Assessment of the children is thorough, monitoring progress and feeding into final assessment profiles. Good provision is made for the children's welfare, risk assessments are thorough and effective safeguarding procedures are carried out. First aiders within the EYFS are well trained, and the school's named first aider assists and advises when required. At the time of the inspection, there was not a designated, and fully and recently trained practitioner to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within the setting, though this has now been addressed. Outdoor learning is an area that is under developed.
- 7.5 Teachers know their pupils very well and are good at planning work for them. For children aged three to four the balance between structured activities and opportunities to explore and to initiate their own learning is good, but insufficient opportunities are provided in Reception, where most activities are adult-instigated and led. The system of registering any concerns about children's development at an early stage is well considered and effective, and parents are kept fully informed. Staffing arrangements provide excellent supervision. Policies, procedures and practice are detailed and audited. Medical provision is of a high standard. The setting provides an interesting, well-equipped and welcoming environment that successfully reflects most children's backgrounds and the wider community. The provision of secure, well-resourced outdoor play and learning space has the potential to greatly enhance learning.

- 7.6 Children's achievements are considerable. They listen well, use a wide vocabulary to ask and answer questions, enjoy books and reading, and have made very good progress in mastering mathematical concepts. When using wheeled toys and on climbing frames they are well co-ordinated, and they have excellent control of pencils, brushes and scissors. Children relate extremely well to one another and to adults, and are inquisitive, enthusiastic and self-motivated. They are keen to share what they discover; during lunchtime, the younger children were identifying the different shapes of food in their lunchboxes. Reception children knew that they must wash their hands to get rid of germs before tasting food as part of their Diwali topic. When moving around the school, they understand the importance of taking care going down stairs. Children appreciate the importance of healthy eating, can identify nutritious foods and learn the benefits of exercise. They delight in increasing their understanding of the wider world through play activities. The children are happy and secure in the setting, and enjoy the many experiences offered to them.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.7 To improve further the quality of its provision, the setting should:
1. further develop outside education;
 2. increase opportunities for child-instigated activities and independent learning.
- 7.8 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.