

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

St Edmund's Junior School

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

Full Name of the School	St Edmund's Junior School
DCSF Number	886/6050
Early Years Number	N/A
Registered Charity Number	1056382
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Age Range (of the whole school)	3 to 13
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	23rd to 26th November 2009
Head of Early Years Setting	Mrs Janet Frampton-Fell
Early Years Age Range	3 to 5
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	23rd and 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 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 St Edmund's Junior School was founded in 1898 in Canterbury as the junior school of St Edmund's School, a mid-eighteenth century charitable foundation for the education of orphans of clergymen. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the establishment had moved from London to a grand Victorian building with its own magnificent chapel on a hilltop to the north of Canterbury, with commanding views of the city and the Cathedral.
- 1.2 When the Choir School of Canterbury Cathedral closed in 1972, the Cathedral choristers joined St Edmund's Junior School, although their boarding house remained as Choir House, adjacent to the Cathedral. This house has recently re-opened after complete refurbishment. The other boarders continue to live in School House which is part of the original Victorian main school building.
- 1.3 In 1996, St Edmund's School devolved from the Clergy Orphan Corporation to become a fully independent coeducational boarding and day school for pupils from three to eighteen years old; its junior school developed into a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils between the ages of three and thirteen years, with boarding from the age of eight years. The present headmaster, who is known as the Master, was appointed to the Junior School in 1996. The members of the board of governors are trustees of the educational charitable trust formed at that point; they have oversight of the entire age range.
- 1.4 In 1998, a new purpose-built Junior School building was opened. In 2006, the three to five year olds moved into refurbished accommodation and, in September 2008, the pre-preparatory department for three to seven year olds was established as a pre-preparatory school, Abingdon House, with its own headmistress; she reports to and works closely with the Master, who reports to the Headmaster of St Edmund's School. This report covers the three to thirteen year old age in the pre-preparatory and junior schools.
- 1.5 All three to thirteen year olds share the extensive grounds and specialist facilities of the senior school, which include the dining hall, swimming pool, sports hall, theatre and music school. Some classrooms for Years 7 and 8 are still in the original school building, and their science, technology and art lessons also take place in senior school specialist buildings. In addition, the pre-preparatory pupils have their own play areas and equipment for the different age groups. Facilities are provided for the before- and after-school care that is offered each day.
- 1.6 The overall aims of the pre-preparatory and junior schools are to provide a happy and positive experience so that children can enjoy a broad and lively education. It aims to offer attention and care to each individual to encourage their all-round development and nurture their talents and interests. It wishes to help each child be successful and achieve the best of which he or she is capable. In addition to fostering close links with parents, the school aims to give its pupils the opportunity to assume responsibility and encourage them to discover and explore whatever aptitudes and interests they may have. Additional aims for the pre-preparatory pupils are to encourage independence and confidence through acknowledging that young children need to develop as individuals and to foster their well-being and motivation through the provision of a happy and stimulating learning environment.
- 1.7 The school has a relatively wide ability intake; it is not selective at the pre-preparatory stage, and has academic testing for entry to the preparatory stage. There are 243 pupils on roll; 136 boys, 107 girls, with 27 full- or part-time children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Including the choristers, 41 pupils are boarders, either full or weekly. The school usually has

one form in each year group up to Year 3, two forms in Years 4 to 6, then three forms in Years 7 and 8. Years 3 to 5 are known as Lower School and Years 6 to 8 are referred to as Upper School. The range of ability is wide within each year group; a small proportion of pupils is below average in ability, and a much higher proportion is well above average. Standardised tests indicate that the overall ability profile of the school is above the national average. The majority of pupils move up through the school from the Nursery or Reception to Year 8; additional pupils may enter at other points, particularly in Year 7. Pupils are mostly taught by their class teachers through to Year 5, although they have specialist teaching in music, dance, French, physical education (PE) and games from the age of three years. Eighteen pupils do not have English as their principal language but very few require specialist teaching in English as an additional language (EAL). No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, while 47 pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD); three-quarters of these receive specialist learning support from the department for additional educational needs while the progress of the remainder is monitored by this department.

- 1.8 While the majority of pupils are British, a few other nationalities and cultures are represented. The school is Christian by foundation and welcomes pupils from all faiths and Christian denominations.
- 1.9 The majority of pupils live relatively near the school. They mostly come from families with business and professional backgrounds. A high proportion of Year 8 pupils proceeds to the senior school, St Edmund's School. A few pupils continue their education in other selective independent day and boarding schools; virtually all enter the senior school of their first choice, several having achieved scholarship and special awards, particularly for music.
- 1.10 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where applicable, 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
Ladybirds	3 to 4
Honey Bees	4 to 5

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

Pre-preparatory School

School	NC name
Cricketts	Year 1
Grasshoppers	Year 1
Dragonflies	Year 2

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided is of a good standard and successfully reflects and fulfils the aims and philosophy of the school. In particular it provides, from the outstandingly effective EYFS upwards, a happy, positive and stimulating environment in which its pupils learn and grow as they enjoy a broad and lively education. At all ages, a wide range of educational opportunities is provided within the well considered and balanced curriculum, enriched by an interesting variety of extra-curricular activities. Since the previous inspection, the curriculum and timetable have been improved, as have curricular links and coordination with the senior school. This has been made increasingly possible by the move away from the Common Entrance curriculum in Years 6 to 8 and the associated examination at the end of Year 8. This change was advocated in the previous inspection report and internal assessment has replaced the Common Entrance examination. The joint planning of a more creative curriculum has enriched the educational experience of pupils. Greater provision is now made for gifted and talented pupils.
- 2.2 The wide range of educational experiences which pupils of all ages enjoy contributes effectively to their progress in all areas of learning. They develop a strong command of the English language, written and spoken, which facilitates their work and development in all subjects. Pupils experience a good variety of approaches, and their education allows them to progress rapidly in terms of their mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. In several mathematics lessons, pupils experienced and responded to challenging topics for their age. The educational environment created by displays of an exceptional standard, particularly in art and ceramics, extends their aesthetic and creative development. A good variety of opportunities for further enrichment is available out of lessons. Clubs in mathematics, English, science, technology and history are well attended. Competitions, usually inter-house, engage and challenge pupils, as do talent shows, singing, spelling and general knowledge team contests, and recently a scarecrow-building challenge. Pupils in Year 3 and above are divided into four houses for competitive purposes. The junior school takes advantage of its affiliation to the senior school to extend its more able pupils by allowing them to compete in some senior sports teams where appropriate and to take part in the St Edmund's School orchestra. The junior school has an enviable record of success in music and pupils are involved in the local community, for example, as part of an orchestra or choir with local primary schools.
- 2.3 In the pre-preparatory and junior school age groups, activity programmes enrich the provision for both day and boarding pupils. Visiting speakers, for example from the Fire Service, the Police Service or charity organisations come in to enhance pupils' learning, as do those who run workshops in drama, history and puppetry. The junior school has an extended outdoor education programme for different age groups, including a woodland survival skills day, an overnight camp, a sailing day, a team-building and leadership day, an adventurous training and survival week in the Hebrides, a water-sports week and a sports tour to Holland. Pupils have their own charity committee and the school takes seriously its links with the community.
- 2.4 Recently established procedures ensure much attention is given to the smooth transition of pupils during their progress through the school from the EYFS onwards. Teachers in the transition years discuss each pupil and pass on academic and social information, while consultations about continuity of the curriculum take place. Informative talks about the next stage and opportunities for discussion are given to both pupils and parents. New pupils make preliminary visits in order to become familiar with their new surroundings as far as is

possible. Educating pupils about career options takes place as part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme in Year 8. Transition from Year 8 to the senior school is eased because pupils are taught in specialist rooms in the main school buildings and several of their teachers are subject specialists in the senior school.

- 2.5 Thorough curriculum planning is set out in writing and enables all groups of pupils to benefit from the wide range of interesting activities on offer both in and outside the classroom. All subjects have effective policies and schemes of work which enable pupils to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding term by term and year by year. The replacement of Common Entrance provided the impetus to put in place strong structures of liaison between the junior and senior schools and to enhance the quality of planning for transition; joint observations between each of the stages are underway.
- 2.6 The curricular requirements for pupils requiring special provision are extremely well met. The school ensures that pupils who require support are well catered for, including those who have English as a second language. The system allows for early identification and assessment of individual needs. The school is efficient in identifying those who need learning support, establishing the correct strategies and ensuring that these are carried out in the classroom. Well-constructed individual education plans are carefully monitored and reviewed. Much thought is given to providing pupils from other countries with opportunities to develop their English and they are enabled to learn effectively across the curriculum. In subjects such as English and mathematics a stimulating and imaginative range of opportunities is offered to the higher ability and gifted and talented pupils in lessons, while extra-curricular activities which include clubs for creative writing, seriously hard sums, young engineers and critical thinking offer further enrichment. Provision for those who are musically gifted and talented is excellent.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 Pupils learn and achieve effectively throughout the age range. They are well educated and well grounded in their knowledge, skills and understanding of their school subjects and the activities in which they participate. They apply their knowledge with enthusiasm and determination and enjoy their learning as they successfully develop the skills and attitudes for work and study. The school is fully attaining its aim of producing happy and successful children who are achieving the best of which they are capable. Pupils are encouraged to discover and explore whatever aptitudes and interests they may have. The pre-preparatory school also successfully achieves its aim to encourage independence and confidence and foster the motivation of each individual child. The high levels of achievement in music and drama have been maintained and opportunities for independent learning have increased since the previous inspection. Pupils demonstrate a love of learning and a willingness to share what they know and can do.
- 2.9 Pupils demonstrate a good level of critical and creative thinking in their lessons and activities. Younger pupils in the pre-preparatory classes were animated and excited about their creative curriculum and the many different opportunities they were given. Year 2 pupils were confident and enthusiastic as they became involved in a mathematics lesson where they were making spectacle frames for themselves from coloured paper; they had to measure in centimetres the circumference of their head and discovered that this measurement did not correlate with height. Other pupils from Years 3 to 8 participated actively and creatively in a house competition to build a bridge with the widest span using cocktail sticks and maize noodles.

- 2.10 Pupils are confident in their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills; they are highly articulate and express themselves well in their written work. Well-developed speaking and listening skills were observed during a discussion about identity and personality in Year 7 PSHE. Sound mathematical skills are displayed in lessons. Pupils demonstrated clearly their ability to reason logically and think independently with their good grasp of basic economics in a Year 4 geography lesson. Pupils are competent in their use of ICT; at an early age in the pre-preparatory stage they become familiar with the use of interactive whiteboards. Older pupils keep a record in their prep diaries of data from fitness tests in PE, and transfer the results to a computer program which analyses their progress.
- 2.11 In lessons and activities, boys and girls of all ages and abilities make appropriate progress and reach good levels of attainment. For example, pupils worked with clear enjoyment and self-confidence, making good progress during rhythm work in music, and in English and mathematics some outstanding work was produced by both boys and girls. Occasionally, where motivation was variable, attainment suffered as a result. The Cathedral choristers as a group show very high attainment in music. The high quality of learning support enables pupils with LDD or EAL to meet with success.
- 2.12 Most children in the EYFS achieve the Early Learning Goals well before the age of five. Pupils perform at an above-average level in nationally standardised tests in verbal and non-verbal reasoning in Years 4 to 8. The vast majority successfully move into Year 9 of St Edmund's School; those who have sat Common Entrance for entry into other leading independent schools have also been successful. In recent years, several music and academic scholarships have been won. Instrumental and theory of music Associated Board examination results are strong and Year 8 pupils have been successful in English Speaking Board examinations also.
- 2.13 Pupils achieve highly across a range of extra-curricular activities. The school has an impressive musical tradition, with the Cathedral Choir's residency at Canterbury Cathedral being central to the musical life of the school. The choristers' service to the Cathedral and the community, their concerts, broadcasts, recordings and tours, as well as their outreach work to primary schools are all highly commendable. Other successes over recent years have included a BBC Radio 2 Chorister of the Year award in 2007/8 and selection of pupils for the National Children's Orchestra. Speech and drama are important elements in the school, with regular plays and musical theatre performances attended by large numbers of parents and pupils from local primary schools. Other notable successes include county representation in team sports, a National Under 15 windsurfing champion, in addition to various sporting and academic team triumphs in local competitions and tournaments. Pupils are very proud of the achievements of their peers and show great loyalty to the school.
- 2.14 Overall, pupils organise their work well and written work is neat and legible. For example, beautifully presented work with meticulous attention to detail was observed in Latin and French. In addition, in Years 4 and 6, English, work was well organised and books were kept in good order. In Year 8, average and higher ability groups enjoy their written work and apply their good subject knowledge, skills and understanding well to a variety of opportunities and tasks; written work in the lower ability group is less fluent and mature but all is well-presented. In mathematics, presentation varied within and across the year groups; in a Year 7 lesson, pupils worked purposefully and independently on the construction of angles.

- 2.15 Co-operation and team work amongst pupils is a strong feature of many lessons. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils built on each other's contributions, listening and engaging with one another appropriately. In a Year 2 PSHE lesson, pupils were sensitive to the needs of others, working co-operatively in a well-organised activity. Older pupils, too, displayed well-developed skills in this area in an excellent Year 8 English lesson.
- 2.16 Overall, pupils settle quickly to their tasks and are eager to listen and contribute in lessons. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, pupils demonstrated a mature attitude to study, making an immediate start to the task set and clearly enjoying the practical lesson on angles. When tasks are difficult, pupils persevere to find a solution; in a Year 4 PE lesson, they worked hard to improve in a competitive passing drill in handball. Pupils' enjoyment is a feature of many lessons, helping to create a positive learning environment.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.17 The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is an outstanding feature of the school, building further on the good practice in place at the last inspection. The school fulfils one of its central aims in providing, within a caring and Christian community, an education which ensures the happiness of children and develops compassionate and caring human relationships. The pre-inspection questionnaires showed great satisfaction, on the part of the parents, with the attitudes and values promoted by the school. The Christian ethos is evident both on formal occasions, such as assemblies in the beautiful nineteenth century chapel, and in the way that the pupils and adults relate to each other within the school community in a kind and collaborative learning atmosphere. The school achieves its aim to give its pupils the opportunity to assume responsibility and thereby to increase their moral and social awareness. The musical life of the school is a cultural strength, and at the core of this are the Canterbury Cathedral choristers.
- 2.18 Pupils' outstanding spiritual awareness is promoted effectively through the life of the school. Regular services in the chapel have a strong spiritual component and there are opportunities for the development of self-worth and self-confidence through the shared celebration of success, both here and elsewhere in the school. All pupils from Year 1 to Year 8 enjoy these experiences; the chaplain acknowledges them as they leave chapel and has considerable everyday contact with pupils and staff in all parts of the school. At every level of the community there is a strong atmosphere of caring about and valuing the contribution of each individual which helps to build up pupils' self-esteem and faith in themselves.
- 2.19 The religious studies curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to explore values and religious beliefs and the way in which they affect people's lives. Work-books are well structured and planned to cover topics which are relevant to the lives of the pupils, such as Remembrance-tide, the commandments and discipleship, as well as the study of well-known parables such as the Good Samaritan. In addition to learning about Christianity, pupils develop awareness of other faiths, for example through topics on Muslim and Hindu festivals.
- 2.20 Pre-preparatory pupils have a well developed sense of right and wrong and this continues to be a strong feature of school life when they move into Year 3. In PSHE lessons, pupils are actively encouraged to express their views and they thoughtfully discuss moral issues which arise from choices and consequences. Year 8 pupils were keen to give their views on the repercussions of Adam and Eve's disobedience, whilst in Year 7, photographs of celebrities stimulated well-considered observations on the difference between identity and personality. Year 5 pupils spoke positively about their 'Thoughts and Feelings' box in which they can place questions or observations; its contents can promote helpful discussions about life's challenges.

- 2.21 Pupils throughout the school are aware of and contribute to the life of the wider community through charity fund-raising. The charity committee consists of representatives from each house and it gives pupils the valuable opportunity to consider future planning and make decisions. During the inspection, pupils helped disadvantaged children through the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal, and there are also supportive relationships with orphanages in southern India and Uganda and the Royal Marsden Hospital in London.
- 2.22 From the youngest age, pupils show a high degree of social awareness and consideration for others. They respect each other and appreciate the importance of good manners, friendliness and tolerance. They consider the needs of others and are encouraged to become responsible citizens. Interaction between year groups is a strong feature and as pupils move through the school they have useful opportunities to assume responsibility, which they undertake conscientiously. All pupils in Year 5 are appointed monitors and in this capacity help younger pupils. Members of Years 7 and 8 regularly visit children in the Nursery, whilst house captains take on valuable organisational responsibilities. House activities such as a bridge-building competition and house singing help pupils to interact in a positive and friendly manner. The outdoor education programme with its emphasis on survival skills and teamwork, and other residential and day visits contribute to pupils' social awareness and development.
- 2.23 Pupils display a strong interest in and respect for their own and other cultures. They are tolerant, open-minded and keen to engage with and understand cultural differences. In a music lesson investigating rhythm, pupils learnt about the origins of the samba, before composing their own version in preparation for performing alongside local schools at the St. Nicholas Day Procession in Canterbury. Full advantage is taken of the international boarding community of School House in order to celebrate cultural differences, most recently through a Nepal Day when pupils learnt elements of language and experienced Nepalese cuisine. Pupils benefit greatly from involvement in dramatic productions such as the annual school musical, and they are encouraged to attend school plays in the senior school. The Cathedral choristers play a significant part in the cultural life of the school. They are seen as a beacon of excellence, and bring their talents to music groups and orchestras where many become leading performers.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.25 The quality of teaching and of assessment is good. The energy and willingness of staff to embrace change have enabled the school to fulfil its aim of nurturing talents and interests, and to help all children to fulfil their potential. The teaching is effective overall, with several examples of excellent practice. With the introduction of assessment for learning since the last inspection, together with a broader range of teaching methods, and target-setting and review, teaching increasingly provides for individual needs and child-centred practice. Tracking of pupils' progress, and excellent support for pupils with varying abilities and needs, successfully enables planning which incorporates those needs. The development of a creative curriculum and greater emphasis on practical and investigative skills throughout the school has energised teachers and pupils alike at all stages. Staff enjoy working with their pupils and delight in their successes and achievements. Overall, resources for teaching from the EYFS onwards are generous with notable improvements since the previous inspection in the upgrading of the playgrounds, particularly in the pre-preparatory area, and the modernisation of the music and design and technology facilities. The school is aware that ICT resources to enhance teaching and learning, such as interactive whiteboards, are not always available or used to good effect. It is also aware through its monitoring programme that there are lapses in concentration and motivation in a few classes, and that there is a need to further disseminate good practice in teaching, particularly where pupils have short attention spans.
- 2.26 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities to acquire new knowledge, make progress according to their ability, increase their understanding and develop their skills. Notable examples were seen in Year 4 PE where, through sensitive teaching, pupils of all abilities were given the opportunity to develop their proficiency. Exciting and original mathematics lessons in Years 5 and 6 engaged the more able pupils and extended their knowledge. Open-ended questioning in Year 2 elicited enthusiastic contributions to a lively discussion of ideas.
- 2.27 Teaching successfully encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical and creative effort; teachers make possible independent thinking and decision making. Pupils are interested in their work and take responsibility for it; they display the ability to think and learn for themselves. Very articulate pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 explained that they enjoyed thinking and using their imaginations, in addition to doing and making activities. Excellent spontaneous teaching during a morning break challenged pupils to analyse the safety of their early attempts at bridge building whereas outstanding teaching in a lesson fully engaged a lower ability group in a musical performance. Staff are excellent role models in many areas. Vibrant displays of work testify to the commitment and achievement of their pupils in the wide range of interesting and engaging teaching activities across the curriculum. Pupils give maximum effort to their studies.
- 2.28 Pupils are encouraged to behave responsibly and enjoy their learning. Good behaviour is valued in the school and overall pupils are attentive, respectful and co-operative. Instances of poor motivation and behaviour affecting progress in both younger and older age groups were occasional. The pupil questionnaire supports the fact that pupils find their work interesting and in pupil interviews they reported that they delighted in the practical and investigative work in projects and cross-curricular activities.
- 2.29 Planning is well structured, with clear learning objectives, for the most part made known to the pupils. In the best lessons, activities are meaningful and appealing to pupils, and time management is effective. Teaching is often sufficiently secure and aware to allow for ongoing evaluation of the lesson together with appropriate adaptation of the lesson plan, as in a Year 5 handball session focusing on decision making in attack and defence situations.

Through perseverance and cooperation in the class activity in the earlier part of the lesson, pupils were able to progress to work in smaller groups.

- 2.30 Teachers have a good understanding of the abilities, needs and attainment of their pupils. Pre-preparatory staff have a particularly keen understanding of individual pupils. The development of accessible records is enabling all teachers to be increasingly aware of their pupils' progress, both in the challenges that they face and in their successes. Pupils with individual needs are identified and their records and targets are regularly updated. Excellent work has been done to ensure good communication between the learning support department and teaching staff to raise awareness and provide guidelines and support. The importance of the identification of gifted and talented pupils is recognised; provision for them, both in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities, has increased significantly since the last inspection. Provision for musically gifted and talented pupils is excellent.
- 2.31 Staff overall are well qualified for the subjects and age groups they teach, and their own subject knowledge enhances the quality and depth of their pupils' achievement. From Year 6, pupils are taught by subject specialists and, in some subjects, from Year 3. This led to outstanding teaching, for instance, on metaphors in Year 8 and on probability in Year 5 and focused teaching with good targets in hockey.
- 2.32 Teaching is supported, on the whole, by generous resources of good quality which are appropriately managed and stored. These are mostly used effectively and to good purpose in classrooms, specialist rooms and outdoors. However, science resources were not used extensively in the lower school, a lack of availability of computers was noted and use was not always made of interactive whiteboards to enhance teaching. Pupils are encouraged to have respect for the resources that they are using.
- 2.33 Assessment procedures are strong throughout the school from the Nursery onwards. The introduction of assessment for learning, focusing on the use of learning objectives, improved questioning techniques, and marking and feedback enable thorough planning to ensure pupils' progress. Pupils are encouraged to respond to feedback and also to make their own evaluation of their work, and this area is being developed. Target setting and tracking are in place from the earliest years and the resultant information is well used and monitored thoroughly. The most effective marking includes clear and descriptive comments and suggestions for improvement and encourages good dialogue with pupils.
- 2.34 Pupils' performance is now evaluated against the school's own aims and expectations. The school has withdrawn from national curriculum tests and Common Entrance examinations, the latter on recommendation from the previous inspection. Performance is evaluated through a comprehensive range of assessments, and book scrutiny, target setting and reviews. There is effective and instant electronic access to this data which allows parents, teachers and senior managers to make good use of the information to improve standards.
- 2.35 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 quality of pastoral care and of arrangements for the welfare and health and safety of pupils is excellent. Members of staff, from the EYFS onwards, care passionately about their pupils' well-being and development, and their welfare, health and safety. The school fully achieves its aim to provide a happy and positive experience so that children can enjoy their education. Its commitment to pastoral care is recognised by parents and their children in conversation and in the questionnaires completed by both parents and pupils prior to the inspection. Parents feel that their children's concerns and other pastoral matters are dealt with very well; they say that the school is alert and aware and always keeps them informed. As needs and requirements have changed, numerous developments have been made since the previous inspection in both arrangements for pastoral care and for safeguarding, health and safety. The reputation for excellent care which the school enjoys is deservedly secure.
- 3.2 The support and guidance that are given to all pupils by the staff are based on clearly defined, well-documented policies and procedures. Staff are able to respond quickly and offer appropriate and effective attention and care to individuals and groups when required. The observations of pupils and parents are heeded; in response to their views, a member of staff has been appointed with special responsibility for girls' pastoral care and social and personal issues; also a common room has been provided for Upper School girls. The emphasis on the building of self-confidence and the encouragement of their all-round development results in pupils who feel safe and secure and are happy, courteous and enjoying their learning.
- 3.3 The well-being and welfare of pupils are taken seriously and pastoral arrangements are very effective. A pastoral committee, chaired by the chaplain, draws up welfare plans whenever required. Individual plans are monitored every three weeks, and during that time a designated teacher is available, as a point of contact, to support and give advice on the needs of the child. Pupils have access to a number of staff who willingly give time to help. These include the chaplain who readily offers support to pupils and parents alike, a councillor who attends the school once a week, the matrons, and an independent listener whose details are available to the pupils. The inspirational 'Cake Club' offers solace and understanding help to pupils who require encouragement, and allows social and friendship skills to be developed in a relaxed, supportive atmosphere.
- 3.4 Members of staff clearly have their pupils' best interests at heart. Pupils are shown great patience and kindness and, as a result, good relationships and mutual respect have developed between pupils and teachers and also between pupils. Pupils feel included, valued and supported and benefit from very good role models.
- 3.5 The comprehensive anti-bullying policy and procedures are well known to staff and pupils. Staff in all year groups are open and positive in their approach to the problem of bullying as seen in a thought-provoking form assembly, where pupils spoke candidly about ways to ensure that everyone was happy and that no-one was left out or bullied. The Golden Rules promote positive relationships and behaviour. An extensive rewards system highlights and celebrates good behaviour and work throughout the school; stickers and stars are awarded in the classrooms, and certificates presented in assemblies by the Master. Achievements outside school are recognised and a number of boys had the opportunity to share with their peer group their successes in their local football club. The pastoral system is laid out clearly in staff handbooks which give guidance on dealing constructively with unacceptable behaviour. A group of children pointed out that school rules are fair and in place for the

- good of all, highlighting that these systems help the school to produce caring and thoughtful young people.
- 3.6 Effective child protection policies and measures are securely in place. A number of designated staff are trained to a high level. New staff have guidance in child protection procedures as part of their induction process. Retraining in the correct procedures and measures to take when dealing with a child protection incident is arranged at appropriate intervals. All staff are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau and references carefully taken up.
- 3.7 The necessary measures to reduce risk from fire are firmly in place. The school complies with fire regulations and requirements and is visited annually by the local fire service on a familiarisation exercise. Premises and resources and equipment, such as that used in PE and DT lessons, are well maintained and repaired or replaced where necessary. Risk assessments are completed to identify possible issues, for example, within the laboratories, and hazardous substances are securely locked away and rigorously monitored.
- 3.8 The school has an extensive and comprehensive health and safety policy. The round-the-clock medical care is outstanding; it is highly efficient, and the spacious medical centre is a place where pupils turn not only for medical issues but also for their pastoral needs. Nursing staff are aware of the needs of younger pupils who are looked after in a very understanding way. Staff and pupils have training in the use of adrenaline pens and inhalers. Pupils' health records are diligently kept up to date and any visits to the nurse are recorded and parents informed as necessary. A high number of first aiders are available throughout the school, and EYFS staff have been trained in paediatric first aid. Admissions records are kept accurately and are computerised, as are daily attendance procedures; the monitoring of lateness and absences are dealt with efficiently.
- 3.9 Pupils enjoy the opportunities to take part in physical activities during breaks; pre-preparatory pupils have safe and suitable bicycles, and colourful, attractive large and small climbing apparatus. Older pupils made good use of their substantial climbing frame and basketball area. There are many opportunities for sport and outdoor activities. The school employs a catering company whose chef and catering team work hard to provide healthy, nutritious, attractively presented food. The choristers have breakfast and supper in Choir House which has its own kitchen and pleasant dining room. Pupils have an ample choice of fruit and vegetables to accompany their main meals, which are served in the traditional dining hall or adjacent smaller dining room in the main building. In conversation Year 3 pupils were appreciative of the selection they enjoyed at lunchtimes; "lunch is good", they said. Baskets of fruit are also placed around the school.
- 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 has an outstanding partnership with parents and has established extremely worthwhile links with the wider community, locally, nationally and internationally. The aim of fostering close links with parents is amply fulfilled. The parents' questionnaire showed an overwhelmingly high degree of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's operation and indicated their strong approval of the education and support provided for their children from the very youngest to the oldest. Since the previous inspection, communication between home and school has steadily improved. In particular, the introduction of prep diaries has played an important role in home-school communication, as have the updated news and information and the handbooks for different sections available on the comprehensive website.
- 3.12 Parents appreciate the plentiful opportunities to be involved in activities in the school and in the work and progress of their children. These include more frequent parent-teacher meetings than previously, and also induction meetings for parents as their children move to different stages. In addition, there are informal occasions, such as attendance at music and drama performances, coffee mornings and drop-in invitations to visit classrooms and see their children's work. Parental representatives from each class meet regularly with the headmistress of the pre-preparatory school, and there is a revitalized parents' association in the junior school.
- 3.13 Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with an abundance of information about the school, through newsletters and information posted on the website, which includes a parents' zone. Current parents in the pre-preparatory and the junior school receive appropriate parental handbooks and information mailings; they find particularly useful the publication, 'The Week Ahead'. The school operates an 'open door' policy, and good quality regular written reports and review cards supplement information given more informally.
- 3.14 Parents feel that their concerns are handled with great care and feel secure in the knowledge that the school will take seriously the resolution of any issues. There have been no formal complaints which have reached the panel stage in the past twelve months.
- 3.15 Over the years, excellent links have been forged with the local community. Staff from the school and from nearby primary schools visit each other and share their expertise and experience. Local primary schools are invited to annual junior school plays and attend in large numbers. A Little Voices Festival for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is organised and hosted by the school in partnership with three local primary schools. Gala concerts at the Cathedral involve choirs from other schools, and a local preparatory school and other local primary schools have joined together for singing. Small groups of Cathedral choristers visit primary schools with the Cathedral organist to promote singing education as part of a programme which trains staff in primary schools to teach singing. The East Kent children's orchestra has been established by the senior school director of music and is hosted for children in the community. Summerfest, a three-week activity camp which attracts some 600 to 700 children each year, is organised, hosted and mostly staffed by St Edmund's. There are links with a primary and secondary school in France. Students from a local Japanese college come into the school for work experience each year. The school does much charitable work such as helping to fund a ranch in Kenya, and the sponsoring of a child in Uganda by the pre-preparatory pupils. Pupils are made fully aware of all these excellent links and the reasons behind them.

- 3.16 The school meets the requirement for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.17 The good quality of the arrangements for boarding effectively supports the boarders' education and development. They promote pupils' welfare and make a positive contribution to their educational experience. Since the last inspection very significant renovations and improvements have been made to the accommodation in Choir House, whilst School House has benefited from redecoration and refurbishment throughout. The school has attended effectively to the matters raised in the last Commission for Social Care Inspection.
- 3.18 In School House, pupils find the boarding staff supportive and approachable. There is a friendly family atmosphere and strong informal relationships have been established between staff and boarders, who feel free to raise their concerns. Their comments and ideas are shared at regular meetings for boarding staff; these meetings, in conjunction with house meetings for the boarders, provide staff with opportunities to keep abreast of day-to-day issues and to encourage a corporate house spirit. The house is international in composition, and the house parents are aware of and actively celebrate the cultural traditions of pupils from different countries in the Far East, in addition to those of this country.
- 3.19 The choristers benefit from the Choir House committee, consisting of pupils and staff, which deals with issues on a weekly basis and provides a platform for ideas and discussion. Choir House is characterised by a friendly family ethos within which pupils go enthusiastically about their commitments. They report that they feel secure, well cared for and happy. Staff display obvious compassion and understanding of the special pressures and demands on their boarders; they work with total dedication to ensure that the boarding experience is relaxing, fulfilling and enjoyable for the busy young choristers.
- 3.20 Pupils in School House are actively encouraged to participate in a good range of after-school clubs and activities such as fitness, football, karate, art, dance and swimming. Pupils' experience is broadened through trips out of school at weekends and these are greatly appreciated. Time constraints and the many demands of the Cathedral Choir restrict the number of trips in term time for choristers, but an exciting range of activities and visits are arranged during the times when singing duties continue out of term. Recent extensions to the buildings at Choir House have provided excellent opportunities for recreation and instrumental music practice which the pupils greatly appreciate.
- 3.21 In School House, over recent years, substantial measures have been taken to ensure that heating, lighting and washing facilities effectively meet the needs of the boarders. In addition, redecoration and refurbishing have greatly improved the dormitories and recreation areas. Sitting rooms and common rooms are homely and welcoming and pupils also much appreciate their kitchen. There remains scope for the spacious dormitories to be personalised to a greater extent and made more homely, although it is recognised that this lack of personalisation is often a feature of weekly and flexible boarding.
- 3.22 The recently completed redesign, extension and refurbishment of Choir House has provided truly outstanding facilities for boarding which meet the needs of the choristers supremely well. The choristers are proud of their new surroundings which, given their schedule and the heavy demands upon them, are richly deserved.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The pre-preparatory and junior school benefit from supportive governance of excellent quality. The governors accept the substantial level of commitment involved in their appointment and share a firm belief in the school's vision for the future; they take their responsibilities seriously and are guided by best practice in all areas. They have made an important contribution to the fulfilment of the aims of the pre-preparatory and junior school and the successful provision of a happy and positive experience which enables pupils from the EYFS upwards to enjoy their education. Since the previous inspection, the governing body has facilitated significant growth and improvement in the education for the three to thirteen year olds.
- 4.2 Members of the governing body, which also serves the senior school, have a substantial range of relevant knowledge, experience and interests. They are carefully selected from the professions such as medicine, law, education, finance, the Church, police and local government, and their number includes several former pupils. Effective arrangements are made for the induction of new governors and, since the fairly recent establishment of a larger board, all governors have received relevant and regular training. A well-defined structure, with reports prepared for the three sub-committees which meet termly in addition to the main governors' meeting, ensures that the board has not only an effective oversight of the management of the school, but an awareness of statutory duties and requirements.
- 4.3 The governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and contribute their time and energy as they apply their expertise and knowledge to planning educational development and appropriate funding. Most recently, they have established a St Edmund's School Foundation to fund continued improvement of facilities and establish bursaries to widen access to places in all sections of the school. Their wise and forward-looking financial management and evident commitment to the educational development of this age range have resulted in pleasant facilities for teaching and learning, effective staffing levels and generous resources, all of which support the good quality of education which is provided.
- 4.4 Governors have effective insight; they are kept well informed about the progress and needs of the pre-preparatory and junior school pupils through visits from the chairman and the link governor, reports from the headteachers and the policies which they review regularly. They monitor standards of education and the implementation of policies, such as child protection and complaints. The three committees, all of which have appropriately experienced chairmen, have oversight of financial planning and management, staffing and educational policies, and development planning and welfare, health and safety. They take expert advice where necessary to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities particularly for the safeguarding and for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils; all work efficiently together for the benefit of the pupils.
- 4.5 The senior management team and staff of the pre-preparatory and junior school are well supported by the chairman, the chairmen of committees, the link governor, and by the Headmaster of St Edmund's School. Pupils, parents and staff are clearly appreciative of all they enjoy, the attractive play areas and sports fields, the well-maintained buildings and facilities, the recent new car park and the benefits which arise from the efficiency of the central administration of the school's affairs.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The quality of the leadership and management is outstanding. The school benefits greatly from dedicated, supportive and wise leadership and management, totally committed to the fulfilment of its aims and ethos. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to develop very successfully its provision for the three to thirteen years age group. There has been much progress in monitoring pupils' learning and using this information effectively to support future planning and teaching. The pre-preparatory and junior school, from the EYFS onwards, are being very effectively led by the combined determination of the leadership to recognise the best in each individual child and nurture their talents and interests in order to produce happy, successful children who enjoy their education in a stimulating learning environment.
- 4.7 The Master works closely with the headmistress of the pre-preparatory school who reports to him. He is assisted by a senior management team which consists of the second master, the senior master, the director of studies, the head of lower school and the headmistress of the pre-preparatory school. The close relationships and co-operation between the different sections and, in particular, between the senior and junior schools are much to the benefit of both. The leadership of both the pre-preparatory and junior school share the same ethos of child-centred creative education in a happy, supportive and caring atmosphere.
- 4.8 The school benefits from a senior management team whose combined talents make a most significant contribution to the direction and quality of the education and care of the pupils. The special ethos reflects the determination of the leadership, which is collegiate in style, to provide a stimulating educational environment combined with the achievement of the highest possible academic standards for each individual. The positive, caring relationships, and the importance placed on family values and the happiness of each child are also significant strengths.
- 4.9 Members of the senior management team are perceptive in their analysis of the needs of the school as a whole. The formation of the current management team is comparatively recent and much updating of policies and procedures has taken place. The senior management team have made excellent progress in development planning, in prioritising the needs of the whole age range, and in the implementation of decisions. A good example of this process is the school's achievement in the development of comprehensive and constructive assessment systems, including the very successful introduction of assessment for learning.
- 4.10 Detailed child protection and safe recruitment policies and procedures are firmly established. Selection procedures for new staff are effective and successful. The strengths of staff at all levels, teaching and non-teaching, are recognised and encouraged. Thorough systems for annual appraisal, including that of the Master and of the headmistress who is appraised by the Master, are all clearly established, as is a programme for identification and provision of in-service training needs. There are no newly qualified teachers on the staff at present but arrangements for their induction and that of new members of staff are appropriate, well considered and of high quality.
- 4.11 The overall management structure and its processes for monitoring, evaluation and improvement of teaching and assessment are extremely well organised, efficient and effective. Middle management is generally successful, with good planning and practice in many subject areas. The role of the subject coordinator in the pre-preparatory year groups is being progressively strengthened. Pupils benefit from the co-operation and continuity involved where specialist staff from the senior school teach in the junior school.

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- 4.12 Administrative staff are welcoming, capable and efficient and this underpins the education and care offered by the school. Excellent use is made of ICT in every aspect of the administration and management of the school. Overall, finances, premises, and health and safety affairs are very well managed and supervised centrally by the head of finance and estates. Catering, maintenance, grounds and housekeeping staff are recognised as vitally important, and much appreciated for their commitment and contribution to the family atmosphere of this school where consideration for others and appreciation and encouragement of individual talents are important priorities.
- 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 St Edmund's Junior School accomplishes outstandingly well its aims to provide a happy and positive experience so that pupils enjoy a broad and lively education, their talents and interests are nurtured and they are helped to achieve the best of which they are capable. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given an excellent start on which to build as they proceed through the pre-preparatory and junior school years to the end of Year 8. The effective teaching and the good quality of the whole educational experience inspire a real enjoyment in learning and a willingness to think creatively. The rich and stimulating educational environment, the plentiful resources, the outstanding quality of display and the dedicated teaching, and the excellent understanding of individual needs all combine to encourage pupils to develop their abilities and talents to the full. The high level of awareness of the importance of spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions gives pupils a thoughtfulness and consideration for other people. Pupils of all ages benefit from outstanding pastoral care. Excellent partnerships with parents and links with the wider community greatly enhance the pupils' educational experience within and outside the school. The extremely positive and supportive relationships within the boarding community and the excellence of the accommodation and resources in Choir House are much to the credit of all involved. The very high quality of the governance, leadership and management and the commitment of all involved to best practice and self evaluation ensure that the school is aware of the important areas for continued attention such as increased provision for ICT to ensure that it fully supports and extends learning, and the dissemination of good practice in teaching.
- 5.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has developed successfully. The recommendations of the previous report with reference to strengthening the links between the upper school and the senior school have been achieved and agreement has been reached about an alternative to the Common Entrance examination. The timetable and curriculum have been improved. Provision and resources for different needs and abilities have been extended significantly and effectively.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 To enhance further the good quality of education it presently provides, the school should:
1. develop further its provision for ICT to ensure wider access to and use of resources such as interactive whiteboards;
 2. develop further the good quality of teaching and learning by extending the formal structure of the sharing of good practice.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.
- 5.6 Any failures to meet the requirements of the EYFS 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 medical centre. 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 one inspector. The inspector 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 inspector examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.3 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by an Ofsted inspector over two days.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Danice Iles	Reporting Inspector
Mr Paul David	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mr Malcolm Gough	Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mr Paul Greenfield	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mrs Elizabeth Hickling	Headmistress, IAPS school
Mrs Barbara Knight	Headmistress, IAPS school
Mrs Jane Chesterfield	Early Years Lead Inspector

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

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at St Edmund's Pre-preparatory School provides care and education in one Nursery and one Reception class. The Nursery takes up to twenty-four children and Reception up to sixteen. There are currently fifteen children on roll in Nursery and twelve in Reception, twenty-four of whom receive funding for nursery education at present. There are no children currently who require additional support. Two are learning English as an additional language. The EYFS is located in three buildings adjacent to the junior school and caters for children aged between three and five years.
- 7.2 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding. Thanks to excellent teaching in both classes, children make very good progress. Excellent attention is given to their welfare and their individual needs are extremely well met. This means that all children can flourish, develop and grow, in accordance with the school's aims. Strong partnerships with parents help staff to get to know children quickly and to understand their needs. Leadership and management are outstanding. There has been no complacency since the last inspection and there is a common sense of purpose as staff strive to make the provision even better. Capacity to maintain high standards and make further improvement is excellent.
- 7.3 The setting is exceptionally well organised and runs smoothly. Arrangements for safeguarding children are robust. The setting's policies are well applied in practice to ensure that all children have full access to all the opportunities available and enjoy their time in school. Staff are well trained and motivated, and teamwork is excellent. Parents are very pleased with the setting and what it offers their children. One commented that: "The school and teachers are really on the button with everything." Parents are welcomed into the setting and are kept very well informed about their children's learning and welfare, through regular contact, meetings and written communication. Home and school scrapbooks help Reception staff and parents to establish a regular dialogue, while weekly topic sheets enable Nursery parents to support their children's learning at home. Development planning for the EYFS is well focused on relevant priorities and fits in well with strategic planning for the pre-prep school as a whole.
- 7.4 The quality of the provision is outstanding. Staff plan together closely to create a stimulating, exciting and challenging range of opportunities across all the areas of learning in both Nursery and Reception. Children learn in a vibrant and lively, word-rich environment where their individual creativity and their own ideas are valued. Staff are very skilled practitioners who know when to help children and when to let them find things out for themselves. Topics are used well to motivate children and involve families, and opportunities for role play are excellent. There are many good opportunities to allow children to try writing for a purpose, for example at the 'travel agents' or the 'airport'. Children are carefully assessed through systematic observations, so that the next steps in their learning can be accurately planned. The quality of their foundation stage profiles is very good. There is a clear sense of progression in the challenge offered to children as they move from Nursery to Reception. The outdoor area is used very well to complement indoor facilities across the areas of learning. However, the garden area is currently undeveloped as a resource for learning. Staff are vigilant at all times in their care for children's well-being, and daily routines successfully promote children's ability to look after themselves and consider the needs of others.

- 7.5 The outcomes for the children in the EYFS are outstanding. Children are all happy and settled, eager to get involved in their activities and able to apply themselves wholeheartedly to what they are doing. From a range of starting points, they make very good progress in the EYFS. Most enter Year 1 with a level of skills well above expectations for their age. Children feel safe in the EYFS, and readily turn to known adults if they need help. They are considerate towards others and behave sensibly. Two children in Reception, for example, felt responsible when another joined their playground game and then fell over, and asked their teacher how they could make amends. Children enjoy a healthy diet and have many good opportunities to be physically active. They are learning to care for themselves, understanding, for example, when they need to wash their hands, and when they need to put on coats to go outside. There is a strong sense of community within each class and within the pre-prep school, and children of all ages get on very well together, especially in the dining hall at lunchtime and in the outside play area. Children are ready to help one another, share resources and listen to the ideas of others, such as during 'show and tell' sessions. They make very good progress in their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and in their personal and social skills. This means that they move into Year 1 extremely well prepared for the new challenges awaiting them.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.6 To improve still further the high quality of its provision, the setting should:
1. implement plans for developing the Abingdon garden as an area for quiet outdoor activities, as set out in the school development plan.
- 7.7 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.