

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **Warminster Preparatory School.**

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

Full Name of the School	<b>Warminster Preparatory School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>865/6009</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1042204</b>
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Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Richard Southwell</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 11</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008</b>

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 and May 2007.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 Warminster Preparatory School is a school for 113 full-time pupils from 3 to 11 years of age, 14 of whom board, and 23 part time pupils. Of the full-time pupils 62 are boys and 51 girls. The 23 part-time pupils are in the Nursery class. There are eight full-time pupils in the Foundation Stage and 105 in Years 1 to 6. In the period since the last inspection the numbers of pupils fell but are now increasing again. Similarly the numbers of pupils boarding has increased and there are now 14 boarders; eight girls and six boys. The school, together with its senior school, are the responsibility of an independent educational trust. Most pupils come from professional, commercial, agricultural or services backgrounds, generally from the surrounding district. The majority go on to the senior school, but some move on to other senior schools and some to local maintained schools.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1707 as a boys' school and merged in 1973 with a neighbouring girls' school to become co-educational. The school site is a blend of historic and modern buildings in the centre of Warminster. In recent years, a programme of new building, conversion and refurbishment has taken place and there are firm plans for further development. The school aims to provide a caring community for all pupils, where every pupil is equally valued and supported. Pupils are encouraged to achieve their full personal and academic potential, and to work out their own moral and religious principles. Since the last inspection in March 2002, the school has undergone considerable change, including two changes of headteacher. The provision for children in the Nursery and for music has been redeveloped and extended. The school has also purchased and refurbished a boarding house for the preparatory school.
- 1.3 The pupils have a wide range of ability on entry, but pupils' average ability on entry to the Foundation Stage is above that of the national average in most years. Entry into the Nursery is not selective, but pupils joining later are tested for suitability. Many pupils join the school in Years 4 and 5 and some of these pupils come with ability below the average nationally. Twenty-three pupils receive support for learning difficulties or disabilities. There are no pupils at present for whom English is an additional language, but this support is available if it is needed.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 Warminster Preparatory School successfully fulfils its aims, providing a balanced and varied curriculum, so that pupils work to develop their potential in all areas of learning. The quality of the educational provision has been maintained and enhanced since the last inspection, with more curriculum time for the humanities and the introduction of an annual arts festival week, enabling pupils to share with pupils from the senior school and other local schools in an enriching programme.
- 2.2 The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development and enables them to acquire skills of literacy, speaking, listening and numeracy. The school prepares pupils very well for each stage of their education and for adult life. Considerable care is taken in the Nursery and Reception classes to ensure that children settle happily. To ensure a smooth transition of pupils from class to class, pupils' assessment information is discussed and passed on from year to year, including into the senior school when appropriate. Pupils regularly go to the senior school for swimming and this is a helpful link for those that move on to the senior school.
- 2.3 The Foundation Stage curriculum is appropriately based on the six areas of learning for pupils of that age and is underpinned by a self-evaluation programme. Specialist teachers provide lessons in music, physical education (PE) and art in the Foundation Stage. From Year 1 the school places a strong emphasis on literacy with particular focus on reading and writing skills. Specialists teach music, art, games and PE and information and communications technology (ICT). In Year 1, French is introduced as a modern foreign language. The school curriculum incorporates all National Curriculum subjects including personal, social and health education (PSHE). In Year 3, class teachers teach most of the curriculum, so that opportunities for cross curricular links are exploited fully. From Year 4 onwards, specialist teaching increases. Curricular planning and policy documents are detailed and provide continuity and progression in learning throughout the school. In recent months a significant emphasis has been put on encouraging reading with a daily early morning reading session for all pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- 2.4 A range of enrichment activities provides good extensions to the curriculum, and often fosters good links with the local and wider community. For example, a Year 6 residential weekend trip to France and visits by younger pupils to a Parisian owned local café, supported the acquisition of a modern language. As well as enriching the pupils' education, the activities cater for a variety of physical, aesthetic and creative talents and interest. Pupils interviewed were unanimous in their enjoyment and appreciation of the extra-curricular activities at school. Year 3 pupils, for example, talked enthusiastically about creative writing, judo and touch-typing. Further enrichment of the curriculum comes from a wide variety of visits to local places of interest and value, particularly to neighbouring Longleat, and by inviting representatives from the church, fire service and police to come to the school. The school's involvement in the Comenius Project means that pupils and staff greatly benefit from sharing experiences and ideas with schools in Europe and an inner city school in Birmingham.
- 2.5 Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and sports held at lunchtime and after school, which enhance pupils' lives and raise their self-esteem. The school's sporting activities include football, rugby, hockey, netball and cricket. Whilst many clubs are sporting or musical, others reflect the diverse interests of the staff such as board games, stagecraft, the clay club,

cycling and ‘imagineering’. Regular musical and dramatic productions involve a large number of pupils and staff and are hugely enjoyed by all.

- 2.6 The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and for those who need extra support is well planned. The procedures for identifying pupils’ particular learning needs are efficient and effective. Support by specialist teaching is provided on an individual basis or in small groups, and there are flexible arrangements to support pupils in class lessons, with the help of classroom assistants. Support for the gifted and talented is being extended by the introduction of WATCH clubs for older pupils, which provide a series of extension activities and challenges.
- 2.7 Pupils attending learning support lessons follow a broad framework of literacy teaching with specific additions to fit the recommendations and targets in their individual education plans (IEPs), which are compiled after detailed testing. However, the pupils are withdrawn from the same lesson each week, which means that pupils sometimes miss a significant proportion of lessons in a particular subject.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils’ Learning and Achievements**

- 2.9 Overall, pupils achieve well at all ages and the tests indicate that, in most years, pupils’ achievements are well above the average expected nationally for their age by the time they leave the school. The good standards identified by the previous inspection in English and science have been maintained and the standards in mathematics have been improved. The school broadly meets its aims of setting high expectations so that all pupils can achieve their full potential. Pupils do not sit national tests, but higher attainers take common entrance tests at eleven, usually to enter the senior school, and they do well in these tests. A few pupils take tests to enter other independent, or local maintained schools and the school has a good record for pupils’ success taking this route. Pupils with learning difficulties also do well and most make good progress.
- 2.10 When pupils come into the early years, the school’s standardised assessments indicate that the overall attainment is above average, but in the last few years a considerable number of pupils have joined the school at an older age and their attainment on entry has been mixed. The school has judged that a significant proportion of late arrivals have required learning support. In the present Year 6, for example, the overall standard of the year group is broadly in line with the average expected for their age. This year group has more pupils than is usual of lower attainment and, in addition, about a third of the year group came to the school within the last two years. The pupils in Year 6 who have been at the school from the pre-prep achieve higher standards overall relative to their ability, even though nearly two-thirds are receiving learning support. The school’s standardised assessments and work seen during the inspection indicate that pupils in other years are achieving standards that are at least well above average in the tested subjects of English, mathematics and science. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
- 2.11 Pupils make good progress in most lessons in developing skills, knowledge and understanding of the subjects they study. In English, mathematics and science they develop a growing understanding, so that they can form and follow an argument and solve problems. Higher attainers also usually make good progress, but there are times when lack of challenge and extension work constrains their achievement. Even so, most pupils, including the most able, achieve well relative to their ability in most lessons at each stage. They develop increasing independence in their study and their homework shows examples of investigation, notes taken from research and good use of the computer. They organise themselves with

- increasing confidence as they move up the school. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress in their individual lessons and, because in most lessons they are well supported by their class teachers, they achieve well across the curriculum. In the pre-inspection questionnaires parents indicate that they are pleased with their children's progress.
- 2.12 In the Foundation Stage achievement is high. The children usually speak fluently when they come to the school, they have a good grasp of phonics and they quickly develop good number skills for their age. By the time they enter Year 1 almost all children have achieved the Early Learning Goals nationally recommended for children of that age, and many have reached those levels earlier.
- 2.13 In most English lessons, pupils make good progress in their learning. They invariably come to the school with good oral skills and these develop as they grow older. They write with imagination and increasing effectiveness in different styles and write stories that are imaginative and engaging. Year 6 pupils, for example, have recently written some very imaginative stories on time travel. In Year 4, pupils develop their vocabulary and writing skills by working in pairs in role-play as policemen writing statements describing an event.
- 2.14 In mathematics, pupils develop good knowledge and understanding. They demonstrate good mental mathematics skills at all ages and, by Year 6, the two upper sets show good skills in solving mathematical problems. The lower set focuses more on the furtherance of basic skills. In science, pupils also achieve well. In Year 5 pupils learn about the nature and functions of various gases and in Year 6 they move on to learning about dissolving solutions in water. They enjoy science, concentrate well throughout lessons and develop good understanding of the topics they cover. Pupils understand the principles of fair testing from an early age. In other subjects across the curriculum pupils achieve well in response to good teaching. ICT skills are very high throughout the school. By Year 6, pupils show highly developed skills in using spreadsheets, desktop publishing and language translation programmes.
- 2.15 Pupils are given many opportunities to learn and to think for themselves, to investigate, to discover, argue cogently and extend their imagination. In pupils' books in history and geography for example, there are good examples of investigation and enquiry. In lessons pupils concentrate, they apply themselves very well and persevere with their tasks. Co-operative work in pairs and groups is a strong feature of many lessons.
- 2.16 Pupils are proud of their individual and team successes in sporting events. The school's policy is that all pupils represent the school in at least one sport of football, cricket, netball, hockey or rugby. They do well in these competitive sports locally and four pupils have represented the school in county teams in the last two years. Pupils gain a great deal of confidence from taking part in arts activities, performing in the termly concerts and school productions. A good number learn musical instruments and some achieve up to Grade 5 in examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.
- 2.17 Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well in their individual lessons because the lessons focus closely on their particular needs set out in the pupils' IEPs. The IEPs provide pupils with realistic targets as well as long-term aims. The provision in class lessons is more variable. Even so, pupils make at least satisfactory progress in most lessons.

## **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.18 Pupils develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The emphasis in the school's mission statement on providing a caring school in which pupils are polite, courteous and considerate of others is fully and consistently implemented by all staff and the Code of Conduct is clearly known and upheld. Pupils mature and grow in personal and moral self-assurance in a friendly and caring environment, underpinned by the school's core values and Christian ethos. The already good provision for pupils' personal development has improved further since the last inspection.
- 2.19 Pupils' spiritual development is good. Pupils experience a wide range of appropriate opportunities, which help them to develop an understanding and appreciation of the spiritual side of human experience. In a chaplain's assembly, for example, pupils reflected on the meaning of Lent and Easter and joined in collective prayer. They frequently experience the joy of music and their work in English shows good reflective work, which focuses on matters beyond the tangible. In a Year 3 religious studies (RS) lesson, pupils discussed a poem, 'What Makes a Church', and appreciated the importance of God, love and blessings, rather than the building itself. In a Year 6 geography lesson, pupils expressed their wonder at the beauty of coral reefs and the amazing fish in the Philippines. The lesson successfully raised the pupils' awareness of the fragility of the environment and the ease with which coral reefs can be damaged. Pupils develop their sense of self-esteem and self-confidence in all aspects of school life, from classroom to sports field.
- 2.20 The moral development of pupils is good. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed their support for the strong values they felt the school instilled. From an early age pupils can distinguish right from wrong and they are pleased to be rewarded for good work or behaviour. Effective use is made of the house system to reward pupils and the Headmaster's Award is given for thoughtful, helpful behaviour. In PSHE lessons, pupils become very involved in circle-time, when they make a personal contribution to discussions on moral and social issues. The pupils understand the anti-bullying policy and know the high standards expected of them. They understand the need for sanctions and believe them to be fair. Good behaviour is a strong feature of the school.
- 2.21 Pupils develop a strong sense of social responsibility. They relate very positively to each other and display a caring, courteous and sensitive attitude to each other. The school works hard, particularly through team sports, to instil a sense of social responsibility. Year 3 commented that when playing football a mid-field player should run his best, as every member of the team is responsible for the success of the game. Younger pupils in the Foundation Stage are given class responsibilities and the tasks are rotated so that each pupil takes a turn. By Year 6 pupils are given further responsibilities, such as distributing hymn books and putting out chairs for staff and visitors, assisting in the library, helping staff during wet breaks with younger pupils and showing prospective parents around the school. Staff encourage pupils to help one another at play; in an RS lesson pupils could recount an act of kindness when another pupil had deliberately tried to cheer up a classmate. Pupils act as 'shadows' to support newcomers to the school. The school council consults so that all pupils are involved in fundraising for children's charities such as NSPCC and Save The Children, or charities with an association with the school community. Pupils develop an awareness of various public institutions and public services, particularly through their work in history. They show a developing understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and healthy choices are available in the school dining hall.
- 2.22 Through a wide range of interesting studies and activities, pupils gain good insight into their own and other cultures. Their own culture is celebrated in lessons and clubs in music, art,

drama and literature. Since the last inspection the provision for cultural development has improved with greater opportunities for music. The RS curriculum includes the study of world faiths and guest speakers from a variety of faiths come to the school to talk to pupils. Displays of art show examples of work on Greek urns and Egyptian papyrus, as well as photographs of a trip to the local French café. The well-planned arts festival supports co-operative learning and links with other schools. The school's involvement in the Comenius Project provides opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of the lives of children in other European countries, as well as in a culturally mixed school in Birmingham. Further understanding of other cultures is gained from studying a foreign language.

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

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.24 Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall and nearly always satisfactory so that teaching successfully supports the school's aim of helping every pupil achieve high academic and personal standards and contributes effectively to pupils' achievement and progress. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are teaching, so that pupils can extend their knowledge, understanding and skills in most lessons.
- 2.25 When teaching is good, high expectations and challenging questions stimulate intellectual, creative and physical effort from pupils. Lessons are planned effectively and good use is made of assessments from previous lessons. Classrooms are invariably quiet, orderly and well managed. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good throughout the school. Behaviour is of a high standard and teachers work hard and successfully to encourage the enthusiasm of their pupils. Target setting is used to good effect in some classes in English and mathematics and the process supports pupils' learning well, although targets are not used in all years.
- 2.26 Lessons are generally interesting and engage pupils' concentration, but where teaching is less successful the subject matter is dull or the pace slow. Pupils then spend too much time dealing with repetitive basic exercises. In these lessons the questioning of pupils does not often provide enough challenge and insufficient planning is done to provide tasks suited to the different levels of ability within the class, even though sets are usually quite small. On occasions, pupils receive little encouragement to think for themselves, make decisions or be responsible for their learning. Some good examples were seen of the use of target setting for individuals, derived from assessment, but this is not yet common practice.
- 2.27 Resources within the school are at least adequate and well organised, and teachers use the resources to good effect. The computer suite is well resourced and organised. Classrooms have computers installed and linked to the network. Most teachers are skilled in the use of ICT, but a few are less confident.
- 2.28 In the Foundation Stage, teachers are very successful in developing children's confidence, self-esteem and independence. The teachers understand how children develop and learn at this age and plan carefully to meet their children's learning needs. The support assistants in the Foundation Stage are very effective in supporting and helping children to progress. Good use of assessments helps teachers to focus the learning well, so that the children make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals set for children of that age.
- 2.29 When learning difficulties are identified, pupils are extracted to benefit from well-taught individual lessons. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is based on good, well-

- focused assessments. The teaching of pupils in these individual lessons is well targeted and skilled, but tends to deal only with difficulties concerned with literacy.
- 2.30 The teaching of pupils with learning difficulties in class lessons is more variable. In the best practice, teachers plan carefully to match the work to the different levels of attainment in the class and work is planned with reference to IEPs, but this is not consistent across all subjects. The school ensures that all teachers have copies of the IEPs and a thumbnail sketch of each pupil's profile.
- 2.31 Assessment was reported on positively at the last inspection, and the practice would seem still to be satisfactory. In the last year, the school has changed its assessment policy and has introduced new forms of assessment, which give greater detail of each pupil's progress as well as setting pupils' attainments against age related norms. This has been a useful move and has illustrated well the different achievements of pupils across the school. So far the information has been collated, and assessment is generally used well to inform planning and to help teachers select subject matter that meets the needs of the pupils; but it is not yet used by management in their curriculum planning and future developments.
- 2.32 Teachers regularly carry out their own tests and assessments in class, and through marking of assignments. The quality of marking is good. There are occasions, however, when the different needs of pupils in the class are less effectively met, in particular the stretching of the higher achievers in the class.
- 2.33 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 Pastoral care is a strong feature of the school and pupils learn in a warm, caring and orderly atmosphere, which has been established by a committed staff through good management and a clear vision that the community understands and respects. The school places great emphasis on good behaviour, well developed social skills, respect for each other and traditional values and it is successful in achieving its aims. As a result of setting out more clearly the routines and expectations of staff, the good provision for pastoral care, welfare, health and safety reported at the last inspection has improved still further and a number of minor matters regarding safety raised at that time have been resolved.
- 3.2 Teachers and other staff work hard to help the pupils build their self-confidence. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and pupils acknowledge the support that they enjoy from their teachers. Inter-pupil relationships are happy as is obvious to anyone spending time in the school. Pupils are extremely courteous and proud of their school.
- 3.3 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour work well and the school has introduced an imaginative rewards system, which includes merits, pupil of the week and the house competition. Through these arrangements the school strongly promotes positive behaviour, self-discipline and responsibility. House meetings, assemblies and school council meetings reinforce the pastoral message and the sense of community. Pastoral arrangements are clearly documented and are understood by both staff and pupils. The form teachers, who are caring and supportive of the pupils, deal with the majority of pastoral issues and time is set-aside during registration and in golden-time to deal with pastoral matters. More serious issues, that occur from time to time, are dealt with by the deputy headteacher and, when necessary, by the headteacher.
- 3.4 Procedures to guard against harassment and bullying are effective and clear guidelines are given to staff and pupils. Staff are familiar with these and anti-bullying procedures are advertised in all classrooms. Pupils do not feel that bullying is an issue and they report that if there is a minor incident it is dealt with quickly and effectively. They say that they are happy to go to teachers to seek help and are confident they will be listened to and their concerns dealt with. Pupils' responses in their pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive about the quality of pastoral care and no issues of concern were raised.
- 3.5 The school has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. Staff have received child protection training and are reminded of the important issues at the beginning of each term. Measures are in place for the safe recruitment of staff. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained.
- 3.6 Arrangements to ensure pupils' health and safety are effective and the school has due regard for health and safety statutory obligations. All necessary measures have been taken to minimize the risk of fire. Tests, fire practices and risk assessments are carried out regularly.
- 3.7 The children enjoy nutritious school meals and lunchtimes are pleasant social occasions. The school is a safe and caring environment where pupils are happy and relaxed. They have good access to regular exercise, in the playground and on the games field. Pupils say that they like coming to school.
- 3.8 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**

- 3.9 Links with parents and the wider community are well established. Since the last inspection the school has strengthened its links with parents. A high proportion of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire. Responses were extremely positive about the school's provision and emphasised the many good and effective links that exist between home and school. The supportive attitudes of parents underpin the school's view that effective partnership between parents and teachers means that their children are encouraged and supported. Parents emphasise their approval of the personal attention and care the staff give their children. Less serious, day-to-day, concerns of parents are dealt with effectively and recorded, and parents acknowledge this.
- 3.10 Parents of pupils and prospective pupils are provided with good information about the school. The prospectus and school website are interesting and informative. For further detail the parents' handbook is a valuable reference and includes a section specifically for parents of boarders. A comprehensive formal report is sent annually to parents and regular grade sheets during the year keep parents informed of their child's progress. Reports are positive and encouraging, and give clear indications of what pupils should do to improve. Regular consultation evenings are held to provide opportunities for parents to discuss progress with teachers and to see their child's work. The excellent arrangements informing parents of the daily life of the school include weekly newsletters, calendars and displays of notices in hallways. For more personal contact, parents and teachers use the prep or reading diary to communicate on a daily basis.
- 3.11 Parents of pupils with learning difficulties are well informed and consulted about the progress their children are making. When a pupil with learning difficulties is identified, parents are consulted and invited to put their child forward for assessment. At each subsequent stage parents are informed and involved in meetings to discuss the pupil's IEP and school reports. For boarders, the house tutor is fully aware of the needs of pupils in her care and is both caring and supportive on their behalf.
- 3.12 The school has developed good links with the wider community. Links are particularly close with the senior school and include numerous joint projects and frequent exchanges and visits of pupils and staff. Prep School pupils go to the senior school each week for swimming during the summer term. In addition, pupils in Years 5 and 6 regularly visit the senior school's specialist facilities, such as the science laboratories and the technology centre. The local primary schools orchestra meets each Wednesday in the school hall and pupils from the school join with others from the locality to make music. The school choir also goes out to sing in the local area. The town Brownie group and the mums and toddler group meet in the school. A mutually beneficial partnership between the school and Warminster cricket club shares premises and resources. The EU Comenius project promotes cultural exchange and enriches the lives of the pupils through contact with schools in this country and in Europe.
- 3.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.14 The school makes good provision for the 14 pupils boarding. Relationships within the boarding community are positive and the staff responsible for the pupils' welfare are caring and supportive.
- 3.15 The matron is supported by a house tutor, both of whom live on site and two or three members of staff are on duty each night. Pupils respond positively to clear rules and guidelines and to the warm and caring attitude of the staff. The boarders are happy, chatty and genuinely appear to enjoy the boarding environment. They complete their homework each evening in the school, under supervision, and the member of staff on duty listens to each pupil read.
- 3.16 Boarders enjoy a range of activities outside of school time and at weekends, including the use of the senior school swimming pool, chapel and artificial grass pitch, and the ICT suite, hall and fields. Evening and weekend meals are taken in the senior school. Most boarders go home for weekends, but those remaining have an opportunity to cook, and to visit the park and shop in the town centre. Staff organise a variety of trips, for example to Longleat, the cinema, ice-skating and soft-play centres.
- 3.17 The quality of accommodation and resources is good, and considerable recent investment, with the purchase and refurbishment of the boarding house adjacent to the school, has greatly improved the standard of provision. It is clean, comfortable and appropriate for pupils' age. Pupils are allocated rooms according to gender and age. They write a letter home every Wednesday and they are allocated a telephone slot each evening when parents can call in and speak to the children in private.
- 3.18 Boarding numbers have increased in recent years and provision has improved considerably since the inspection in 2002. All issues raised in the last inspection by the Commission for Social Care in 2006, have been successfully addressed.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The prep school and senior school are governed by an independent educational trust. A sub-committee focuses on prep school matters, but other sub-committees, such as the finance, and shortly to be formed academic committee also deal, or will deal, with issues that are relevant to the prep school. Minutes of meetings show a well-informed and conscientious governing body. A particular and understandable focus is on the need to keep numbers healthy. The structure and functions of the governing body appear well organised.
- 4.2 The present prep school headteacher is a governor who stepped temporarily into the headship when the previous headteacher left and the school was in some disruption. He intends to return to the governing body at the end of the year, when the deputy will take over as headteacher.
- 4.3 The chairman of governors is very active and takes a keen interest in the school. Through his influence, all governors are involved in all aspects of governance. So all governors are members of the prep school committee. Overall, this has worked satisfactorily.
- 4.4 It is clear that the governors have given priority to the senior school in building development in the last few years, although considerable funds were used to purchase and refurbish the junior boarding house. The prep school has also received funds to reposition and refurbish the Nursery and Foundation Stage provision. Overall the school's accommodation is adequate for its purpose and governors ensure that it is a safe and healthy place for pupils and staff to work in.
- 4.5 The governors have a good insight into the working of the school and provide advice, support and stimulus for growth and improvement. In the last two years the governors have been concerned to re-establish staff confidence and morale. Having achieved this they now consider the time ripe to move on, and look to improve and develop further the activities and practices of the school.
- 4.6 Until the new modes of assessment are fully established the governing body does not have full information about the achievement of pupils with which to monitor the performance of the school. Appraisal, too, including the appraisal of senior staff, is not presently operating. Consequently development planning has weaknesses, for example in the lack of focus on the professional development of staff.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.7 The leadership and management of the prep school are good. The school has been through a period of considerable disruption, when staff morale was low and parents were concerned about the school. Standards have been at least maintained throughout this period and are now rising again; the present headteacher has worked hard and very successfully to restore confidence and unity. The school is working with increasing success to fulfil its aims.
- 4.8 The school is now a remarkably happy and cohesive society. This is most apparent in teachers' work on the care and management of pupils' behaviour. The staff approach to the management of pupils is cohesive and consistent. Having achieved a high level of motivation among the staff, the management is now ready to focus more on other aspects of the school.

- 4.9 At present, in addition to their daily role of administration and organisation the senior team monitor teaching and pupils' work, but the outcomes are not recorded. Appraisal, or performance management, of the staff at any level is in abeyance while a new scheme is introduced and job descriptions are being reviewed. Peer monitoring is working effectively and some subject co-ordinators monitor the teaching of their subjects. Teachers have also been encouraged to visit other schools to observe similar practice, and all are encouraged and supported to attend training courses and meetings.
- 4.10 The management has recently introduced new forms of assessment that give the school better detail about pupils' progress. The new assessments also give age related comparisons, so that the school can know how well pupils are achieving against national norms. When the new system has been running for some time information about the progress pupils make in their learning will also be available.
- 4.11 Together with information from the monitoring of teaching and the new assessments, the management are moving to analyse more clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the school's teaching and set out strategies and priorities in the school development plan for the professional development of the staff: an area which is missing at present. In many other respects the development plan is a useful document for taking the school forward. It plans for the development of the curriculum, for staff appraisal, for the monitoring of pupils' work, and strategies for marketing the school.
- 4.12 The work of subject co-ordinators varies from subject to subject. Subject policies and schemes of work are generally of good quality and give clear guidance to teachers working with them, as do whole school policies. The leaders of subjects that involve a number of teachers usually provide good support for their colleagues. They, and the director of studies, regularly collect samples of pupils' work to monitor pupils' progress and teachers' marking. The management of the provision for pupils with learning needs is effective and efficient.
- 4.13 At the end of this academic year the present deputy headteacher will become the headteacher. Communication between the headteacher and the staff is very good and teachers tell us that they are now very happy with the school and feel well supported.
- 4.14 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and makes good arrangements to support the new teachers. There are no newly qualified teachers at present. All adults working in the school are subject to the necessary checks at the time of appointment, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau.
- 4.15 Financial matters are well managed by the bursar, who works with both the prep and the senior school. The school is housed in premises of a satisfactory standard for its pupils, it is well resourced for learning and the resources are well organised. Management of, and accommodation for, boarding is good. The administration of the school runs smoothly and effectively, and communication on day-to-day matters is well done. Office staff present a welcoming atmosphere for the school and are highly efficient.
- 4.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.17 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 Warminster Preparatory School is largely successful in meeting its aims and aspirations. Good teaching is effective in enabling pupils to achieve their potential academically. Almost all pupils move on to schools of their choice, mostly to Warminster Senior School. The pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good and there is a very strong sense of cohesion in the community. The quality of care, guidance and personal development, underpinned by warm supportive relationships and mutual respect, is a strong feature of the school, and one to which all staff show strong commitment. Pupils develop well personally. All pupils are valued and they respond by demonstrating a thoughtful and responsible approach to other people, the environment and to charitable causes. Their life at the school is rich and rewarding, and they enjoy being at school. They make the most of the many opportunities offered to them in a wide-ranging programme of activities.
- 5.2 The standards achieved by pupils are broadly similar to those reported at the last inspection, other than in mathematics where standards are higher. Teaching has improved overall, as has the quality of pupils' learning. Links with parents have improved and the school makes good use of the local and wider community to enhance pupils' learning. Strong leadership and management has been effective in raising the quality of provision, and is now seeking to focus directly on raising standards of teaching and learning. However the process of development planning is incomplete; the rigorous monitoring of teaching and planning for the professional development of the staff are not yet fully effective.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to improve further the good standard of education already established, the school should take the following action.
1. Take steps to improve the collection and use of information from monitoring standards in the school and assessing the achievement of its pupils by:
    - consolidating and refining the new methods of assessment so that senior managers are better informed, teachers and curriculum managers can plan more effectively, and parents can be better informed about the progress their children are making;
    - establishing systems for the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning and other aspects of the work of the school, to clarify for management the school's strengths and weaknesses;
    - re-establishing regular appraisal, or performance management, for all staff, including the provision of current job descriptions.
  2. Use the information gained from more effective monitoring as the basis for a comprehensive development plan for the medium and longer term growth of the school, with particular focus on the professional development of the staff.
  3. Improve the quality of teaching by seeking ways regularly to disseminate the good practice evident in the school so that strengths in teaching can be shared.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

## **6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008. 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 also visited the boarding house and spoke to a number of boarders. 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.

### **List of Inspectors**

Mr John Ayerst	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Susan Bailes	Headteacher of an IAPS Preparatory School.
Mr Edward Rees	Deputy Headteacher of an IAPS Preparatory School
Mrs Maureen Daborn	Head of department at an IAPS Preparatory School