

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Prospect House School

Full Name of the School	Prospect House School
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Age Range	3 to 11
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	21st to 24th April 2008

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 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 Prospect House School began as a nursery school in Barnes, moving to its present site as a preparatory school in 1991. In 2001, when the previous owners retired, the school joined Bassett House School in Kensington and Orchard House School in Chiswick as part of the House Schools Group. The school is located on one site in Putney in south west London and is run on a proprietorial basis. A new headmistress has been appointed since the last inspection in 2002 and considerable development and investment have taken place with regard to staffing, educational resources, information and communication technology (ICT) and outdoor play provision.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection there were 178 pupils on roll, aged between 3 and 11 years. The numbers of boys and girls were the same. Apart from 15 pupils in the nursery, all pupils attend on a full-time basis. In total, 54 pupils were in the Foundation Stage and 36 were in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 there were 88 pupils.
- 1.3 The school has identified 32 pupils as in need of additional learning support, usually in mathematics or literacy. This is provided either in the classroom through small groups, or through one to one help in the learning support department. No pupils have a statement of special educational need. A total of 29 pupils do not have English as their principal language. Most are fluent in English, although additional support is given so that such pupils are able fully to access the curriculum.
- 1.4 Most pupils come from an area local to the school and from families that strongly support their children's education and want them to be successful. Most pupils' parents are involved in the professions or business sectors and are based in London.
- 1.5 Entry to the school at the age of three is not on a competitive basis but is based on date of registration and the need to maintain a roughly equal gender balance; in addition, priority is given to siblings of pupils already at the school. Pupils entering the school at a later stage take a series of assessments in literacy and mathematics to assess their suitability for the school. The pupils cover a wide spectrum of ability, though their ability in general is above the national average. This means that if pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results will be above the average for all maintained primary schools.
- 1.6 All pupils transfer successfully to a range of senior schools. In 2007, almost all pupils transferred to their first choice school. Furthermore, a significant proportion of pupils entering those schools had gained scholarships.
- 1.7 The school has a series of aims which are underpinned by its ethos. Firstly, it wants its pupils to achieve excellence and success by working together in a safe, supportive and well-resourced environment. Through providing a broad and balanced curriculum it intends that they are equipped for the future as active, confident and responsible members of a rapidly developing society. Also, the school intends that pupils will achieve their full potential in all areas, become independent learners and have a positive attitude to their work. It also wishes that pupils will have positive attitudes towards themselves, have a strong sense of self-respect, be creative and also be able to appreciate human achievements, failures and aspirations. Finally, it seeks to develop in its pupils a range of desirable personal qualities, a concern for others and the environment, a sense of respect for other people and a sense of moral values.

- 1.8 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 The school provides an all round educational experience of high quality, consistent with its declared aims and philosophy. Significant improvement has been made since the last inspection. The introduction of Latin into Years 5 and 6 and French into the Foundation Stage has extended the pupils' linguistic skills. Wide-ranging and effective upgrading of the provision for ICT, the introduction of a single teacher for science and improvements in several aspects of literacy, have enhanced the quality of teaching and learning. Increased outside space for physical education (PE) and play has led to further improvements in the education provided. Throughout the school, emphasis is placed on providing pupils with activities that contribute to their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. Pupils are easily able to acquire the skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy in a very well-planned and progressive way.
- 2.2 Pupils benefit greatly from the variety and breadth of the educational experience they receive. The curriculum is good, with features of significant strength. The nursery curriculum uses elements of a Montessori approach with only French, physical education, music and drama being specifically timetabled. The reception classes follow the 'Stepping Stones' leading to the Early Learning Goals. In Years 1 and 2 all subjects of the National Curriculum are followed, together with personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), French, religious education and a library period. A period of verbal and non-verbal reasoning is added from Year 3 and the pupils are grouped according to their ability for English and mathematics. They are also increasingly taught by specialist teachers. The addition of Latin in Years 5 and 6 is made possible by an acceptable reduction in the time allocated to library sessions.
- 2.3 The educational experience pupils receive contributes effectively to their progress in all areas of learning and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Pupils acquire good speaking and listening skills in many subjects. The programme of ICT throughout the school is most thorough. Many subjects, such as history and geography in particular, integrate ICT very effectively into their planning and lessons. Indeed, such is the quality of the ICT provision that the school has recently been awarded the British Education Communications and Technology Agency's Award, the first independent preparatory school in the United Kingdom to gain this for the use of ICT in both school administration and across the curriculum. All pupils have access to a broad range of sports through physical education and games. This includes many opportunities to represent the school in competitive sport.
- 2.4 An outstanding variety of clubs and activities is offered. These complement the curriculum and provide for individual interests, as well as introducing new opportunities. Participation is optional but uptake is almost universal. The majority of clubs are open to all with a few exceptions, such as choir and gifted and talented sport programmes being by selection. Pupils speak highly of the activities, enjoying the video animation club especially. The educational experience in every year group is considerably enriched by opportunities to participate in visits to places such as York, and in overseas trips to, for example, Barcelona and France. All activities have a most positive impact on the educational experience of the pupils.
- 2.5 The curriculum overall is both carefully and effectively planned. It is developed in a logical way in order to extend pupils' skills and knowledge. The schemes of work and policy documents are of high quality, with attention being paid to depth of coverage, use of

resources and adherence to relevant whole-school policies as they apply. The schemes of work also cover the whole school, from the nursery class to Year 6. Such high quality documentation helps to ensure the progressive and continuous development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school.

- 2.6 Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) to receive additional support is also of a high quality. Pupils are identified at a very early stage in their time at the school and, if necessary, individual education plans which are appropriate to their needs are drawn up. Support in the classroom is good and teachers plan effectively for individual pupils' needs. Help is given by the learning support staff regarding strategies to teach the pupil, both in the classroom and in the learning support rooms. Good provision is also made for pupils for whom English is not their first language. The help they receive, offered by skilled staff, is effective and enables those pupils who require assistance to make good progress in their learning. Good provision is also made to support those pupils identified as being gifted and/or talented.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 In both their academic and broader education, pupils achieve particularly well. As a result, the school meets its aim of enabling pupils to achieve excellence and success in their work. In addition, pupils very clearly enjoy their work and apply themselves to it well. They attain significant levels of knowledge, skill, and critical and creative understanding in the subjects they are taught as well as in the activities they pursue outside that taught curriculum. The last inspection in 2002 found achievement to be good by the age of eleven, but that standards in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 needed to be improved. Significant progress has been made since then and good standards are now being achieved in all areas by pupils at the end of Year 2. Of particular note is the work that has been done with regard to pupils' writing standards. These were recognised as a weakness and the school has worked hard, using a variety of strategies, to address the issue. As a result, pupils' writing standards have now risen considerably.
- 2.9 Pupils achieve very well in all areas of learning by the time they leave the Foundation Stage at the age of five. This is as a result of the good quality of teaching that is supported by a very well-planned programme of work. The end product is that the basic skills are well learnt and understood by these young children. In Years 1 and 2, these skills are built upon successfully. Pupils learn to read and write with increasing confidence and with much enjoyment. They demonstrate a considerable understanding of number as a result of the firm foundations that are put in place for their mathematical development. Well-planned lessons and effective teaching mean that pupils' knowledge and understanding are most successfully developed. Their ICT skills mature rapidly as they move through Years 1 and 2. As a consequence of the encouragement and support they receive from their teachers, pupils develop their creativity and imagination well and apply these to a range of activities, particularly in subjects such as art and English.
- 2.10 The good start pupils make is built upon successfully in Years 3 to 6. As a result, they are well able to apply their rapidly expanding knowledge and skills to many situations in different subjects. This is most apparent in their written work. During these years, pupils make considerable progress and are well prepared to continue their education at their senior school.

- 2.11 When pupils reach that transfer point at the age of eleven, they have well-developed speaking and listening skills relative to their age. Pupils are articulate and talk with ease and confidence to each other and to adults. They use their mathematical skills particularly well, most notably in subjects such as science and geography. Particularly high standards are also attained by pupils in ICT and the skills associated with the subject are very well applied to other subjects. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 4 history lesson, where pupils' high levels of ICT competency were evident both in the presentation of their work and in the use they made of the resources to obtain their evidence about the Sutton Hoo Anglo-Saxon settlement and its excavation. By the age of eleven, pupils' creativity levels are good, particularly in their written and investigative work in subjects such as science, but also in their writing generally. The high standards achieved in music, PE and art reflect the critical and creative skills being effectively developed.
- 2.12 No significant differences are apparent in the relative attainment of different groups of pupils or between boys and girls. Pupils identified as being gifted and talented make progress that is most significant given their overall ability levels. Similarly, those pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as those for whom English is not their first language, achieve at a good level relative to their abilities and, where applicable, make considerable progress towards attaining their individual education plan targets.
- 2.13 Pupils' overall attainment in national tests at the age of seven is good in relation to their ability. Their results in these tests are well above average when compared to pupils' results in maintained primary schools.
- 2.14 Results in national tests taken at the age of eleven are particularly good in relation to pupils' ability, being outstanding in mathematics. Pupils' performance over the last three years has been far above the average found in maintained primary schools in English and mathematics and well above that average in science. The overall high achievement levels, particularly in English and mathematics, are indicative of the rapid progress that is made by pupils during their time at the school. In 2007, almost all pupils transferred to their first choice senior school with a significant proportion gaining accompanying scholarships.
- 2.15 The school, given the number of pupils on roll, has a significant list of individual and team achievements in a number of areas. The school is proud of its pupils' performances in music. Following their performances at the 'Music for Youth' regional festivals, the school's choirs have been selected to sing over several years at the Symphony Hall in Birmingham and in the recent past, at the Royal Academy of Music. Individual pupils have also performed well and have been selected to perform in productions at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Particularly high achievement levels have also been gained by pupils studying the piano. In sport, teams of a variety of ages, as well as individual pupils, have gained significant local recognition. The Year 2 and Year 3 football teams have, in recent years, won the Wandsworth league championship and Years 5 and 6 have won the local schools' Consortium Cup. Individual pupils have been selected to represent Surrey and to become Chelsea FC Academy players. Other pupils have excelled at sports such as rugby, hockey, judo, karate and netball. In addition, some individual pupils have represented Surrey at both cricket and tennis. In art and English, individual pupils have won national competitions and in two cases had their work published. Year 6 pupils made films as part of their work in ICT and these were chosen to be 'show cased' in a major ICT store in central London. Whilst the school is proud of the successes its teams and individual pupils gain, care is taken to ensure that all pupils have equal access to coaching and tuition and therefore have the opportunity to compete at a level that is appropriate to their age and ability.

- 2.16 As a result of teachers' high expectations, pupils' attitudes to work and study are very good in all sections of the school. Pupils respond most effectively to their teachers' expectations. They are friendly, helpful and eager to talk about what they are doing and how they are getting on.
- 2.17 Throughout the school, pupils read and write fluently and intelligently at a level that is often notably good for their age. Pupils work hard both on their own and in pairs and groups. For example, pupils were seen constructively challenging each other's answers in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, and in another Year 5 class they chose appropriately persuasive language to select potential candidates for the School Council.
- 2.18 Across the school, pupils settle and apply themselves to whichever task has been set. Concentration levels are high and they show great enthusiasm for their work and activities. Both boys and girls organise their work appropriately and, as a result, they progress well and attain high standards. When opportunities for research are provided they widen pupils' breadth of knowledge and understanding, and pupils clearly enjoy these as well as the other many varied learning opportunities.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.19 The provision made for pupils' personal development is of outstanding quality. The school has made considerable progress since the last inspection, particularly in developing a coherent policy for this area and its usage across the curriculum. Pupils demonstrate an excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness which is evident in the way they conduct themselves throughout the school. A formal PSHCE programme has been developed and this, together with the school's caring ethos, enables the school to meet its aims for personal development very successfully, especially with respect to pupils' self-esteem and becoming confident members of society. The school creates and promotes an environment in which pupils feel secure and valued, and in which they have a strong sense of moral values and justice in order to be able to develop into acceptable, considerate members of any community.
- 2.20 Spiritual awareness of exceptional quality is fostered and nurtured in pupils through a range of experiences. These include assemblies, PSHCE and religious education lessons. There are moments of excitement in discovery and through reflection, even in the playground. The values of friendships are explored extensively in class discussions and their resultant displays are evident around the school. A number of parents and staff of differing faiths celebrate festivals and explain how their own faiths affect their lives. PSHCE is planned very well but with a flexible approach which enables time to be devoted to spontaneous issues that may arise from the pupils or from media events.
- 2.21 Pupils develop a strong moral awareness and are able to identify the differences between right and wrong from a very early age. They respect the values of the school which are well displayed in 'Golden Rule' format and classroom codes which the pupils negotiated and helped to formulate themselves. These are reviewed annually by the pupils and updated by consensus. At lunchtime, pupils are extremely well monitored and corrected sensitively, should they stray from what is appropriate in their manners or behaviour. Staff provide excellent role models for their pupils and this in turn also reinforces the stated aims of the school.
- 2.22 In addition, elections for the School Council promote outstanding moral discussions about current politics, which in turn develop pupils' understanding of society's moral codes. Other opportunities in PSHCE lessons and assemblies enable pupils to develop their self knowledge and understanding of issues such as friendships, bullying and being a valuable, well-

informed member of the school community. Themes for well-planned assemblies also support this extremely well. The school has excellent, positive systems for encouraging moral behaviour and achievement through the 'Golden Leaves' and 'Book of Recognition' initiatives.

- 2.23 Pupils' social development, with respect to their positions in school and the wider community, is of an exceptionally high quality. Through PSHCE, assemblies, fund raising activities and focussed charity concerts, pupils are encouraged to think of others as well as themselves. Very good examples of partner work and small group negotiations highlighted this when pupils showed their intuitive awareness of the difficulties of others and responded most appropriately. Throughout the school, pupils are polite, helpful and show pride in their school environment.
- 2.24 Pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 make up the School Council, which meets to represent pupils' issues and present ideas for school improvement to the senior management team. This is an outstanding institution within the school that promotes citizenship and responsibility for others. The system of 'Playground Pals' is excellent in enabling pupils to develop social intelligence and an awareness of others.
- 2.25 Pupils enjoy the multi-cultural aspects of their school. They like learning from each other about the cultures of the world and this promotes a sense of harmony and tolerance throughout the school. Pupils have many excellent opportunities to learn about and appreciate cultural traditions from a variety of backgrounds. Indeed, the school emphasises commonality between cultures more than the differences between them and this promotes considerable mutual respect amongst the pupils. Pupils understand and respect their own and others' cultures. They contribute to a variety of displays around the school, take part in international residential visits and visit theatres, art galleries and historical homes. Groups of pupils have also performed at such national institutions as the Royal Festival Hall and the Royal Academy of Music. Many subjects contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school and corporately help to foster and nurture the pupils' appreciation of the culture of this and other countries.
- 2.26 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.27 Teaching is good and frequently outstanding. It effectively supports high achievement and enables each pupil, irrespective of their ability, to achieve excellence and success in their work, in line with the aims of the school. On no occasions was teaching unsatisfactory. This is an improvement on the situation found at the time of the previous inspection when, whilst teaching was judged to be good overall, some unsatisfactory teaching was reported in the lower part of the school.
- 2.28 In the best practice, teachers expect a lot from their pupils and successfully motivate them to become interested in their work. Many learning opportunities are created to enable pupils to expand their knowledge and understanding of a subject or particular skill. In addition, teachers encourage their pupils to think and learn for themselves by the astute use of tasks and questions that are set at levels appropriate to pupils' ages and abilities.
- 2.29 Teachers have particularly good subject knowledge and their considerable enthusiasm challenges and motivates their pupils. This was clearly evident in an outstanding ICT lesson where the teacher used her extensive knowledge of and enthusiasm for a digital animation package to teach pupils how to add text, titles, sound effects and 'jingles' to enhance the animations they had created. The constant challenging provided for pupils by the teacher, together with the excellent use of the high quality resources, ensured that all pupils made considerable progress.
- 2.30 Throughout the school, pupils' behaviour is very well managed by teachers who skilfully enable their pupils to express themselves in a variety of ways. Lessons are particularly well planned and pupils are left in no doubt as to what they are expected to do and what they are required to learn. Most lessons proceed at a good pace and effective use is made of the time available.
- 2.31 The most successful lessons are characterised by the way teachers use a range of different activities to motivate and stimulate their pupils. These often include discussions, and theoretical or practical work. This is particularly the case in subjects such as English, music and physical education where pupils' learning is often increased by the way they are encouraged to work in pairs or small groups. It was particularly noticeable in an excellent Year 4 music lesson where pupils were required to work together to clap various rhythms given to them by the teacher on rhythm cards.
- 2.32 In those few lessons where the quality of teaching does not reach the high standards of the vast majority, it is largely because the pace is slower and, as a result, not every pupil is fully challenged. Occasionally, the teacher's introduction is over long and consequently some younger pupils lose concentration. In addition, there are some rare occasions when older pupils are insufficiently encouraged to use well-guided and directed independent research.
- 2.33 In much of the teaching, excellent relationships, based largely on mutual respect, exist between teachers and their pupils. As a result, pupils express, confidently and ably, their opinions and ideas in a most positive manner. Teachers know their pupils well and in the best practice give most sensitive help, particularly to those pupils with LDD or those who have English as an additional language. Pupils' needs are recognised and appropriately addressed.
- 2.34 Good use is made by teachers of the school's high quality resources. The excellent support given by teaching assistants clearly helps pupils to make considerable gains in their learning. Material resources are carefully selected to support pupils' learning and their understanding of what is being taught, including the exceptionally good use that is made by teachers of ICT.

The well-stocked libraries and other teaching rooms have appropriate book stocks and other resources that can also be used to support pupils' learning.

- 2.35 The school's assessment procedures have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now of high quality. They are consistent, accurate and effective. An excellent general assessment policy is in place, supported by detailed subject-specific provision. In addition the system used to manage and oversee pupils' performance is most effective, standardised and consistently used by teachers. Assessment in the school guides teachers' future planning very well. Subject co-ordinators and senior managers have clear overviews of the specific needs of each phase, subjects, year groups and indeed individual pupils.
- 2.36 The school is developing an excellent system to track attainment against national norms and to evaluate and identify specific areas for improvement. The software to facilitate this is in a state of evolution but it is anticipated that it will be available in the very near future.
- 2.37 Assessment is used very effectively to identify pupils who need extra support, to set targets for groups of pupils and to inform the school's reporting to parents. Good use is made of pupil self-marking, self-evaluating and peer-group evaluations in the upper part of the school; this includes pupils setting their own targets, especially in PSHCE.
- 2.38 A whole-school marking policy is in place which is, in the main, consistently applied across the school. Much of the marking is undertaken alongside the younger pupils and this is of great benefit to them. Comments are informative, celebratory and of value to both pupils and teachers for learning and monitoring purposes. In the vast majority of cases there is clear evidence of excellent practice, where helpful comments enable pupils to understand what they need to do to continue to improve.
- 2.39 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, welfare and health and safety is outstanding. Excellent relationships prevail throughout the school thus helping to provide a nurturing and caring atmosphere in line with the school's aims. This is an improvement on the situation found at the time of the last inspection when pastoral care was judged to be good.
- 3.2 The atmosphere in the school is warm and friendly. Teachers and other staff treat pupils with respect. Members of staff know their pupils well and provide them with extremely effective support and guidance. The staff are well supported by the senior managers who relate well to both pupils and staff. The quality of relationships between adults and pupils is very strong. They show kindness and courtesy to each other at all times. The relationships among pupils are also strong and supportive. Pupils talked most positively about the 'Playground Pals' system and the help given to new pupils when settling in.
- 3.3 Staff are given clear guidance about rewards and sanctions in the staff handbook and through a range of effective policies. A very good communication system is in place between the teaching staff and the senior managers and concerns are carefully recorded. This allows for prompt action to be taken to support any pupil in need. Pupils respond well to the merit system and show pride in the house system.
- 3.4 Pastoral issues are regularly discussed in staff meetings. Measures to promote good behaviour are most effective and staff are very positive in their approach. The school's procedures for promoting good behaviour are clear and the 'Prospect House Golden Rules' are displayed around the school. Pupils are well aware of what is expected and consistently show excellent behaviour and friendly courtesy. An effective anti-bullying policy is in place and is promoted through assemblies, circle time and through role play. Staff deal with minor incidents quickly and effectively and parents are informed of any concerns.
- 3.5 Child protection measures are fully in place and are effective. These procedures are clear to all staff, who receive regular, relevant training. Effective measures are also in place to ensure correct and safe dismissal at the end of the school day.
- 3.6 All measures to reduce risk of fire and other hazards are in place. Fire practices are held regularly and recorded. The school has good measures to ensure the health and safety of pupils. The headmistress chairs a health and safety committee which monitors provision regularly. All policies related to this aspect of the school are comprehensive and detailed. Thorough risk assessments are carried out for all school visits and for activities held at school. A significant number of staff are qualified first aiders and first aid equipment is placed at strategic points around the school. All accidents are properly recorded and parents informed. Effective measures are in place for the storage and administration of medicines.
- 3.7 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing good eating habits, and numerous opportunities to take regular exercise are available. The registration of pupils at appropriate times during the day is methodically carried out and overall attendance is well monitored.
- 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 community are outstanding and successfully reflect the school aims. The school has continued to maintain and, in certain areas, improve upon its links with both parents and the community since the last inspection.
- 3.10 Parents are supportive of the school, with which they enjoy a positive and open relationship. Those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated a very high level of satisfaction with almost all aspects of school life, but particularly in the way the school encourages and supports the pupils both in their learning and pastorally. A very small minority of parents were unhappy with the provision of homework. However inspection findings show that the amount of homework pupils receive is appropriate for their ages and abilities.
- 3.11 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in school activities. These include involvement with fund raising for charity, helping with the library and talking to pupils about their different cultures and beliefs. The school welcomes suggestions to improve this contact. Talks about educational interest are also organised to explain the curriculum to parents and how they can support their children in their learning. Parents are warmly welcomed at the school and there are high expectations of the staff about how to respond to parental requests and communications. Parents are welcome to see staff at the end of the day for formal or informal meetings and staff will always contact parents if they have concerns about their child's welfare.
- 3.12 The school has highly effective and most appropriate systems for communication with parents. A comprehensive prospectus clearly outlines the school's aims and ethos. The school website and other electronic means provide information, and weekly and termly newsletters outlining school events and general information are also sent home. Written reports are provided three times a year. These are clear, concise and have suggestions for further improvement. Parents' evenings are held in the Spring and Autumn terms, after these reports have been sent home, to discuss each child's progress and achievements. Records of these meetings are given to parents. The school has an open door policy and encourages parents to speak to the class teacher or headmistress if they have concerns.
- 3.13 The school has a clear and straightforward complaints policy. Details are sent to parents on request. All parents reported they were happy with the way the school handles their concerns.
- 3.14 Good links with the local community enrich the pupils' learning experiences. Many visits to local museums, including Gunnersbury Park Museum and the British Museum, take place. The orchestra performs in local concerts and takes part in competitions. Sports teams compete regularly in matches against other schools. The school carol service takes place in a nearby church and the vicar is a regular visitor to the school.
- 3.15 The school supports a range of charities, both local and overseas, allowing pupils regular opportunities to consider those less fortunate than themselves. Strong links with a local special school are in place and this year the school has supported a community in Peru. Both links serve to make positive contributions to pupils' learning and development. Indeed, all of these activities enable positive links to be made with the wider community and enhance the pupils' understanding of the local and global environment.
- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The governance of the school, carried out by three proprietors of its holding company who act as its governing body, is of good quality. Whilst the three proprietors meet on a regular basis, one of them acts as the managing governor to the school and is responsible, on a day to day basis, for the ongoing links with the headmistress and the school. It is most apparent that an overriding commitment exists to provide the very best for the good of the pupils, the school and its continuing development. Consequently, the school is most ably positioned to achieve its aims of encouraging pupils to achieve excellence and success in a safe, supportive and well-resourced environment. The good quality governance, found at the time of the previous inspection, has been maintained.
- 4.2 The governors, and in particular the managing governor, ensure that appropriate management structures are in place in order to enable their effective oversight of the school. They are well aware of their overall responsibilities and are fully involved in both financial and educational planning. In consultation with the staff and senior managers, they are well placed to ensure effective educational provision. Investment in human and material resources is considerable. However, opportunities for individual subject co-ordinators to apprise the managing governor of developments in their individual subjects are limited.
- 4.3 Effective communications between the managing governor and headmistress and also among the governors ensure that they have a particularly knowledgeable insight into the working of the school. Consequently they are again well placed to ensure that good provision is made for advising and supporting other members of staff, with sufficient stimulus for growth and improvement. The governors are particularly well positioned and effective in discharging their responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 Outstanding leadership and management are provided by the school's senior staff. The headmistress in particular, has outstanding leadership and management qualities and her vision, ability to motivate others and overall determination, are critical factors in enabling the school to achieve all that it does. Consequently, the school realises its aim of enabling pupils to achieve excellence and success whilst working in a safe, supportive and well-resourced environment. Much of the success of the headmistress and senior managers is evident in the high quality education that the school provides and in the way pupils are cared for and looked after. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the previous inspection which judged leadership and management to be good overall.
- 4.5 The school's senior management team of five members provide it with a clear sense of direction. This is largely as a result of their sharp and careful oversight of the work of the school. They are a well established group and are ably supported by subject co-ordinators. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in developing the role of these subject leaders, so that they clearly understand what their role is. What is less certain is their understanding of how they are required to carry out that role in a systematic and structured way over a set period.
- 4.6 The school's development plan is a high quality document which outlines the direction proposed for the school over the next three years. It is detailed in its coverage of whole-school issues, identifying an achievable number of targets together with clear timescales,

personnel, costs, resource needs as well as the success criteria by which each target is to be judged. Review dates are appropriately identified. Such a high quality plan shows that senior managers are effective in analysing the school's needs, setting priorities and planning strategies in detail in order to meet the whole-school targets.

- 4.7 Supporting the whole-school development plan are good quality plans of a similar nature in all subjects of the curriculum. These also have a whole-school focus, looking at the proposed developments for each subject and for all pupils. Of particular note is that each individual subject plan indicates what the outcomes for pupils will be as a result of each proposed development.
- 4.8 Policies and procedures are in place to cover aspects of school life and these are of a good quality. They cover the whole school and where different age groups may need different procedures, for example in the homework policy, these are appropriately identified. Each policy is dated and a planned date for review is indicated in the school development plan.
- 4.9 A good system to check the implementation and effectiveness of the various policies and procedures is in place. For example, regular checks are made on issues such as child protection and health and safety. The good quality written policies and procedures are reflected in practice in the work of the school.
- 4.10 Teaching and support staff are effectively deployed. Generous staffing levels help to ensure that high quality guidance and support are given to all pupils, including those who require particular help with their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff recruitment is most efficiently managed, with the statutory staffing checks being made and the resulting records securely kept.
- 4.11 Staff new to the school have a most effective induction programme that supports them well. This is also the case, when applicable, for newly qualified teachers, for whom the school follows closely the appropriate national guidelines. In-service training opportunities are available to staff and a sufficient budget supports this. Priority is given to relating in-service training needs to the school development plan. A formal system for appraisal is also in place and is used effectively to support each teacher's individual professional development.
- 4.12 The school is located on one site and good use is made of all its facilities. Teaching space is good overall and is appropriately utilised. Specialist accommodation is available, particularly for subjects such as ICT, music, and design and technology. Such accommodation, which is well used by teachers, has a particularly positive impact on pupils' overall learning and the progress that they make. Good provision is made for outdoor games which, when accompanied by the good quality teaching, further ensure that high standards are achieved.
- 4.13 The school has a considerable stock of high quality resources to support both teaching and pupils' learning. These are generally located near to areas where they are needed. They are effectively managed and well used. Libraries are well stocked and managed. Staff and pupils use them well and see them as an integral part of the school; they are of considerable benefit to the development of pupils' skills.
- 4.14 Procedures for budgeting operate most effectively, with subject co-ordinators being able to request and acquire funding to support their own subject development plans. High quality support and assistance are provided by the administrative and other support staff. They ensure that the school runs most efficiently on a day to day basis. Good communications exist within the school as a result of an effective system of staff briefings, staff meetings, staffroom notice boards, email and if necessary, the school's intercom broadcast system.

- 4.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.16 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 Prospect House School achieves its aims and meets the needs of its pupils most effectively. It provides a high quality education for its pupils, much of which is outstanding. Wide-ranging opportunities are provided in order to enable pupils of all abilities to achieve their full potential. The school gives pupils a broad educational experience supplemented by excellent extra-curricular activities and educational visits. In addition, good, and on many occasions outstanding teaching, as well as highly effective school leadership and management, combine to enable pupils to achieve high standards in many areas of the curriculum by the time they leave. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the high quality of provision and have particularly positive attitudes to their learning. They are most responsible members of the school community and behave very well. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and outstanding provision is made for their personal development. Excellent links have been established with parents and the wider community.
- 5.2 Many of the strengths found at the time of the previous inspection have been built upon successfully. Significant progress has been made in tackling the weaknesses related to raising pupils' attainment and the amount of progress they make in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. In addition, curricular planning has also improved, and issues related to child protection, nursery children's registration and the development of the role of subject co-ordinators have all been addressed. The school is well aware that it now needs to continue to look at further refining the procedures for systematically monitoring its work.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. In order to develop further the high quality education it provides it should:
1. refine further the existing system for monitoring its work, in order to produce a more measured programme of ongoing review and development for all aspects of school life.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 21st to 24th April 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 the managing governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Graham Nunn	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Bailey	Headmaster, COBIS school
Mr David Edwards	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mrs Ros Ford	Head of Pre-preparatory Department, IAPS school