



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
THE CROFT PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

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## The Croft Preparatory School

Full Name of School	<b>The Croft Preparatory School</b>
DfE Number	<b>937/6016</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY304910</b>
Address	<b>The Croft Preparatory School Alveston Hill Loxley Road Stratford-upon-Avon Warwickshire CV37 7RL</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01789 293795</b>
Fax Number	<b>01789 414960</b>
Email Address	<b>office@croftschool.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Marcus Cook</b>
Proprietor/Principal	<b>Mrs Lyndall Thornton</b>
Age Range	<b>2 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>424</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (248 boys; 176 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>0-2 (EYFS): 28    5-11: 319 3-5 (EYFS): 77</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Alison Webber</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>16 Jun 2015 to 19 Jun 2015</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous whole-school ISI inspection was in May 2009, and the Early Years Foundation Stage was last inspected by ISI in May 2012.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the vice chair and another governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Lady Fiona Mynors	Reporting Inspector
Mr Paul Barlow	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mr Richard Follett	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Margaret Marsh	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mr Richard Balding	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 The Croft Preparatory School, a limited company, educates boys and girls aged between two and eleven. It was founded in 1933 in central Stratford-upon-Avon, and bought by the Thornton family in 1981. It moved to its present site in 1986, based around a farmhouse with additional buildings, set in its own grounds on the outskirts of the town. Members of the Thornton family make up the board of directors. A governing committee, appointed in 2014, has devolved responsibilities and acts as a governing board. The present headmaster was appointed in 2013. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), located in its own designated buildings, is an integral part of the pre-prep, which also includes Years 1 and 2.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the EYFS accommodation has been reorganised and an outdoor learning environment has been developed. The games barns have been refurbished, and a new theatre and sports hall have been created. The management structure of the school was changed in April 2015, and day-to-day management is undertaken by a newly created executive leadership team. The school aims to provide each child with academic challenge and the opportunity to develop self-worth, and to enable pupils to be successful within a happy and secure environment. It seeks to place particular emphasis on respect and good manners, and on the collaboration with parents to nurture in pupils a lifelong love of learning.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection 424 pupils were on roll, of whom 105 were in the EYFS. There were 96 pupils in the pre-prep, and 223 pupils in the prep, for Years 3 to 6. The overall ability of the pupils is above the national average, with most pupils having ability that is above or in line with the national average. The pupils travel to school from within a 25-mile radius and come from families involved in the rural community, in business or professional activities. A few of the pupils are of minority ethnic origin. The school has identified 86 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 48 receive support. Twenty-four pupils have English as an additional language. They are fully bilingual and do not receive additional support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report and in most cases by the school to refer to year groups. The school refers to its older Nursery group as Little Crofters.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent. Pupils are extremely well educated in accordance with the school's aims. They achieve at a high level and progress increasingly rapidly in their subjects and activities. Pupils with SEND achieve and progress as well as their peers. More able pupils are appropriately challenged and achieve well. A particular strength is the way that pupils tackle all activities with confidence and enthusiasm, taking risks in their learning. The dynamic, well-planned curriculum provides pupils with a rich learning experience. The provision for children in the EYFS is outstanding, well suited to meet their needs. The outstanding extra-curricular programme provides a stimulating breadth of experience, greatly appreciated by pupils and parents. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved. It is excellent and ensures that pupils have many opportunities to learn independently and to develop their thinking skills.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social and moral awareness, is excellent. By the time they leave they have become confident, articulate, caring members of a wider community. Their cultural understanding is also excellent, a significant improvement since the previous inspection. In the EYFS, all staff take care to ensure outstanding care practices that focus on children's well-being. Children are extremely well prepared for transition across the setting and into Year 1. Pupils benefit from excellent arrangements for pastoral care, underpinned by highly effective policies and procedures, and friendly relationships across the community. The school is effective in promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents and pupils felt that teachers show great concern for the pupils, and all parents felt that their children are happy and safe at school. A few parents and pupils expressed concern about the way incidents of bullying are handled. The inspection judgement is that rigorous systems are implemented to support pupils, including effective measures to guard against bullying. The arrangements for welfare, health and safety, including in the EYFS, are excellent.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is good. The governing committee is in the early stages of development and is refining its structures and procedures under experienced leadership. It already has a good insight into the working of the school, and has begun to exercise its monitoring role. The quality of leadership and management is excellent. Under visionary, collaborative leadership, strongly supported by senior managers, all members of the school community share the vision for the development of the school. This is reflected in the excellent quality of the pupils' education and the high standard of their personal development. Since the previous inspection, senior managers have regularly monitored teaching. Heads of department oversee planning and observe lessons informally, though no formal system exists for them to exercise their monitoring role. The leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. Rigorous self-evaluation is used to develop the setting to provide children with an excellent start to their education.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- 2.5 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Establish fully effective monitoring by governors.
  2. Implement the plans for middle managers to monitor teaching and learning through a structured programme of lesson observation and work scrutiny.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are extremely well educated in accordance with the school's aims. They achieve at a high level across their subjects and activities. Pupils of all ages are extremely articulate. They relish opportunities for discussion with their peers and adults, and generally listen to others considerately. Pupils write with increasing skill and imagination, handling language and vocabulary maturely. They take pride in the presentation of their work and their handwriting is good. They investigate efficiently and use their thinking skills vigorously, suggesting solutions to problems. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge are excellent, and their linguistic skills are well developed. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) well in music and designated lessons, and for research in homework, but opportunities are limited for them to use it consistently as a tool for learning across the curriculum. Pupils' physical skills are extremely well developed. Creativity in drama and art is excellent, and in music outstanding, with pupils demonstrating maturity in their performances well beyond their ages.
- 3.3 Pupils are almost always successful in gaining a place to their first choice of senior school. Each year many pupils gain places at grammar schools in extremely competitive entry. Many gain academic and non-academic scholarships to senior independent day and boarding schools.
- 3.4 Individuals and teams are extremely successful in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have reached the semi-final of a national mathematics award. Three-quarters of the pupils learn one or more instruments, and many achieve high standards in external examinations. Pupils are successful in external drama assessments, and individuals have been selected to perform in professional theatre productions. Pupils' artwork is often successful in competitions. Pupils have gained places in national and regional children's choirs and orchestras. School sports teams are extremely successful, and individuals have been selected at national, regional and district level in a variety of sports.
- 3.5 Pupils with SEND achieve as well as their peers through targeted individual and class teaching that they receive, strongly underpinned by the school's inclusive approach to meet each pupil's needs.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at the age of 11 have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools. Mathematics results in 2013 were exceptional, and have been generally higher than for English, particularly in 2012 to 2013.
- 3.7 In relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities, and judged from national tests, standardised measures of progress, pupil interviews, work scrutinised and lesson observation, pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND, make good progress, which increases rapidly by the time they reach Years 5 and 6.
- 3.8 The pupils' attitude to their work and activities is almost always extremely positive, supporting their excellent achievement. A particular strength is the way they tackle

all activities with confidence and enthusiasm, taking risks in their learning, recognising making mistakes as an important part of the process. On a few occasions this enthusiasm becomes over-exuberant and hinders their ability to focus effectively on the task in hand, impeding their learning and progress.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The dynamic, well-planned curriculum provides pupils with a rich learning experience, well suited to all their needs. It strongly supports the school's aims to provide abundant opportunities for pupils to achieve, preparing them extremely well for the next stage in their education and for their future life. The school's inclusive approach ensures that pupils of all abilities feel valued and confident in their learning. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching, starting with music in the youngest Nursery group, French in the oldest Nursery group, and physical education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) in Year 1, until, in Years 5 and 6, all subjects are taught by specialists. Pupils are placed in ability groups, beginning in Year 1 for phonics and mathematics, so that by Years 5 and 6, four groups in both mathematics and English allow excellent scope for individual attention.
- 3.11 The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that any political issues are presented in a balanced way, and pupils gain a good understanding of fundamental British values. The relevant and comprehensive PSHE programme, closely linked with religious education (RE), is taught by specialist teachers. A particular feature of the programme is the development of pupils' emotional resilience. Care is taken to help them to understand how to keep safe online.
- 3.12 Music, drama, art and sport feature strongly in the curriculum, supported by excellent facilities. The pupils' opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum are limited because of restricted access to the internet in the rural location. At the time of the inspection, improvements were being made. Geology in Year 5 and Latin in Year 6 add breadth to pupils' experiences. The curriculum is supported by regular homework. A few pupils raised concerns about the value of homework in pre-inspection questionnaire responses. Evidence from work scrutinised and pupil interviews shows that pupils feel confident in being able to organise and complete tasks, and enjoy the opportunity to extend their learning at home.
- 3.13 Systems and procedures to identify and support pupils with SEND, including any with a statement of special educational needs, are excellent, and highly appreciated by parents and pupils. Pupils receive support from specialists both in the classroom and individually through tailored programmes. Individual education plans provide clear strategies to help all staff plan effectively. Staff have regular training sessions to improve their knowledge and the school's provision. Gifted and more able pupils are carefully identified. They receive appropriate challenge in lessons and through ability grouping, extra mathematics quizzes and the highly successful Challenge Club.
- 3.14 Pupils' experiences are enriched by curriculum-linked visits locally, and they gain independence through residential trips. Through their local charitable work they have a good understanding of those in society who need extra support. A small collection of animals and a vegetable garden at school allow pupils to enjoy ecologically friendly activities.

- 3.15 The outstanding extra-curricular programme provides a stimulating breadth of experience, greatly appreciated by pupils and parents. A wide variety of sports and activities is available to suit all tastes. Musical ensembles abound, and more than 140 pupils sing in choirs. Pupils benefit in many of their activities through strong links with the local community, especially in music and sport; these include former pupils who continue to sing as part of an evening choir. The annual Orchestral Afternoon involves families and friends of the school in a 150-strong orchestra.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 Teaching contributes extremely well to fulfilment of the aims of the school, and enables all pupils to learn according to their individual abilities. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved to ensure that pupils have many opportunities to learn independently and to develop their thinking skills. Pupils receive a high level of individual attention. They benefit greatly from working in a positive, happy environment in which their relationships with teachers are strong, and tolerance, respect and hard work are praised and promoted. Pupils feel confident to ask for help or clarification and that they will receive them.
- 3.18 Since the previous inspection, lesson planning has been a particular area for development. High quality and detailed lesson plans include tasks for pupils of varying abilities. Teachers have an outstanding knowledge of pupils' needs, including those with SEND, and are adept at using a variety of effective teaching methods, to both support and challenge pupils. Structured activities and active learning experiences are particularly effective with younger pupils and those with SEND. Teaching meets the requirements for pupils with a statement of special educational needs. A particular feature of excellent teaching is the use of open-ended and probing questioning, which uses complex vocabulary to challenge all pupils, particularly the more able. This enables pupils to develop their own ideas and strategies, and to think independently. Most teaching is well paced, promoting the progress of learning. On occasions, within the limited timeframe of shorter lessons, too long is spent introducing topics and pupils are unable to complete tasks. In longer lessons, time is usually well organised, with a variety of tasks to engage pupils' attention and develop their learning. However, where activities are not sufficiently varied, pupils lose concentration and this restricts their progress. Teachers are careful to ensure that work and discussions on political issues are balanced and non-prejudicial, in order to promote tolerance.
- 3.19 Since the previous inspection, assessment systems have been improved. These are robust, well used in planning and still being actively developed to provide a more focused and standardised information base to assist targeted teaching. Marking is regular and thorough across the school, and pupils say that it helps them to understand how their work is improving. Pupils also value the oral feedback they receive. Although the newly introduced marking policy is proving to be useful in improving pupil progress, particularly in certain subjects, its use in all subjects is inconsistent. The school has plans in place for a review of the marking policy and its implementation.
- 3.20 Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they use well to provide clear explanations and to nurture enthusiasm among their pupils. Teaching assistants give valuable support to teaching, and teachers and assistants are highly effective in

building on pupils' previous learning, knowing when to intervene to help pupils with difficulties or misconceptions, or to provide additional challenge.

- 3.21 Teaching uses ICT effectively within the current restrictions of the site. High quality facilities, resources and the school's scenic outdoor setting are used creatively in teaching. Excellent displays across the school, which celebrate numerous pupil achievements, create a dynamic learning environment that contributes to the positive atmosphere pervading the school.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 This area is a strength of the school, which achieves its aims of establishing a happy and caring community in which pupils flourish. Pupils are instinctively friendly and welcoming and show respect for themselves and each other, in line with the school's Christian ethos. Pupils' spiritual development and awareness are strong. They are self-aware and emotionally resilient, and understand their own strengths and weaknesses. They are confident as they perform in a range of musical, dramatic and sporting events, and enjoy the opportunity to show other pupils their talents and abilities. They have time to reflect and pray in assemblies, and in discussions and role play in PSHE and RE lessons they demonstrate their spiritual awareness and sensitivity to others and the world around them. Pupils appreciate and take advantage of the natural beauty and open spaces provided.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral awareness and development are excellent. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and show maturity when they discuss moral dilemmas. They understand the need for rules and boundaries within the school and the community, and that these are underpinned by an effective system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils are sympathetic when they consider those less fortunate than themselves; for example, they have considered the plight of refugees and victims of natural disasters. They choose charities and raise funds for them regularly. Pupils are developing an understanding of current affairs and British institutions.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is excellent, as they work extremely effectively together. They are courteous, and a genuine feeling of support and tolerance for the diversity of pupils represented within the school pervades its community. Pupils of all ages undertake responsibilities across the school. They demonstrate a caring attitude towards their peers and are conscientious in fulfilling their roles of responsibility. All Year 6 pupils have positions of responsibility which they undertake with enthusiasm and efficiency. They help to serve lunch, and trained 'peer supporters' encourage good behaviour around school. They are well respected by the pupils, creating an opportunity to which younger pupils aspire. Pupils have a strong sense of community and enjoy working hard, striving to do well for the good of their house community as they win house points. They play extremely well together during breaks.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural understanding is excellent, a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils have a good understanding of the Christian traditions that underpin the school. They are developing an awareness of different faiths through visits from members of the Buddhist, Jewish and Sikh communities, and through trips to local mosques and other places of worship. Pupils show understanding about democratic British values as they elect their peers to the school council, through activities in a mock general election and as they learn about national merit awards from family members. Pupils gain an insight into a range of cultural traditions, performing in plays and music from around the world. In a concert taking place during the inspection, pupils performed a piece that fused Western and Eastern musical traditions, combining a Gamelan chamber ensemble with the school orchestra.

- 4.6 Pupils throughout the school are well prepared for transition across and beyond school. By the time they leave, they have developed into confident, articulate, caring members of a wider community.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The school has highly effective pastoral policies and procedures that strongly reflect its aims. These include helpful target cards to encourage behaviour improvement, which are appreciated by parents.
- 4.9 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves is excellent. Teachers are seen as positive role models by the pupils, and they feel that they can approach them for help. Trained Year 6 pupils provide additional pastoral support, much valued by younger children, through the 'peer supporters' system.
- 4.10 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing healthy eating habits, and an active lifestyle is supported by a range of sporting and other energetic activities. Excellent school meals are widely appreciated by pupils; lunches are healthy, varied and nutritious.
- 4.11 The school is effective in promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, a few parents and pupils expressed concern about the way incidents of bullying are handled. A careful scrutiny of documentation, interviews with staff and pupils, and observation of the positive relationships enjoyed across the school demonstrate that rigorous systems to support pupils and deal with friendship difficulties are successful. These are underpinned by efficient early intervention, carefully monitored and led by senior pastoral managers whose close involvement and oversight of strategies support this success. Parents and pupils feel that teachers show great concern for the pupils, and all parents expressed the view that their children are happy and safe at school. A few pupils felt that rewards and sanctions are not always fairly given. Inspectors judged that the rewards and sanctions system is transparent and fair. The school has reviewed and changed the system and in discussions pupils of all ages felt that it is fair.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.13 Good systems are established to respond to the views of pupils. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a few pupils felt that their views are not considered. Inspectors judged that pupils have opportunities to express their opinions through the elected school council, and a suggestions box. These have stimulated discussion relating to additional activities and new play equipment. Where appropriate, pupils with specific concerns can use an individual 'worry box' through form tutors. Pupils were also involved in the creation of the school's new mission statement and aims.

**4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 The school systems for safeguarding pupils have appropriate regard to official guidance, and are carefully and efficiently implemented. All staff are regularly trained, and are clear about what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Designated safeguarding leaders have up-to-date advanced training. Documentation scrutinised demonstrates that the school takes great care to safeguard the pupils, and strong links have been developed with local agencies in support of pupils when necessary.
- 4.16 Meticulous attention ensures that efficient measures are implemented to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. These are rigorously and regularly reviewed to ensure that they are as robust as possible and necessary changes are implemented swiftly. Fire prevention procedures are clear and include regular, well-documented drills; appropriate systems operate for staff training and the checking of systems and equipment. Risk assessments are comprehensive for all areas of the school, and trips are carefully planned.
- 4.17 The arrangements for the care of sick or injured children are efficient. The sick room is suitable, providing a quiet place for recovery. Records of accidents are kept efficiently and reviewed regularly in order to identify any areas or activities which need improvement. A significant proportion of staff have first-aid training. Pupils with any health concerns are well supported.
- 4.18 The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and appropriately stored for the required three years.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The new structure of governance is in the early stages of development. The board of directors maintains efficient overall responsibility for the school's financial planning and management. Excellent investment has been made in staff, well-maintained and imaginatively developed grounds and accommodation, and high quality resources. The directors work closely with the newly created governing committee, one director being a committee member, and another governor attending directors' meetings. In its early stages, the governing committee is refining its structures and procedures under experienced leadership. The governors selected and appointed have a good range of skills to support the school, and include staff and parent representation. All governors have received appropriate training for their role.
- 5.3 Governors have a good insight into the working of the school. At this early stage, the governing committee has appropriately focused on evaluating the quality of education provided. Governors have designated responsibilities and links with different areas of the school, and have begun to observe lessons and activities. These strategies are enabling them to begin to exercise their monitoring role. At regular, minuted meetings they receive informative reports from the school's leadership. The minutes indicate that governors are developing their understanding of the school's working and the standards achieved by the pupils sufficiently to enable them to provide effective support and challenge as a stimulus for improvement and the future development of the school.
- 5.4 The directors and governing committee are assiduous in discharging their responsibilities for statutory requirements; policies and procedures are reviewed and updated as necessary. The chair of the directors retains responsibility for and undertakes a careful annual review of the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, and this is reported to the governing committee. Two safeguarding governors have been appointed to give additional support to the school.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.6 Leadership and management at all levels are highly successful in ensuring that the school achieves its aims. All policies and procedures reflect the school's clear ethos, which focuses on the needs, well-being and safeguarding of the pupils, and encourages respect for others.
- 5.7 Under visionary, collaborative leadership, strongly supported by senior managers, all members of the school community share the vision for the development of the school. This is reflected in the excellent quality of the pupils' education and the standard of their personal development. A review of the aims, ethos and vision for the school has been undertaken democratically by all members of the school community. New aims and a mission statement were agreed, from which the detailed school development plan was created. This gives the school a strong impetus for improvement. The regular review of the plan ensures that school

development is a dynamic process and enables management to provide clear educational direction. In response to the recommendation of the previous inspection senior managers regularly monitor teaching and learning, which is reflected in the improved quality of teaching.

- 5.8 Regular, well-minuted meetings for managers at all levels demonstrate constant focus on the pupils' best interests, and that communication across the school is efficient. Departmental leadership is good and documentation is comprehensive. Departmental development plans are incorporated into whole-school planning. Heads of department monitor curriculum planning and scrutinise books on occasion and observe lessons informally. Staff have also had opportunities to observe each other teach. However, no systematic programme is in place for regular lesson observation and work scrutiny. The school has identified this as an area for development.
- 5.9 All staff are appropriately trained to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, and in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Teaching staff benefit from regular appraisal and access to relevant training, linked to personal and whole-school areas for development. New staff feel extremely well supported through an efficient induction and mentoring process. Arrangements to check the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers are thorough, and records carefully maintained.
- 5.10 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of almost all aspects of the school. Parents particularly appreciate the breadth of subjects and extra-curricular opportunities offered to all pupils, and the ease with which they can access information about school and its policies. Almost all parents would recommend the school to others.
- 5.11 The school has many effective ways of communicating with parents. All receive a diary listing the key events in school, to which they are welcome, and a weekly newsletter and annual magazine. Electronic messaging advises parents of immediate situations. In support of families, good quality before- and after-school care is available. The welcoming administrative team provides strong day-to-day support for parents.
- 5.12 The school maintains excellent relationships with parents, in line with its aims to work with them for the benefit of the pupils. A few parents felt that the school does not handle their concerns well. Detailed scrutiny of documentation relating to parents' concerns indicates that most difficulties are resolved informally and quickly. The school's responses are timely and handled with appropriate thoroughness and sensitivity. An appropriate complaints procedure is available if needed.
- 5.13 Parents have many opportunities to be actively involved in the school and the work and progress of their children. A few parents did not feel that they receive sufficient information about their children's progress. Inspectors judge that parents are kept well informed through regular detailed reports, attainment and effort grades, and parent consultation evenings. Parent handbooks produced for each stage of the pupils' development provide details of what is required and how parents can assist in their education. Parents have easy access to staff on a day-to-day basis when bringing their children to school or collecting them at the end of the day. Senior managers take trouble to discuss with parents the most appropriate senior schools for their children. Parents are also supported by staff at the school through a parent and teacher group, which meets regularly to discuss pastoral matters and parenting.

- 5.14 The family atmosphere of the school is enhanced through the involvement of parents in assisting with reading and taking assemblies to share their faith traditions and experiences. Parents are also involved in the school community through the Croft Parents Association, which organises a variety of fund-raising and social events.
- 5.15 A detailed website, school prospectus and parent handbooks provide the parents of current and prospective pupils with the necessary information about the school.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## **6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **6.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend**

6.1 In meeting the needs of the range of children who attend, the provision is outstanding. Baseline assessments, meticulous recording of sharply focused observations and accurate tracking enable staff to plan detailed programmes for children's learning. Moderated profile scores show that all children attain the levels expected for their age, with most exceeding them. High quality teaching is highly successful in meeting the needs of all children, including those who need extra support or extra challenge, ensuring that they make good progress. Children under three are prepared extremely thoroughly for the next stage, including the three prime areas of learning, and benefit from specialist teaching in music. For children over three, the curriculum covers all seven areas of learning and specialist teaching in French. Children respond enthusiastically to the staff's extremely high expectations. As children move across the setting, the sessions become more formal so that they are exceptionally well prepared for work in Year 1. Staff work extremely closely with parents, who are regularly informed about their children's progress and achievements. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the setting.

### **6.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being**

6.2 Provision for the children's well-being is outstanding. All staff are highly skilled, and focus carefully on promoting the children's safety and safeguarding. Children are happy and confident, feel extremely secure and develop an excellent understanding of how to manage risks. They benefit from the highly stimulating environment and exciting activities provided. All children have an experienced, sensitive key person, who establishes a secure bond with them to ensure their well-being. Children demonstrate their strong independence when they choose from a wide variety of activities. They work co-operatively and talk confidently with their peers and adults. Their behaviour is excellent. Children under three play imaginatively with the excellent resources in their bright, welcoming classroom and in the well-equipped outdoor area. Children aged three to five work and play extremely confidently, exploring the outstanding outdoor environment. Children understand how to keep safe and that healthy eating is important for a healthy lifestyle. They develop independence in managing their personal hygiene. Staff are highly successful in ensuring that children are extremely well prepared emotionally as they transfer confidently across the setting and into Year 1.

### **6.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision**

6.3 Leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. The governors have a strong involvement in the setting, with the appointment of a knowledgeable EYFS governor and as demonstrated by the provision of high quality resources. Dynamic, knowledgeable leadership ensures that the setting is extremely successful in fulfilling and monitoring its responsibility to meet and exceed the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. The welfare and care of the children are given high priority. Safeguarding procedures and child protection training are robust. All members of staff have suitable checks and receive child protection training regularly. Most have paediatric first-aid training. High quality staff appraisal, supported by frequent informal supervision, is underpinned by regular training. This enables management and staff to evaluate and improve their practice constantly. The staff team members work extremely effectively together to make the setting a welcoming, safe place for children. They are involved in the rigorous system of self-evaluation, which sets challenging priorities, constantly seeking to improve the children's experiences. The setting has developed highly effective links with parents and external agencies, which ensure that children receive the support they need.

### **6.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision**

6.4 The overall quality and standards of the EYFS are outstanding. All children make excellent progress and achieve or exceed the Early Learning Goals from a wide range of starting points. Staff use detailed tracking information to give excellent support to children who need extra help or extra challenge. Children under three recognise their names, and enjoy singing songs and playing games. By the end of the older Nursery year, children write their own names and recognise letters as they begin to read. They can order and count up to twenty, recognise various two-dimensional shapes and begin to make comparisons using the correct terms. By the end of Reception, most children are reading and writing at a level above their chronological age. They can recognise numbers to one hundred and know the properties of three-dimensional shapes. Their physical and creative skills are excellent. The children's personal and emotional development is outstanding. All children feel safe and secure, enjoying their time in the setting. They respect each other and are good listeners who respond well to instructions and answer questions extremely clearly. All staff give high priority to the children's safeguarding and welfare, and all requirements have been met fully. In response to the recommendation of the previous inspection, the team meets regularly to evaluate the effectiveness of the setting and make ambitious plans for future developments, demonstrating an exceptional commitment to continuous improvement. Children are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

### **Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

6.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

**Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.**