



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

GRANTHAM PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Grantham Preparatory School

Full Name of School	Grantham Preparatory School
DfE Number	925/6031
Registered Charity Number	N/A
Address	Grantham Preparatory School Gorse Lane Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7UF
Telephone Number	01476 593 293
Fax Number	N/A
Email Address	admin@granthamprep.co.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Kathryn Korcz
Proprietor	A for E Limited
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	118
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (64 boys; 54 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 27 5-11: 91
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 118
Number of Boarders	Total: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Marie Marshall
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	04 Oct 2011 to 05 Oct 2011

PREFACE

This inspection was conducted to assess the suitability of Grantham Preparatory School for membership of the Independent Schools Association (ISA). It follows the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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 31st 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 Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 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, though inspectors will 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Grantham Preparatory School is a non-denominational day school for boys and girls from the ages of three to eleven. It is situated on the outskirts of Grantham in purpose-built accommodation. It was founded in 1986 by a local individual. The school is now operated by A for E Limited, a subsidiary of the International Education Systems (IES) Limited organisation, and is administered by a board of three directors.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, 118 pupils were on the roll, 64 boys and 54 girls; of these, 27 were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children from the ages of three to five, of whom four attend part time. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and live in the local town and surrounding villages. Approximately one in twenty comes from a minority ethnic background and one pupil needs support with acquiring English as an additional language. A significant number of pupils join the school at various stages in their primary schooling.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide excellence in education within an international perspective and to promote the development of young people who will have the capacity to contribute pro-actively towards a better world. It seeks to encourage pupils to achieve their full potential in all aspects of school life, particularly academic, sporting and musical excellence. It strives to develop leaders for the future who are collaborative, communicative, enquiring, respectful and creative individuals with a passion for life-long learning through a dynamic curriculum. The school aims to encourage pupils to integrate effectively in the local, national and international communities through the diverse opportunities provided.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Early Years	Nursery
Reception	Reception

Preparatory School

School	NC name
Class 1	Year 1
Class 2	Year 2
Class 3	Year 3
Class 4	Year 4
Class 5	Year 5
Class 6	Year 6

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 Pupils achieve well overall, developing their knowledge, understanding and skills across a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. The school successfully meets its aims to develop young people who are collaborative, communicative, enquiring, respectful and creative individuals, and to encourage them to achieve their full potential. They are articulate and converse extremely comfortably with adults. They reason and think through their ideas logically because of their levels of confidence and maturity. Their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are strong, and pupils are adept at transferring these skills to other subject areas. The committed focus on a new reading and writing scheme is now beginning to pay dividends and is having a positive effect on literacy skills. Pupils with SEND and EAL make good progress in their learning, for example when linking sounds and letters and subsequently using them successfully in spelling and reading. Those who are gifted and talented are often given extension work to broaden their knowledge and understanding. Creativity is strong, as seen in the high-quality displays of art work. Their physical skills are developing well. Individuals and teams are very successful in many sports, including rounders, athletics, swimming, netball, gymnastics and squash, some as area, county and national champions. The school also wins many awards in local music and speech and drama festivals, and in 2010 gained the Gold Artsmark award in recognition of the high standards achieved in art, music, dance and drama.
- 2.2 The pupils follow a wide curriculum and, on leaving the school, a significant proportion of them proceed to local maintained selective schools, with others gaining places at independent schools, both as day pupils locally and as boarders further afield. Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. Inspection evidence confirms this judgement and includes consideration of the levels at which pupils are working in relation to national targets. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. These achievements are partly due to their excellent attitudes to learning, as well as their good behaviour and their strong relationships with staff. Pupils enjoy their learning, have fun in many lessons, work effectively together as well as individually and take pride in their achievements. They apply themselves to most work with enthusiasm and perseverance; on a few occasions, pupils lose their focus on the task in hand because the pace of the lesson, or participation in the activities involved, is too slow for their ability and then their learning is less rapid.
- 2.3 The curriculum is wide and varied, covering all areas of learning, and offering pupils the opportunity to develop a range of skills. Curriculum planning is good, although some lacks information about how pupils' differing needs will be met. The comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education reflects the school's aims and ethos very well. A good range of educational visits enhance the curriculum. The pupils are well prepared for the transitions between each stage of their education, and for their senior schools in particular. Pupils with SEND are given individual education plans and, along with those with EAL, are supported well. The provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent and includes hobbies and interests as well as music and sport, with regular fixtures against other schools a

feature. A particular strength is the school choir. Links with the local community continue to grow through the pupils' charitable giving. The school also has a link with a local maintained girls' secondary school through dance.

- 2.4 Teaching makes a good contribution to the pupils' achievements, both academically and in their personal development; a good proportion seen was excellent. Teaching demonstrates enthusiasm and expertise, which encourage all pupils to try their best. Pupils are keen to learn and think for themselves, and these attributes were seen when questioning was of a high quality. They are very well-known by the staff who teach them and, in many lessons, teachers provide well-planned tasks which meet the pupils' needs. On occasion, the pupils became restless and behaviour slipped a little because the pace of the lesson or organisation did not engage them sufficiently. Marking is always encouraging and supportive, giving praise for work done well. The best gives helpful comments for improvement or sets clear targets for the future. The progress of individual pupils is monitored effectively using National Curriculum levels in English and mathematics, and this enables staff to identify those who are making excellent progress and those who may require additional support with their learning.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.5 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent and fulfils the school's aims. Outstanding spiritual development is evident in quieter moments of reflection and in contributions to discussion in assemblies. The pupils empathise with the needs of different people; they understand how to help and support those who are new to the school or those in the community who have known loneliness. Their self-esteem and self-confidence is very strong, promoted by a nurturing, caring and supportive environment. Pupils feel that the core values of caring are a tangible presence and, in discussions, described the school as being like a very happy family. They know right from wrong and have excellent relationships with each other and with staff whom they feel they can trust to help with difficulties. They have opportunities in some year groups to contribute and take responsibility as monitors. They collaborate very well in pairs and groups in the classroom and in teams on the playing field. Pupils understand their own culture. This is strongly supported by trips to museums and theatres as well as visitors into school to develop their understanding of, for example, Shakespeare. Their knowledge of other cultures and faiths is strengthened within the religious education programme, as is their ability to identify other people's special qualities.
- 2.6 Personal development is supported extremely well by the excellent pastoral care shown by all staff. Pupils say that staff show exceptional concern for them, encouraging them to achieve well in every area of school life. Pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to should they have any personal or academic problems. They say that bullying is rare, and they are sure that, if it does happen, staff are there to support and deal with it quickly and constructively. They feel the school rules are fair. Pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were positive about all aspects of school life, particularly believing the staff treat them equally and fairly when giving rewards and punishments. They are very happy at the school; relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are outstanding. The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good. Suitable policies safeguard pupils and all staff have undertaken the required training as appropriate to their responsibilities in this area, although the implementation of these policies has not always been rigorous in the past. Risk assessments, including those to reduce the risk of fire, have been prepared, fire

procedures are clear and health and safety hazards are minimised. A suitable room has been designated as a medical room for those pupils who may fall ill during the school day. Attendance and admission registers are completed accurately and correctly stored. The school has an appropriate accessibility plan designed to increase the access to facilities and the curriculum for those pupils who have disabilities. Pupils understand that a healthy lifestyle including physical exercise is important, and school meals are nutritious.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.7 The board of directors administers the school in a sound manner, and helps to fulfil the school's aims. Financial planning is carried out carefully so that human and material resources are provided for the needs of the pupils, and recent changes to the premises have improved the learning environment for the youngest pupils very well. The directors, two of whom are not continuously resident in Britain, receive monthly reports from the headmistress which give them an insight into the successes and challenges of the school, and one director visits termly. Decisions made in discussions, however, have not been formally recorded in writing. The executive chairman of IES Limited has recently been appointed to develop closer links, from which the school is already benefitting, because it was recognised that the current structure of governance was not supporting growth and improvement sufficiently strongly. Whilst great strides have been made very recently in the documentation concerning regulatory requirements, the monitoring of the legal responsibilities of the directors has not been discharged with enough care in the past.
- 2.8 The school is well led and managed. Strong features are the processes used to monitor the quality of teaching and learning including the examination of pupils' books and lesson observation, which is now beginning to be more closely linked to appraisal, and the sharing of information between the staff on academic and pastoral matters about the pupils. The formulation of the school development plan is in its earliest stages. School policies have been reviewed, and subject co-ordinators have been introduced but their role is not yet fully developed. For example, they do not yet play an active role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Suitable opportunities are given for in-service training. A centralised register records the recruitment checks carried out when staff are appointed, although the school has not been rigorous enough in ensuring that all checks have been carried out on a number of staff before beginning work and on proprietors at the time of their appointment. All except one issue, which is currently being resolved, have been rectified where it is possible to do so. The premises and grounds are used to best effect for recreation and learning and are very well maintained. Displays around the school cover many areas of the curriculum and are bright and colourful, celebrating and valuing pupils' efforts.
- 2.9 The school has excellent links with parents, carers and guardians, keeping them well informed about school life. The weekly newsletter and the website are appreciated by parents, and reports are helpful and detailed, conveying information about progress, targets for future improvement, and pastoral comments from class teachers. Year-by-year curriculum leaflets for parents are useful and informative but these do not have a consistency in style or content. An active and enthusiastic Friends of Grantham Preparatory School association reflects and strengthens the family atmosphere of the school. Any parental concerns are handled with due care and recorded in suitable detail.

- 2.10 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show a high level of satisfaction with the quality of education provided. All parents who responded expressed positive views about the curriculum, standards of behaviour, the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and values, opportunities for their involvement, management, and information about, and communication with, the school. A very small minority of parents were concerned about the provision for those pupils with SEND but this issue was found by the inspection team to be unwarranted.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

3.1 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore must:

- ensure that, in the future, all recruitment checks are carried out on staff, proprietors and volunteers before they begin work at the school and are recorded on the single central register of appointments [Part 4, paragraphs 19.(2)(a) and (b); 19.(3); 21.(6)(b)(i) and (ii); 22.(3)(b); 22.(4); and 22.(7)(a) and (b), under Suitability of staff and proprietors; and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

3.2 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure the proprietors monitor the school's compliance with regulatory requirements and record formally the outcomes of their meetings.
2. Develop further the links between monitoring, training and appraisal throughout the school including the EYFS.
3. Extend the role of the subject co-ordinators to include the responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding and meets the needs of the children exceptionally well. Strong teaching and extremely good interactions between staff and children contribute significantly to children's high levels of achievement. The enthusiastic and energetic staff team works consistently and effectively to sustain previous high standards and continuously improve practice in the setting.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. The EYFS leadership has strong aspirations for high-quality provision through continuous self-evaluation and improvement planning, establishing and communicating clear and relevant priorities. All records, policies and procedures for the efficient management of the setting and safeguarding of the children, including those to promote equal opportunities, are implemented well, and risk assessments are secure. Staff are well qualified and effectively deployed. Their professional development is encouraged through external and internal courses, although a formal appraisal system to help identify training has not yet been fully developed. Resources, both indoors and particularly in the outdoor area, are well deployed and accessible to children. Exceptional home-school links are swiftly established and the parents show very strong support; their views are considered and, where appropriate, acted upon. Helpful links with local agencies have been established and strongly support the children's learning.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 Provision is outstanding. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of how young children learn best through a carefully structured and well-balanced programme of both adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children benefit from long periods of outdoor learning, offering freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active and exuberant. Activities are based on the interests and needs of the children, enabling them to enjoy a wide variety of experiences. Thorough assessment and planning identify what children can do and the next steps they need to take in order to progress. Staff are exceptionally skilful at prompting children's thinking and developing their learning in an exciting way. They pose searching questions, build on children's ideas and fire their imaginations. Children are extremely well supported by their key person, who promotes their welfare and guides them towards independence. Staff strongly encourage their safety skills and an awareness that personal hygiene, exercise and nutritious food are all required for a healthy lifestyle.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. They reach high levels of achievement across all six areas of learning, so that by the end of the Reception year most children exceed the Early Learning Goals. From an early age children show a keen awareness of word sounds and a love of reading, and use these in their writing of simple sentences. By the end of Reception, most children recognise and use numbers to twenty and beyond. Children make significant progress in knowledge and understanding of the world, developing strong observational and investigative skills, and use computers with confidence. They enjoy their learning and their enthusiasm is infectious. Their independence shines through and they diligently take responsibility for the various tasks asked of them. Behaviour is extremely good and is effectively managed through gentle reminders of the underlying rules and expectations of the setting. The children show a keen understanding of the importance of exercise, healthy eating and personal safety; for example they move around the setting safely and can explain why they bring healthy snacks to school.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, one of the directors and the executive chairman of IES Limited, 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

Mrs Elizabeth Coley

Mr Michael Hewett

Mrs Linda Donowho

Reporting Inspector

Former Headmaster, ISA school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector