



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST HILDA'S SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Hilda's School

Full Name of School	St Hilda's School		
DfE Number	919/6092		
Address	St Hilda's School 28 Douglas Road Harpenden Hertfordshire AL5 2ES		
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Email Address	office@sthildasharpenden.co.uk		
Head	Mrs Carolyn Godlee		
Proprietor	St Hilda's (Harpenden) Ltd.		
Age Range	3 to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	163		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	35	5-11: 128
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Claire Pearson		
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	12 Feb 2013 to 15 Feb 2013		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2008.

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) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website 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', 'satisfactory' 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 proprietor, 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 regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Bridget Windley

Mrs Pam Simmonds

Mrs Marjorie Harris

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Former Head, ISI school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Situated in the small Hertfordshire town of Harpenden, St Hilda's School is a girls' preparatory school for pupils aged from three to eleven. The school, which is set in a large Victorian house on a site of one and a quarter acres, was founded in 1891. It was purchased by the current proprietor's family in 1950 and it is now administered by a board of directors as a limited company. The board comprises the proprietor, the chairman, who is also a family member, and four other directors. The group acts as a governing body and oversees the management of the school.
- 1.2 The premises include an adjacent field used for athletics, a tennis court and a small swimming pool, along with specialist science, music and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. The school is in the final stages of a building programme to provide six additional teaching rooms, extra office space and refurbishment of the kitchen and dining room in the existing accommodation. Since the previous inspection a new head teacher has been appointed.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection there were 128 girls in Years 1 to 6 and 35 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), of whom 16 were part-time. There were eight classes, one each for Nursery to Year 6. The majority of pupils are of British origin and they come from business and professional backgrounds in Harpenden and the surrounding area.
- 1.4 The school ethos is based on Christian principles, though other faiths and cultures are represented. The school aims to build on the achievements of the past, encouraging pupils to grow into caring, responsible and well-rounded citizens. It is the school's intention to create a centre of creative excellence, maintaining high academic and sporting standards and to provide each girl with the opportunity to achieve her full potential.
- 1.5 Overall the ability profile of the school is above the national average, although the average ability of some year groups is in line with the national average. The school has identified 21 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) all of whom receive specialist learning support. Four pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) who are given support as necessary. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) 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 equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception
Form 1	Year 1
Form 2	Year 2
Form 3	Year 3
Form 4	Year 4
Form 5	Year 5
Form 6	Year 6

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils of all abilities are highly successful in their learning and personal development and St Hilda's School effectively meets its aim to provide a first-class education for girls. The pupils' excellent standards of achievement in academic work are reflected in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are confident and independent with particularly well-developed skills in literacy and numeracy. They benefit from an excellent curriculum whose breadth and richness prepares them thoroughly for their senior schools. Teaching is excellent overall and some stimulating practice was observed during the inspection. In the very small minority of lessons where the teaching was less effective, the pace was slower and the tasks set were not always suited to the needs of the more able. Planning and support for pupils with EAL and SEND is excellent and in dedicated lessons the more able pupils are offered suitably challenging tasks. Assessment is thorough and highly effective in tracking pupils' progress and needs.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. It is supported by excellent pastoral care and strong safeguarding and health and safety measures. Pupils' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. Incidents of unkind behaviour are rare and pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils develop well spiritually, have an excellent sense of morality and an outstanding social awareness. They understand fully how cultural and religious diversity enriches life. The environment is caring, and secure relationships are built on mutual trust and respect. Pupils welcome opportunities to take on roles of responsibility and the care they show for one another is excellent. Their behaviour in lessons is exemplary.
- 2.3 Excellent governance ensures that pupils are well educated and the directors are committed to the success and development of the school. Their involvement in academic and curricular matters is increasing with the introduction of more regular visits and staff presentations. Leadership of the school is excellent and the strong and collaborative management style has taken the school forward from the previous inspection with many improvements including a newly defined management structure and a review of the curriculum. A comprehensive development plan sets out a vision for the future although the proposed actions for the EYFS currently lack sufficient detail. The leadership has been entirely successful in implementing the recommendations from the previous inspection to monitor the curriculum and its delivery and to enable pupils to develop their investigative and research skills. Parents are highly satisfied with the school as shown in the almost entirely positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They unanimously agree that their children are well looked after at the school and that high standards of behaviour are achieved.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

1. Ensure that the excellent teaching methods seen in many lessons are employed by all staff so that the pace of teaching always meets the needs of the more able pupils.
2. In the EYFS include more detail of planned actions in the existing development plan.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims to maintain high academic and sporting standards and to provide each girl with the opportunity to achieve her full potential. Pupils show highly developed literacy skills. They read extremely well and their stories are imaginative with accurate spelling and punctuation. In the Reception class, pupils were seen using their knowledge of word sounds to write sentences from story pictures and their love of books was evident as they read to their teachers with interest and expression. Mathematical development is strong and pupils' well-developed skills were observed as they manipulated fractions, decimals and percentages competently. Their secure grasp of ICT enables them to organise and present their work to a high standard. In the EYFS, the children's mathematical skills are reinforced through a wide range of practical activities, for example identifying numbers up to ten, counting coins and completing simple calculations.
- 3.3 Pupils display high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons and across a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Achievement in sport is high and teams perform to a good standard against local and regional opposition. Music is a strength of the school and pupils take great pleasure in participating individually and communally in a range of musical activities. Pupils' results in music examinations are consistently high. High standards in art are evident from the good quality artwork around the school and the pupils' own colourful displays in classrooms. In the EYFS children exhibit the qualities of active and independent learners who can become fully absorbed in their play. This was observed in their outdoor learning activities and as they enjoyed sustained periods of role play.
- 3.4 Individual pupils have been successful in national competitions: for example a few have competed at county level in athletics, tennis and swimming and others have achieved significant success in art and ballet. In 2012, many pupils achieved distinctions in the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) competitions.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but on the evidence available, from lesson observations, pupils' written work and curriculum interviews, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. In many subjects, particularly English and mathematics, pupils achieve high standards in work which is considerably more challenging than the National Curriculum. Pupils are extremely successful in gaining places to the senior schools of their choice and many demonstrate high achievement in winning academic and all-round scholarships.
- 3.6 This level of attainment indicates that from Year 1 onwards pupils make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils identified as having SEND or EAL benefit from a high level of support which enables them to make significant improvements as was particularly evident in their free writing. Those identified as more able or talented are often offered appropriate extension activities which enable them to make rapid progress. In the EYFS all children, including those with SEND and EAL, make excellent progress in their learning and development relative to their

ability and starting points. Almost all children complete the early learning goals by the end of the EYFS and some go beyond.

- 3.7 This high level of success in so many fields arises from the pupils' hard work and perseverance. They show highly positive attitudes to learning and they respond well to a climate of support and encouragement. Pupils are ambitious and eager to assume responsibility for their own academic development and they co-operate well with others. They use lesson time effectively, develop good work ethics and enjoy learning.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The curriculum is highly effective in covering all requisite areas of learning, enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make rapid progress. The quality of the curriculum and its contribution to the pupils' achievement and learning has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils from the EYFS upwards are offered all the National Curriculum subjects, together with drama and French. Latin is introduced in Year 4, alongside German taster lessons, and pupils in Year 6 also benefit from Spanish. The curriculum is tailored to the requirements of examinations for entry to local secondary schools and incorporates a comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme.
- 3.10 At all stages, and for all ages and abilities, the curriculum includes a broad range of opportunities which support the school's aim to achieve excellence in creative and performing arts, humanities, physical education (PE) and ICT. The curriculum is enhanced by a broad programme of visits and visitors. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for all pupils to perform in school productions, assemblies and concerts and to enter local and national competitions in subjects such as art and mathematics.
- 3.11 From the EYFS onwards, pupils benefit from the expertise of specialist staff in music, ICT, French and PE. Specialist drama is introduced for pupils from Year 1, Latin is added in Year 4 and in Years 5 and 6 all subjects are taught by specialists. Suitable schemes of work have been written and are updated annually. Curriculum planning is thorough and caters for the teaching of different ability groups and for methods of assessment. The curriculum also provides for pupils with SEND and EAL by allocating specific times for specialist support.
- 3.12 The EYFS curriculum makes excellent provision for children's individual needs enabling them to reach the expected levels of development. A wide range of activities, together with a balance of adult led and child initiated tasks, enables children to respond to the high expectations of staff. The EYFS is well resourced and high quality, attractive displays brighten the classrooms. Outdoor learning is planned throughout the setting and creates an excellent alternative learning environment.
- 3.13 Many exciting day visits further enrich the curriculum. Recent outings to Buckingham Palace and the Imperial War Museum have added realism to history lessons as have the more local visits to museums and historical places of interest. Residential trips for pupils in Year 5 and 6 to North Yorkshire and France respectively, have enhanced their studies in geography and French. Visiting speakers bring the curriculum to life and recent presentations have included an

account of being an evacuee during the war and guidance on internet safety for pupils and parents.

- 3.14 Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities on offer. They have the opportunity to attend a wide variety of musical activities, including choirs, orchestra and string, woodwind and recorder groups. There are also many sports clubs available as well as numerous other activities including art, chess, craft, film making and drama. Well organised before and after school clubs offer good provision for those pupils who require care out of school hours.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The quality of teaching is excellent overall.
- 3.16 Teaching throughout the school, including the EYFS, provides activities that enthuse the pupils, so that learning is enjoyable and in accordance with the school's aims. A well implemented teaching and learning policy sets out expectations clearly and exemplifies the aims of the school. These expectations are met well and the standard of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- 3.17 Teachers have high expectations and an extremely secure knowledge of their subject areas. Lessons are consistently well organised, and almost always exhibit fun, pace and challenge. In the best lessons inspirational teaching uses humour and praise to enthuse the pupils, and progress and achievement in such sessions is excellent. In the very small minority of lessons where teaching is less effective, a lack of stimulus and pace fails to fully maintain pupils' interests. In the EYFS teaching provides many opportunities for active learning through play and exploration.
- 3.18 Good quality resources are employed well by the teachers and effective use is made of interactive whiteboards to enhance learning. In the EYFS, staff additionally use role-play, puppets and costume as resources.
- 3.19 More able pupils are frequently given challenging work in English, languages, music and in the different ability sets in mathematics. However, their capabilities are not always fully recognised in other lessons where all pupils sometimes work on similar activities at the same pace. Appropriate help for those children with SEND and EAL is provided by high quality learning support. Staff work closely with parents and external agencies to secure appropriate support. Pupils with individual education plans are monitored closely and in conjunction with their parents, suitable targets are set for these pupils, which are regularly reviewed.
- 3.20 Overall, marking is thorough, accurate and frequent and often gives pupils helpful advice as to how to improve. The systems in place for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress is based on a range of standardised tests and is successful in tracking the progress of individual pupils, as well as whole year groups. Scrutiny of the assessment results by senior staff feeds into planning and adds to the information used to decide on appropriate targets for each pupil's end of year reports. Pupils are given a high level of personal attention, and benefit greatly from working in an environment where hard work is praised and celebrated. In interviews, they reported that their teachers were always kind and caring and that they helped them to learn.

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 From the EYFS, pupils exhibit a high degree of personal development, in accordance with the school's aim that pupils should develop moral and ethical awareness. They are polite, friendly and welcoming and they show respect for themselves and each other. By the time they leave school as confident and well-balanced young people, they are thoroughly prepared for the next stage of their education. Excellent support is given to Nursery children as they move into Reception and as they subsequently transfer to Year 1. Pupils' responses in the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual awareness is good. They are encouraged to develop awareness of the non-material aspects of life in PSHCE through discussions of topics such as fairness, and in assemblies on dealing with feelings of jealousy and being different. Pupils are self-aware and their confidence is developed through organising and leading assemblies, and taking part in drama productions, music concerts and public speaking. Assemblies are linked to the PSHCE programme and Christian themes, and always include a hymn and a prayer which encourages the development of moral and ethical values. Healthy competition is encouraged through the house system and sporting fixtures.
- 4.4 Moral awareness is excellent and the pupils have a mature sense of right and wrong which is nurtured by the caring family atmosphere within the school. They understand the school's code of conduct and accept that sanctions are appropriate for poor behaviour. Pupils are considerate and kind towards their peers and they are helped by their teachers to appreciate truth and fairness. Care for the environment is given high priority and members of the school eco team are currently showing their keen understanding of the dangers of pollution by supporting the 'Keep Britain Tidy' campaign and picking up litter in the local area.
- 4.5 Excellent social development is evident, based on the warmth of the relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff. Children in the EYFS co-operate well and share happily. Pupils willingly accept responsibility as head and deputy head girls, house captains, school council representatives, members of the playground squad and monitors and they are proud to contribute to the society of the school. Children in the EYFS are encouraged to show independence and responsibility through familiar routines and classroom chores such as changing for PE, tidying their games away and helping themselves by choosing their own water and fruit snack. Pupils show an awareness of those less fortunate than themselves through their involvement in charitable fund raising. Recently they have made donations to medical research and to a school in Uganda with which they have very strong links. Pupils have learnt about public institutions and the rule of law through a visit by magistrates, a talk by the local mayor and by attending a service to celebrate the United Nations Day of Peace, whilst an awareness of economics is developed in geography lessons as they learn about financial difficulties in the developing world.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural development is strong, reflecting the western tradition as well as that of other parts of the world. They develop understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures during their work in religious education lessons and by visiting local places of worship such as the local Christian church, a synagogue and a Hindu

temple. They enjoy celebrations such as Chinese New Year and a Mexican fiesta. They have also increased their awareness of the achievements of people from other faiths and cultures through a recent assembly on Aung San Suu Kyi.

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

- 4.7 Pastoral care throughout the school is excellent.
- 4.8 In accordance with the school's aims, all members of staff provide excellent pastoral care. Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding with high levels of mutual respect evident. Members of staff know all the pupils well. In the EYFS, each child has a key person who plays an important role in their personal, social and emotional development alongside the class teacher. Whole school assemblies include a celebration of pupils' achievements, with teachers praising emerging skills and talents. Birthdays and out of school successes are also celebrated within the school community.
- 4.9 Pupils, including those in the EYFS, are supported sensitively in the development of personal hygiene routines. Healthy eating is encouraged through the provision of a well-balanced and nutritious range of home-cooked dishes at lunchtime and crudités and fruit are always available. Dietary requirements are catered for, and the pupils are encouraged to drink plenty of water. A healthy life style is promoted through science, PSHCE and many outdoor activities which enable the children to keep fit.
- 4.10 Staff are guided by good pastoral arrangements, and regularly updated comprehensive anti-bullying, discipline and behaviour policies are implemented effectively. Form teachers are primarily responsible for the pastoral well-being of the pupils and an effective mentor system supports pupils in Year 5 and 6. Pertinent information regarding any concerns about pupils is quickly disseminated to all teaching staff and teaching assistants at weekly meetings or through the minutes, which are emailed to all concerned.
- 4.11 Behaviour throughout the school, including in the EYFS is outstanding. The school has devised useful strategies to deal constructively with any unacceptable behaviour. Clear and consistent boundaries are understood by pupils. In interviews, pupils reported that incidents of unkind behaviour are rare and are always dealt with swiftly and effectively; they have confidence that staff will ensure their well-being. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND. Pupils articulate their views competently through the school council.

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

- 4.12 The school makes excellent arrangements to secure pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- 4.13 Excellent safeguarding arrangements have regard to official guidance and a rigorous child protection policy applies to the whole school, including the EYFS. All staff know the child protection procedures and they have regularly updated training. Those with specific responsibilities are trained to a higher level. The school has strong links with the local authority, which ensures that it is able to give very high priority to the protection of children in the EYFS and throughout the school. Meticulous recruitment procedures are firmly in place and the checks to ensure the suitability of staff are carried out and recorded thoroughly.

- 4.14 Detailed arrangements secure the health and safety of pupils throughout the school, and the comprehensive health and safety document is regularly reviewed and updated. The fire safety manual provides detailed guidance and fire drills take place at appropriate intervals. Risk assessments are prepared for the school premises and activities on tours, visits and trips and daily checks ensure that any hazards or faulty equipment are removed or repaired without delay.
- 4.15 All members of staff are trained in first aid and an appropriate number have a higher level qualification. The required numbers of staff in the EYFS have paediatric first aid qualifications. A comprehensive first aid policy outlines protocols for the administration and recording of medicines, and for dealing with illness and accidents. Pupils are supervised well at all times and the school makes good provision for pupils who are unwell during the day. All health and safety arrangements take full account of pupils with SEND. Admission and attendance registers are completed accurately and stored appropriately.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The directors have a valuable blend of experience and expertise and they are loyally committed to the school. Two of the board are members of the original proprietor's family and since the previous inspection three former parents have been newly appointed. The directors have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and set appropriate aims and values in keeping with its ethos. Astute financial management has enabled the ambitious building development which is currently in its final stages of completion. Alongside the changes to the board, the directors have also been following a number of other initiatives to increase the board's effectiveness. Not all of these have been fully implemented, but the school's consistently excellent outcomes demonstrate the impact of what has been done to date.
- 5.3 The proprietor is in regular contact with the leadership team and provides excellent advice and support. Regular and minuted meetings once a term provide the directors with the information necessary to be conversant with the activities, needs and opportunities facing the school. They visit the school including the EYFS at its major events and for 'Directors' Day' which is one day a term set aside for each board member in turn to observe lessons, and talk with staff, parents and pupils. In this way they gain good quality information, although this is not yet shared formally with the board. A recently introduced initiative is for members of staff to give a presentation to the board about a specific curricular area. This is a valuable way to build on the directors' awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's improvement plan is shared with the directors who are aware of agreed priorities and the progress being made towards meeting them. Designated directors provide effective support for the board to discharge its legal responsibilities. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are regularly reviewed by the whole board.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management including links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent.
- 5.5 Highly competent leadership and management of the whole school including the EYFS has improved since the previous inspection and is wholly in line with the school's aims to encourage staff to share and participate in the long-term vision for the school. The school has addressed fully the recommendations in the previous report to review the curriculum and its delivery and increase the opportunities for investigative and research work.
- 5.6 Since the previous inspection the senior management has been restructured to ensure that the members have complementary skills and set a tone that benefits the whole school community. Together with the leadership, the senior management team provides a caring and clear sense of direction and exercise their management role effectively across the whole range of school activities.

- 5.7 Heads of department manage their subjects effectively by supporting and monitoring the standard of teaching. They regularly review and maintain good quality departmental records and documentation and set an excellent example. Curriculum planning and its delivery are monitored regularly via termly audits of medium term planning by heads of department, discussion at departmental meetings and visits to lessons by heads of department and senior management. This has led to greater consistency in the delivery of the curriculum across all abilities and age groups.
- 5.8 Development planning based on thorough self-evaluation demonstrates that the school has a secure understanding of its strengths and areas for development. This five-year document appropriately identifies priorities and indicates the person responsible for the fulfilment of each aim. It includes clear criteria for judging success and the timescales for completion. All management staff are involved in the development planning process and this clarity of vision is reflected in the excellent quality of education and personal development of the pupils. In the EYFS staff meet regularly to self-evaluate provision and set clear priorities for improvement. The future vision for the setting forms part of the whole school development plan. However, for the EYFS, the plan currently lacks sufficient detail as to how this vision will be achieved.
- 5.9 Comprehensive whole school policies, which are reviewed regularly by the senior team, reflect the school's commitment to high standards. They provide practical and achievable guidance and are implemented successfully by staff. In interviews staff spoke knowledgeably about all the existing systems and procedures. In the EYFS, policies are well known by staff and systems for monitoring consistency in their implementation are fully embedded in practice.
- 5.10 Appraisal and in-service training are regular features of staff development and all members of staff have received the required training for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Induction procedures for new staff are extremely thorough with secure appointment procedures and excellent initial guidance and support. Professional development is strongly promoted and staff attend a wide range of courses to update their knowledge and skills. In the EYFS the effective monitoring of the curriculum and regular supervision of staff identifies any further training needs. Recruitment procedures for staff, volunteers and directors are robust. The leadership is assisted by the proprietor in appointing senior staff and they both hold the qualification for safer recruitment. The central register of appointments is properly maintained.
- 5.11 Throughout the school and including EYFS, excellent links have been established with parents, carers and guardians. Close relationships are formed with every family as soon as they join the school and parents and prospective parents are provided with all the required information and policies through the website, colourful prospectus and parents' handbook. In the EYFS staff work closely with parents to settle children into school and to involve them in their children's learning.
- 5.12 Parents are given a wide range of formal and informal opportunities to talk to staff. They appreciate the open door policy, and value the excellent communication that exists via email, the regular newsletters and home/school diaries. Parents can access the website daily for updated policies and procedures and to find out the latest information about school events. The formal arrangements for parental complaints is thorough and in line with published procedures. Minor concerns are dealt with quickly and efficiently

- 5.13 Termly consultation evenings provide parents with good quality information about their child's work and progress and an annual written report gives detailed information on attainment. Targets for further improvement are regularly included in reports for pupils in Years 1 to 6, but are not used in all subject areas in the EYFS. Information sessions for parents on various curriculum subjects have been recently introduced and a presentation on the teaching of mathematics was well attended and gave parents the necessary guidance to support their children.
- 5.14 Parents are given many worthwhile opportunities to be involved in school activities including helping on trips and attending a wide range of events and social occasions. All parents are invited to join the 'Friends of St Hilda's' which is an active parents' association that works hard to raise funds for the school through the organisation of social events for pupils and parents. In the pre-inspection questionnaire the vast majority of parental responses indicated an extremely high level of satisfaction with the school, with no significant areas of concern. Parents unanimously agree that their children are well looked after at the school and that high standards of behaviour are achieved.

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