



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE CAVENDISH SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Cavendish School

Full Name of School	The Cavendish School
DCSF Number	202/6038
Registered Charity Number	312727
Address	The Cavendish School 31 Inverness Street London NW1 7HB
Telephone Number	020 7485 1958
Fax Number	020 7267 0098
Email Address	admissions@cavendish-school.co.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Teresa Dunbar
Chairman of Governors	Mrs Mary Robey
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	191
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 57 5-11: 134
Number of Day Pupils	191
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Isobel Boyt
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	18th to 19th January 2010

PREFACE

This report is according to 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 school's previous ISI inspection was in May 2006.

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 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard 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 does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Cavendish School is a day school for girls between the ages of three and eleven years, with a few sibling boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school was founded in 1875 in Cavendish Square in London as part of the original foundation of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. When the Society left Cavendish Square in 1970, the school moved a little further north to its present accommodation in a modernised and extended Victorian school building with its own secluded playgrounds near Regent's Park. At that point an educational trust was established, and the trustees of the charity form the board of governors; one member is a representative of the Society. Many different faiths are made welcome in the school; and, at present, approximately one third of the pupils come from Catholic families.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a high quality education, within a warm, nurturing ethos founded on the promotion, development and practise of Catholic Christian principles. It seeks to offer a broad, rich, purposeful, balanced and stimulating curriculum which acknowledges the individual contributions and needs of all members of the community, and enables them to work towards reaching their full potential in all areas – spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and physical. The school also aims to give its pupils an excellent preparation so that they move with confidence towards the next stage of their education. Since the previous inspection in May 2006, further refurbishment, interior and exterior, has taken place and sibling boys have been re-introduced in the EYFS. The school also offers after-school care. The present headmistress has been in post for almost three years.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 191 pupils on roll, of whom 57, 6 boys and 51 girls, were in the EYFS. In Years 1 to 6, the school has identified 18 pupils as having learning difficulties or disabilities, 15 of whom receive specialist learning support, funded by the school. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Ten pupils have English as an additional language but none require specialist support for this.
- 1.4 The EYFS provides care and education in one Nursery and two Reception classes. The Nursery takes up to 24 children and Reception up to 40. There are currently 24 children on roll in Nursery and 33 in Reception, of whom 55 receive funding for nursery education at present. One child requires additional support and 13 are learning English as an additional language.
- 1.5 While the majority of pupils are British, a significant minority of other cultures are represented, reflecting the range of ethnic backgrounds in the catchment area of the school. The school is not selective and the ability range of the pupils is wide. Results of the EYFS profiles as they leave Reception, and standardised tests in Years 1 to 6 indicate that the girls' average ability is above the national average, with a significant proportion in the higher rank of 'above average'. Pupils proceed, through entrance and scholarship examinations, to a range of mainly selective independent and maintained senior schools.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

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

- 2.1 Pupils are successfully educated and pupils make very good progress over time in relation to their ability. Attainment overall is good with high standards achieved in Year 6, which fulfils the school's aim to give pupils an excellent preparation for the next stage. The quality and presentation of written work is good overall; pupils read and listen with confidence and understanding. In mathematics, pupils demonstrate a thorough grasp of concepts and the associated vocabulary; they apply their mathematical knowledge effectively to problem-solving and investigative tasks. Inferencing skills, problem solving and independent thought are successfully promoted, particularly in subjects such as English and science. In national tests at age 11, high standards are achieved in science when compared with the national average for maintained primary schools. Significant success is achieved in senior school entrance and scholarship examinations, and in national music and speech examinations. The school has achieved a Gold Arts Mark award and a Year 6 pupil reached the final stage of the Primary Mathematics Challenge.
- 2.2 Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning. They listen attentively and concentrate well when working independently; they also enjoy collaborative work. They are happily engaged in their learning, enthusiastic, well motivated and well behaved. Their creativity is encouraged and their response is celebrated in colourful art displays around the school.
- 2.3 Strong curricular and extra-curricular provision which covers all the required areas of learning makes a highly positive contribution to the successful education of the pupils. They benefit from a broad, well planned and organised curriculum which includes French from Nursery, and Mandarin from Year 4. It is well supplemented by a comprehensive range of worthwhile extra-curricular activities which pupils thoroughly enjoy. Some of these activities are run by parents or friends of the school and this fosters the positive links established with the local community and nearby Catholic church, where many important events in the school calendar are held.
- 2.4 Good, and at times outstanding, teaching contributes to the academic success of the pupils. Specialist teachers also make an important contribution in several areas from Nursery onwards. The teaching encourages application, effort and good behaviour. In the best lessons, pupils were challenged by their teachers' high expectations and a brisk pace which maintained motivation and interest. Good explanations and questioning kept interest alive. Occasionally, class teaching did not consistently consider the full range of ability, although individual learning support is carefully and thoroughly organised. In many instances, the teaching assistants provided excellent support, but this was not consistent throughout. Teaching is supported by a generous range of resources, particularly interactive whiteboards. These are used effectively and extensively by staff and pupils to promote interest in learning. A comprehensive assessment scheme enables achievement and effort to be tracked and contributes to individual profiles which follow pupils through the school. Progress is monitored effectively against national norms.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.5 Pupils' personal development is excellent. The school is highly successful in achieving its aims. Within its warm and nurturing ethos pupils develop, from an early age, a sense of caring about others, of responsibility and independence, and an awareness of beauty in nature, art and music. While spiritual awareness is successfully developed through assemblies, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, the heritage of the school which perpetuates its values of loving and caring makes a major contribution. Girls develop a strong moral awareness; they clearly appreciate the need for their 'Golden Rules', and are pleased about the introduction of a school council. Their social skills are extremely well developed. Lunches are enjoyable occasions where pupils display excellent manners and conversational skills. A high proportion of parents considered that the school successfully encourages a high standard of behaviour and gave their children worthwhile attitudes and views. The school's emphasis on music, art and drama and the advantage it takes of its position near the centre of London combine to offer excellent opportunities for pupils to learn about and appreciate cultural traditions, their own, and those of others. A wide range of national and international charity work, including that of the Society, is generously supported.
- 2.6 The quality of pastoral care is outstanding and ensures that pupils feel extremely safe and happy in a secure and caring environment. Relationships are warm and relaxed. Effective systems and policies are in place, including those for safeguarding, anti-bullying and promoting good behaviour. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. Careful provision is made for pupils who are unwell. There is a suitable plan to provide educational and physical access for pupils with disabilities. Pupils appreciate the good quality of lunchtime meals. Pupils participate in the well-structured physical education and sport programme with enthusiasm and look forward to these sessions. Admission and attendance registers and procedures are efficiently maintained and organised.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.7 Governance, leadership and management are excellent. Governors are highly committed and have an excellent insight into the workings of the school and carry out their responsibilities, including those for child protection, welfare and health, efficiently and effectively. They make an important contribution to strategic planning.
- 2.8 The senior management team, led by the headmistress, is exceptionally effective in its educational direction of the school and the fulfilment of its aims. Very good use is made of the existing accommodation. The high quality of the education enjoyed by the pupils, and their excellent personal development is a credit to the commitment and professionalism of the management. Planning for school improvement and careful setting of priorities and action are based on wide consultation. Monitoring of teaching is carried out by subject coordinators and overseen by the senior management team; the well-judged appraisal system is linked to this and to staff professional development. Recruitment procedures are thorough.
- 2.9 Links with parents are excellent and relationships are constructive and supportive. Parents are made very welcome and have good opportunities to be actively involved in the work of the school. The excellent library is a vibrant resource which has been developed and supported by parents who organise a weekly library club. Parents' comments in the questionnaire were overwhelmingly complimentary and positive. They praised the well-rounded academic education provided and the self-reliance

and self-confidence encouraged; they considered leavers well-equipped for the next stage of their education. They are pleased that their children much enjoy coming to school. Parents of pupils and prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school and parents, on the whole, are happy with the information they receive. The school handles the concerns of parents with care and there is an appropriate complaints procedure in place.

2.10 The school meets all of the regulatory requirements.

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 meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.
- 3.2 The school's provision for childcare met the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and no action was required.

(ii) Recommended action

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
 - 1. incorporate peer observation across subject areas into the present programme of lesson observation;
 - 2. review the provision and use of ICT resources across the school, including Nursery and Reception;
 - 3. encourage all children in the EYFS to try out the full range of resources available to them.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

(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 EYFS is outstanding. Excellent provision for children's welfare and for their learning and development means that their needs are very well met, and they are able to make very good progress during their time in the EYFS. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the setting's strengths and weaknesses, and there has been continuous, sustained improvement since the last inspection. Capacity for further improvement is excellent.

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

4.2 Leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. Very good attention is given to all aspects of safeguarding children, and staff are vigilant in implementing fully the school's policies and procedures for ensuring children's well-being. Relationships with parents are excellent, so that parents can work in close partnership with the school to support their children's learning. Development planning and self-evaluation are systematic and well-considered, resulting in constant improvement. The setting makes very good use of its resources, particularly its staff, who work exceptionally well as a team. This means that all children are effectively supported and have an equal chance to do their best.

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

4.3 The quality of the provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is outstanding. Children enjoy an exciting range of carefully planned, stimulating activities which cover all areas of learning comprehensively. The setting has worked hard to successfully achieve the right balance between child initiated and adult led learning. Staff are particularly skilled in building on children's learning as lessons develop, and taking their learning in the direction the children's imaginations want to go. Occasionally, though, staff do not always make sure that all children choose from the whole range of activities available to them. The outdoor area is very well used to complement and build on indoor activities. Assessments are thorough and inform both future planning and parents. Daily routines run very smoothly and procedures for care are robust. Staff are consistent in the thoughtful way they promote safe and sensible behaviour and consideration for others.

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

4.4 Outcomes for children in the EYFS are outstanding. Thanks to the warm and positive attitudes of staff, they settle quickly and are eager to learn. Children of all backgrounds and abilities are curious about their surroundings and happy to apply themselves to their tasks. From a wide range of starting points they make very good progress, entering Year 1 with a range of skills well above expectations for their age. They feel safe and secure in the setting and readily approach known adults if they need help. Children enjoy a good, balanced, healthy diet and understand how to look after themselves. They work well together and help one another, and are able to share resources with little prompting. They are developing very good literacy and

numeracy skills, although some need encouragement to use ICT confidently. Children leave the EYFS extremely well prepared for the new challenges of Key Stage 1.

What the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve is given in section 3.

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 chair of governors, 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 Danice Iles

Mr Kieron Peacock

Mrs Jane Chesterfield

Reporting inspector

Team Inspector (Deputy Headmaster, IAPS)

Early Years Lead Inspector