



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BLUNDELL'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Blundell's Preparatory School

Full Name of School	<b>Blundell's Preparatory School</b>
DfE Number	<b>878/6012</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1081249</b>
Address	<b>Blundell's Preparatory School Milestones House Blundells Road Tiverton Devon EX16 4NA</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01884 252393</b>
Fax Number	<b>01884 232333</b>
Email Address	<b>prep@blundells.org</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Nick Folland</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr David Fursdon</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>244</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (138 boys; 106 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>3-5 (EYFS): 55    5-11: 200</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Elaine Filmer-Bennett</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>14 Jun 2011 to 15 Jun 2011</b>

## 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 inspection was in June 2007.

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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 Blundell's Preparatory School is a co-educational day school situated on the western outskirts of Tiverton in Devon. The school is set in the middle of extensive playing fields adjacent to Blundell's Senior School. It is part of the Blundell's charitable trust. The school has its own governing committee which reports to the overall governing body of the senior school. Originally founded as the privately owned St Aubyn's School for boys in 1929, the school moved to near Tiverton in 1947. After becoming co-educational in 1980, it became part of Blundell's Senior School in September 2000 and moved to its current site. It took its present name in September 2006.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, there were 244 pupils on roll, 138 boys and 106 girls, of whom 55 are in the Early Years Foundation State (EYFS), which is housed in purpose-built premises and takes pupils from the age of three. The ability profile of the school, based on evidence from the inspection and discussion with the headmaster, is broadly average although this includes a wide spectrum of ability. With few exceptions, pupils from the preparatory school progress to the senior school. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage and come from the mainly rural areas within a ten-mile radius of the school, although a small proportion travels by bus from further afield. Pupils come from a broad spectrum of professional families with some parents travelling into London to work. The school has identified seventeen pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and who receive specialist learning support from the school. One pupil has English as an additional language (EAL) and receives support for this. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.3 The school aims to educate the whole child in a happy, friendly and supportive environment and to give the pupils the freedom to be independent and creative in their learning. There has been significant redevelopment of the preparatory school building since the previous inspection. This includes larger classrooms and dedicated art and design technology rooms.
- 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 EYFS and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

### ***Early Years Foundation Stage Setting***

School	NC name
Nursery 1	Nursery
Nursery 2	Nursery
Kindergarten	Reception

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

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

- 2.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievements, their learning, attitudes and basic skills are excellent, reflecting the school's aims to achieve high levels of academic success whilst offering a breadth of opportunity for each individual.
- 2.2 Pupils are confident, articulate and have a good grasp of mathematical and scientific concepts. They write fluently and accurately in a range of styles, although spelling on computer-generated work is weak. The introduction of a new literacy scheme in Years 1 and 2 has had a positive impact on reading and writing skills. Physical, creative and artistic skills are well developed. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities ensures that all pupils have opportunities to develop their skills and interests outside the classroom. They achieve high standards, particularly in drama, sport and music, and they perform on a wide range of musical instruments. Individuals and teams are highly successful in local, county and national competitions. Pupils attain academic awards which include scholarships to the senior school and other local independent schools. The vast majority of the pupils go on to the senior school of their choice.
- 2.3 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be above average in relation to national age-related expectations. On the basis of work seen during the inspection, this level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress overall in relation to pupils of similar ability. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are effective learners; they approach their lessons with enthusiasm and work willingly at the tasks set. Behaviour is excellent. The school provides well for pupils with LDD or EAL, who make good progress alongside their peers. In many lessons, tasks for the most able are challenging and enable them to make rapid progress with their work. They might, for example, act as a group leader making difficult financial decisions on behalf of the team or undertake enrichment activities that require them to work independently. In a minority of lessons, however, there are insufficient opportunities for the most able to be fully challenged and their progress in these lessons is satisfactory rather than good.
- 2.4 Pupils enjoy a rich educational experience which fulfils the school's aim to embrace learning inside and outside the classroom and offer the opportunity to enjoy a diverse range of activities. The curriculum is rewarding and goes beyond the requirements of the National Curriculum. The comprehensive personal, social and health education programme develops the pupils' confidence and sense of responsibility. French is taught from the Nursery onwards and food technology is introduced in Year 3.
- 2.5 Good teaching fulfils the school's aim to give children every opportunity to improve their skills and further their knowledge. The teachers' subject knowledge is good and their enthusiasm and friendly rapport with the pupils ensures that most pupils make good progress. In the best lessons, interesting and highly stimulating teaching enables the pupils to acquire new knowledge, make rapid progress and increase their understanding. These lessons give pupils the opportunity to learn from each other and to share their opinions and findings. In a small number of lessons, however, tasks were insufficiently matched to the needs of the most able and their

progress was restricted as a result. Marking is excellent overall and extremely helpful in showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils value the regular grades they receive and gain a sense of achievement.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.6 The pupils' personal development is excellent. In line with the school's aims, they think of others before themselves and the school motto exemplifies the genuine feeling of togetherness and strong family values which permeate every area of school life. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are friendly and supportive of one another and readily welcome visitors. They reflect well on spiritual matters in assemblies and lessons. In conversation they clearly feel strongly about right and wrong, and fairness. At all ages they show strong social skills and participate actively in the democratic process through the school council and the prefect system. A link with a school in Sri Lanka has given the pupils a genuine understanding of global issues.
- 2.7 Pastoral arrangements are excellent and are much valued by parents and pupils. Pupils are proud of their school and clearly enjoy being part of such a caring community. They know to whom to turn in a crisis and are confident that any problems will be rapidly sorted out. Pupils say that bullying is rare and quickly resolved. During the inspection, no evidence could be found to support the views of the significant minority of older pupils who made negative comments in the pre-inspection questionnaire about fair treatment by their teachers. Relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils are friendly, respectful and based on mutual trust. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and they appreciate the good quality of food available at break and lunchtime. Staff take great care of the pupils and are conscientious about their health and safety. Good policies for anti-bullying, health and safety, behaviour and child protection are rigorously implemented. Staff are fully aware of the school's safeguarding arrangements and implement them effectively; they are appropriately trained in child protection and first aid, and secure procedures are known in case of fire. Pupils are well supervised at all times and there is appropriate provision for pupils who are ill. Admissions and attendance registers are appropriately kept. The school complies with its obligations under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.8 Governors perform their duties well. The governing body is well informed about the school's activities and the good relationship between the headmaster and the governors ensures that any issues that arise can be addressed quickly. On the whole, governors are well informed about the school's activities and offer an excellent breadth of knowledge, experience and interest which contribute well to strategic planning and development. However, governors are not as systematic in ensuring that regulatory requirements are subject to regular review.
- 2.9 Leadership and management are excellent overall and result in a high quality all-round education and excellent personal development for the pupils. Senior staff evaluate outcomes appropriately and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The new posts of academic leaders have been given the responsibility to monitor teaching and learning across the school and to make more systematic use of data to track pupils' progress. These roles are not yet fully developed. Checks are carried out correctly for all staff appointments and these are recorded appropriately. The new classrooms have significantly improved

the facilities; the buildings and the extensive school grounds are maintained to a high standard.

- 2.10 The school has excellent links with parents. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed overwhelming support for almost all aspects of care and education provided for their children. A few voiced concerns about the amount of information that they receive about their child's progress, the help given to pupils with LDD and the amount of homework given. Inspectors found no evidence to support these views. Parents receive excellent information about the school and its activities. They are warmly welcomed to the school and any concerns are dealt with promptly and sensitively. The complaints policy is readily accessible and concerns raised are well handled.

### **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 2010.

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

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Develop the roles and responsibilities of the new academic leaders to establish more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning across the school and to make more robust use of data to track progress.
  2. Improve teaching by consistently challenging the most able pupils.
  3. In EYFS, widen the children's experience still further by making more use of the extensive school grounds.

#### **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 effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding. All the children's needs are met exceedingly well so they make excellent progress in their learning and development. Staff continuously look for ways to develop the high quality of provision. Since the previous inspection, improvements include the introduction of healthy snacks and greater use of the Nursery outdoor area.

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

4.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. There is a clear vision for the development of the setting, backed by comprehensive policies that are implemented rigorously to safeguard children and eliminate discrimination. The children's welfare and development are enhanced by the exceptionally strong links with parents who support the school very well, and the local authority. Parents appreciate the detailed written reports, parents' evenings and daily contact with staff that keep them informed fully of their child's progress. A clear vision of the way forward is shared by the dedicated staff who meet regularly to reflect on current practice and make plans for further improvement. Each child has an equal opportunity to succeed, supported by an extensive range of appropriate resources.

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

4.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. The stimulating environment together with a carefully planned curriculum, enable all children to learn and make rapid progress. Children develop their imagination and acquire problem-solving skills through role play, learning to choose from a wide range of materials and toys. Whilst the outdoor areas are well resourced, the school has identified that the extensive school grounds are insufficiently used currently to enhance children's development. A proper balance is struck between child-initiated and adult-led activities and an accurate profile of each child informs staff about the next steps in learning. Children are cared for extremely well and taught about keeping safe in many contexts, for example in using stairs and gymnastic equipment safely. Daily checks of all equipment create a safe environment. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly.

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

- 4.4 Outcomes for the children are outstanding. From different starting points, they all make substantial progress. By the end of Reception, most achieve high standards in all six areas of learning, exceeding the expectations of the Early Learning Goals. Children are enthusiastic learners who enjoy participating in all their activities and work industriously, both individually and co-operatively. They play enthusiastically with a range of easily accessible resources and interact positively with the adults around them. By the end of Nursery, most children can order numbers up to ten, have developed good skills in using scissors safely and demonstrate good motor skills as seen in the gym and on the playground. At the end of Reception, most are able to write independently, using full stops and capital letters. Children's creative skills can be seen in the various styles of paintings and in particular a collage made from materials found on nature walks. Children care for and respect each other, take turns, share willingly and offer to help. They develop a strong sense of safety as shown by the way they move around the school and playgrounds. They understand that healthy eating, personal hygiene and physical exercise are prerequisites of a healthy lifestyle. They are developing considerable skills for the future, displaying exemplary behaviour and relating extremely well to each other and to adults.

**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 and with the chair of governors' representative, 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 and 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**

Dr Lynn Bappa

Mr David Edwards

Mr Richard Balding

Reporting Inspector

Deputy Head, IAPS school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector