

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Orchard House School

Full Name of the School	Orchard House School
DCSF Number	307/6074
Early Years Number	N/A
Registered Charity Number	N/A
Address	16 Newton Grove, London W4 1LB.
Telephone Number	020 8742 8544
Fax Number	020 8742 8522
Email Address	info@orchardhs.org.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Sally Hobbs
Proprietor	Orchard House School (a subsidiary of House Schools Group)
Age Range of the whole school	3 to 11
Gender	Mixed 3 to 8; girls only 8 to 11
Inspection Dates	8th to 11th June 2009
Head of Early Years Setting	Miss Sarah Stevens
Early Years Age Range	3 to 5
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	1st to 2nd June 2009

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. The inspection was carried out by ISI, a body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting EYFS provision in schools belonging to the ISC Associations. Section 7 of this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the EYFS 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.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
Characteristics of the School	1
2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	3
The Educational Experience Provided	3
Pupils' Learning and Achievements	4
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	6
The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)	8
3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	10
The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils	10
The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	11
4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	13
The Quality of Governance	13
The Quality of Leadership and Management	13
5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	16
Overall Conclusions	16
Next Steps	16
6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE	17
List of Inspectors	17
7. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)	18
What the Setting Should Do to Improve	19

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Orchard House School opened as an independent preparatory day school for boys from age three to eight and for girls aged three to eleven in 1993 with 67 pupils in four classes. The main premises are a Grade II listed Victorian house with half-an-acre of garden occupying the corner site of two residential roads in Chiswick, West London. It is one of the three schools of the House Schools Group and is governed by the three directors from the group. In 2000, the 'West Wing' was added and, in 2001, a lease was taken on two rooms in a nearby church hall. The headmistress has been in post since 1993. The previous inspection took place in June 2003.
- 1.2 Entry at age three or four is non-selective and based on date of registration. At age seven and above, pupils entering the school are assessed. Most pupils come from the area local to the school. Whilst children are largely from professional British families, a small number have international backgrounds. On leaving at age eight or eleven, most pupils transfer to selective independent schools.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 219 pupils of whom 72 were boys and 147 were girls. Sixty-three pupils were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of whom twenty pupils in the Nursery were part time. Thirty four pupils are identified as requiring support with their learning, with the most usual difficulties being dyslexia or the development of literacy or numeracy skills. Ten pupils do not have English as their principal language of whom two pupils receive help with the development of their English skills. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.4 The results of standardised tests show pupils' overall ability to be well above that of the national average. However, as the school is non-selective on entry into the Nursery and Reception, there are some classes where the ability profile is quite wide. If pupils are attaining in line with their abilities, their results in national tests at the age of eleven will be well above the average for all maintained primary schools.
- 1.5 The aims and vision for the school are wide-reaching and underpinned by its ethos. Through the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum, the school seeks to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and promote enjoyment in learning; its aim is to equip pupils as confident members of a rapidly-changing society. Within a challenging, safe and supportive environment, the school seeks to offer pupils the opportunity to reach their true potential and to become independent learners who value life-long learning. As a member of the school community, pupils are encouraged to develop a mutual respect and concern for others which embodies the value of citizenship. In celebrating application, perseverance, initiative and independence of thought and action as well as co-operative endeavours, the school seeks to help pupils develop good personal qualities, respect for the ideas and beliefs of others and a sense of moral values so pupils can become responsible members of society.

- 1.6 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

School	Age of children
The Den	3+
Lower 1R	4+
Lower 1S	4+

Preparatory Department

School	NC name
Form 1L	Year 1
Form 1D	Year 1
Form 2S	Year 2
Form 2G	Year 2
Form 3F	Year 3
Form 3B	Year 3
Upper 1V	Year 4
Upper V	Year 5
Upper V1	Year 6

- 1.7 See Section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Orchard House School provides an outstanding academic and all-round educational experience which is consistent with the school's aims, aspirations and philosophy. Pupils' educational experiences enable them to achieve very well academically in relation to their abilities, and the high expectations of the school in terms of personal development, mutual respect, trust and contribution to the community equip pupils to meet the challenges of the future. Pupils are given every possible encouragement and opportunity to reach their full potential.
- 2.2 Since the previous inspection, excellent progress has been made. The role of the subject co-ordinators has been developed enabling them to take greater responsibility for their subject. Additionally the curriculum has been strengthened by improved provision for science, personal, social, health and cultural education (PSHCE) and religious education (RE). Library facilities and its access have also improved, whilst information and communication technology (ICT) provision has been extensively developed throughout the school to a very high standard. Interactive whiteboards in all classrooms and the plentiful laptops in lessons have allowed the complete integration of ICT across the curriculum.
- 2.3 Pupils benefit greatly from the variety and breadth of the educational experience they receive. The curriculum in the EYFS covers all six areas of learning and is of high quality. Throughout the school the curriculum is broadly based and equally accessible to all pupils, contributing positively to their development in all areas of their learning within the National Curriculum and additionally in RE, PSHCE, Latin and philosophy. Skills in English are highly developed, as illustrated in the writing of both poetry and prose across the year groups. These experiences lay firm foundations for future success and prepare pupils extremely thoroughly for their next schools. The curricular experience in ICT provides opportunities for pupils to acquire independent discovery techniques and very competent skills in science, mathematics and geography, seen in work on the analysis of information where pupils were illustrating their results in bar and pie charts. The excellent PSHCE programme successfully supports the aims of the school. Pupils said that time spent with their teacher discussing matters important to them was of particular value.
- 2.4 Curriculum planning throughout the school is thorough and supported by detailed policy documents. Schemes of work are comprehensive, both for the medium and long term, and take account of assessment data. Classroom assistants work closely with teachers and are deployed well in supporting individual or small groups of pupils in their development of reading and numeracy skills.
- 2.5 The physical education and games provision gives opportunity for pupils to acquire good health and fitness. All pupils have access to a wide range of sports and this includes opportunities to represent the school in competitive games and in other sporting activities. Good use is made of local facilities such as the swimming pool and Acton Park. Music is enjoyed throughout the school and many pupils receive specialist instrumental or singing lessons. The programme of drama and art ensures that pupils' creative needs are met at all ages.
- 2.6 The differing capabilities of pupils are well served by the setting system. A careful blend of whole-class teaching and ability-based groups ensures that work is well matched to each pupil's ability. The provision in EYFS reflects the school's broad objectives and ethos, aiming to meet the individual needs of each child in a stimulating learning environment, with a particular emphasis on the happy child being an effective learner. Across the school pupils'

social and emotional development is given a high priority whilst careful attention is paid to their emerging literacy and numeracy skills. Specialist teaching in a range of subjects from Year 3 greatly enhances pupils' education, as seen in science, physical education and games, ICT, French and music.

- 2.7 Pupils participate with enthusiasm in a good variety of voluntary extra-curricular activities which provide opportunities to extend or develop their interests beyond the classroom. The level of staff contribution and pupil participation is considerable. A well-planned programme includes visitors and parents from the professions sharing their experiences with pupils. The pupils' educational experience is further enriched by opportunities to participate in educational visits and expeditions. Annual residential trips to Suffolk, York, the Isle of Wight and Normandy for all pupils from Year 3 and above, offer opportunities to extend their knowledge of places, people and cultures.
- 2.8 Pupils are prepared well for each stage of learning as they move through the school. Those moving from Year 2 to Year 3 visit their new classrooms and the parents meet with teachers who outline the school's expectations of their children for the year ahead. Pupils are confident and articulate and develop a good awareness of the world around them. The opportunity to develop leadership and take responsibility within the school includes librarians or positions within the house system. Serving on the school council and participation in assemblies and drama productions also prepare pupils well for adult life. Pupils are successfully prepared for the next stage of their education as they move to a senior school. All parents of children due to leave the school meet with the headmistress to discuss the choice of next school best suited to their children's needs and abilities. They receive detailed information explaining entry methods and requirements for schools in the local area. Preparation for entry examinations is thorough, including interview practice and additional lessons.
- 2.9 Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) and those with special educational needs (SEN) through individual support is excellent. The pupils are identified very early on through teacher observation and school assessment. Individual educational plans are drawn up and are appropriate to the individual's needs. Guidance is given to the teachers by special educational needs co-ordinators regarding strategies to teach pupils in the classroom, as well as providing support in either small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Occupational and speech and language therapists regularly visit the school to support these pupils. The school makes excellent provision for pupils for whom English is not their first language. Programmes of learning are individually tailored to meet each pupil's needs. The school has developed a gifted and talented policy. For those identified, an effective structure is in place within the classroom and further supported by additional activities including extensive exposure to exercises in thinking skills, investigations and puzzle solving.
- 2.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.11 Since the previous inspection, standards of learning and achievement have improved, and, overall, they are outstanding. The school consistently aims to prepare pupils for their next stage of education by inspiring them to achieve their full potential within an environment in which they feel secure and happy.

- 2.12 Throughout the school pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding, which they are encouraged to use not only in their subjects but in other activities. Pupils show high levels of creative and critical thinking, which are developed and applied as a result of well-planned lessons and high quality teaching. Pupils' creativity is evident in music, ICT, drama, design and technology, art projects, clubs and activities. Many children play a musical instrument and all children in Year 2 learn to play the recorder. The school orchestra plays at many concerts. Drama lessons are very popular and standards are high. All pupils are encouraged to take part in school productions.
- 2.13 Pupils are articulate and confident speakers and they are challenged to use high level reasoning skills to argue cogently and think logically. Their listening skills are strong and they are able to ask intelligent questions and draw equally intelligent conclusions. This was evident in a philosophy lesson where pupils discussed 'Why are people good?' In the EYFS, children make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points and most reach or exceed the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception year.
- 2.14 Literacy standards are very high and pupils realise the value of reading. This is evident from the considerable use made of the school libraries. These are much improved since the previous inspection, with an increased stock of books and a computerised Dewey system. New reading schemes and strategies have been introduced to support reading development across the whole school. Pupils also write confidently in a range of genres and they benefit from many opportunities to write imaginatively. As a result of encouragement and nurturing of pupils' talents, many individuals and groups of pupils achieve success in a number of areas. Pupils' poems have been published in the national school poetry anthologies and pupils have enjoyed considerable success with gold and silver awards being won in national competitions for writing. The 'mystery' in the library, is an idea initiated by the head of English: she offers a suggested mysterious start to a story and all pupils are invited to complete it and to display their writing for a wider audience to read.
- 2.15 Pupils' mathematical and numerical skills are strong. They have confidence and understanding in using these skills effectively in mathematics and elsewhere, when required. Pupils are very able at using and applying science, particularly in developing experiments in practical science, as was seen in a Year 3 class where they confidently set up an investigation to explore how different distances from an object affected the height of its shadow. Work in science is enabling pupils to use their critical analysis skills to assess each other's work. Pupils in Year 6 were preparing their entries for a national awards scheme, submitting investigative work on a range of selected topics including food packaging and beauty products.
- 2.16 There has been very considerable development of the use of ICT in the school since the previous inspection and the school is one of only four independent schools in the country to have been awarded the Becta ICT Mark, which recognises the school's achievements in the use of ICT. Pupils use ICT confidently across the whole curriculum and standards are extremely high. As well as presenting written work and illustrations, pupils are highly skilled at producing graphs, tables, video clips, sound recordings, computerised presentations, podcasts and animations. Pupils are also able to share many aspects of their work with parents through the school website.
- 2.17 Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their abilities. Over the past three years for which comparative data is available, results in national tests for seven year-olds show performance in reading and mathematics to be far above, and in writing to be above, the national average for all maintained primary schools. Results in national tests for eleven year-olds over the same period in English, mathematics and science show pupils' performance to be far above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Pupils' success in gaining

scholarships and entrance to the schools of their choice is further evidence that over the course of their time at the school, pupils, including those with LDD and SEN, and those for whom English is an additional language, make considerable progress.

- 2.18 There is no significant difference in the relative attainment of boys and girls in different classes or subjects. The ambiance in classrooms is relaxed but focused on working hard. Pupils' attitudes for work and study are very positive. Whatever their ability, pupils are encouraged to be competent learners. They show perseverance with very little need for prompting. Pupils settle sensibly to their work, ready to apply themselves to the tasks of the lesson, often for long periods of time. Pupils' skills in note-taking, study and organisation are exceptionally well-developed throughout the school as seen in many subject areas. The presentation of books is exemplary. They work well together in pairs, in groups or alone. In music, Year 2 groups were seen to work very co-operatively to produce their own songs or to listen to others.
- 2.19 The competitive sports programme is extensive with regular matches and competitions for boys and girls of almost every age group. Many sport clubs are held before and after school. At national level, the school achieved much success in the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools' swimming gala. Pupils take great pride in their achievements and those of their peers as they represent the school.
- 2.20 The school values individual and group achievements. Excellence in all areas is clearly a focus for the curriculum and valued within the ethos of the school. Although pupils are keen to achieve, they are also ready to help others and share ideas. They described the work as fun; they take a determined approach to their studies and set themselves the highest of standards in all they do at school. Pupils are well motivated and their eagerness to achieve successful outcomes is obvious. Another striking feature is the pupils' enjoyment of their lessons; they show great interest, and even passion, when talking about their subjects and the programme of extra-curricular activities. The house system offers further opportunities for different age groups to share and work together including academic, creative and sporting pursuits.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.21 The quality of the pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, including in the EYFS, is outstanding, building strongly on the good practice in place at the previous inspection. This underlines the school's aims; it is implicit in the family ethos of the school and the positive examples set by staff in a happy and caring environment. The positive parental and pupil responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires are a testament to the school's success in this area.
- 2.22 Pupils have a well-developed spiritual awareness shown in their appreciation of events throughout the year. For example, during an ICT session, Year 5 pupils created a podcast, identifying that religious diversity is an important characteristic of Chiswick. Pupils responded with maturity to the use of silence in assembly, and the recent 'chicks' cam', which followed the live hatching of hens' eggs and the chicks' development, created rich opportunities for contemplation and wonder. The school has made significant improvement in the range and style of assemblies since the previous inspection. Art work around the school highlights pupils' fascination with the process of creating an original piece of art and their obvious pride and enjoyment in the results, as was seen during a Year 6 ceramics lesson when pupils designed and painted tiles in the style of a chosen past artist or designer. Pupils take an active part in sharing their work and enjoy the rich variety of awards, leaves and golden apples for their 'recognition tree'.

- 2.23 Pupils support each other well. Acknowledgement and celebration of success, and praise for something well done, are all part of the school's life through which the pupils develop self-confidence and self-belief and so fostering a good level of self-knowledge. They learn to value and respect themselves and others and show tolerance through their studies.
- 2.24 The provision for moral development is outstanding. Pupils have a strong moral code which is upheld by the staff and permeates the daily life at school. Pupils are confident that any behavioural issues will be dealt with promptly and believe that all children are dealt with fairly. Pupils think independently and consider world issues, along with an understanding of the needs of people in other countries. They learn the importance of being responsible for their actions. Through mutual respect and courtesy, they understand the value of friendship, responsibility and relationships, and so develop respect for the law within the school and in the wider community. They are trusted with increasing freedom and independence as they move through the school, which they respond to with excellent maturity. Years 5 and 6 girls were carrying out independent research and project-planning activities during break and ensured that they were back promptly for the start of the subsequent lesson. Behaviour within the classroom and around school is of a consistently high standard, with staff and pupils sharing a warm and respectful trust.
- 2.25 Pupils demonstrate excellent social awareness and responsibility. EYFS children learn by example from the staff how to treat one another with consideration and good manners. In the rest of the school, pupils show good understanding and courtesy in their attitudes to those who have difficulty with their work or who have outstanding attributes. All members of the school are valued and encouraged to participate in concerts, drama productions and residential trips. They have a very good understanding of their roles in school and are proud of their successful school council which has effected real change in the playground and within the school buildings. The house system strengthens the sense of corporate identity and teachers provide excellent opportunities for house captains and the older girls to exercise a supportive role for younger pupils. Opportunities in EYFS to exercise responsibility, such as when helping to serve their friends at lunch time, are much enjoyed. Throughout the school, the PSHCE programme enhances pupils' personal development which is further broadened as they learn about public institutions, social services, the wider community and how they should take their part in it. Pupils take responsibility seriously, whether as head girl, head of house, 'blog' editor, team captain, librarian or member of the school council. Throughout the school, social responsibility is celebrated through the commitment to the 'Love in a Box' charity, supporting orphaned children in Eastern European countries, and regular recycling. Voting to select the school charity, and deciding on individual class charities, allows an understanding of democratic processes, and all link well with the idea of caring for others less fortunate. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- 2.26 Pupils develop culturally very successfully; they display a strong interest in and respect for their own and others' cultures. They are tolerant, open-minded and keen to engage with and understand cultural differences. Pupils' understanding of their own culture and its relationship to others develops effectively through lessons in RE, PSHCE, music, art, dance and drama and by visits to museums, theatres and historical sites. The general knowledge programme of study engenders a genuine understanding and respect for the wider world. Use of poetry, drama and music throughout the school supports this empathy. In the EYFS children's understanding of the wider world is successfully developed through topics which bring representatives from the community into school. The annual 'International Food Day' and the programme of educational visits make a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding and knowledge of other countries and their cultural diversity and traditions.

- 2.27 The school has worked hard to develop the beauty of the natural surroundings of the school environment and this makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, social and cultural development of pupils of all ages. Pupils appreciate and show respect for their surroundings.
- 2.28 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.29 The quality of teaching is good and frequently outstanding. The good practices seen at the previous inspection have been maintained and developed. Many lessons are taught to the highest standards, meeting the needs of pupils of all abilities, allowing them to achieve high standards and success in their work. Teachers know their pupils extremely well; they are committed to them and provide them with generous levels of support and guidance which, in keeping with the school's aims, enable pupils to set high standards in all they undertake. Encouraged to strive to the best of their abilities, pupils work well independently, reflect thoughtfully and contribute openly and confidently when developing and exchanging ideas. In the EYFS, through planning and regular evaluation of learning, teaching ensures that each pupil receives suitable challenge. Throughout the school, those requiring additional support are quickly identified and are offered effective help in class. When necessary, guidance is sought from visiting therapists who liaise closely with teachers.
- 2.30 Lessons are thoughtfully planned. Teaching at all stages demonstrates considerable subject expertise, knowledge and understanding. The outstanding level of support provided by adults promotes effective progress and encourages good learning because teachers have a good understanding of pupils' ability and prior attainment. Throughout the school in the most successful lessons, careful attention is given to ensuring that effective methods are used to support learning, and pupils' progress is at least good. The great majority of lessons meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, including those with LDD, SEN and those for whom English is an additional language, and enable them to acquire new knowledge, make progress, increase their understanding and develop their skills. In most instances, pupils achieve good and, at times, high standards relative to their ability.
- 2.31 Good teaching and well-paced lessons stimulate many aspects of pupils' intellectual, physical and creative development, and, with time well used, they have good opportunities to engage in scientific inquiry and discovery. ICT is widely used to enhance learning in all subjects across the curriculum.
- 2.32 Resources are generous and of good quality, effectively supporting the teaching and needs of the pupils across the school. ICT is particularly well resourced. Interactive white boards, which are readily available throughout the school, are very well used to enhance both teaching and learning.
- 2.33 The colourful displays of pupils' work around the school in corridors, public spaces and in classrooms support learning and celebrate pupils' achievements.
- 2.34 Marking is regular and thorough. The good assessment and record-keeping procedures seen at the time of the previous inspection have been improved and make a positive contribution to effective teaching. Teachers use their assessment data to help individual pupils make progress. Pupils understand the marks and grades used by their teachers. In discussion, pupils confirmed that they understood the methods of marking and commented on the valuable addition of oral comments by teachers in the classroom which offer additional help and encouragement. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on marking and discuss improvements with teachers. Classroom behaviour is exemplary, with pupils always willing to add to class

learning in a most constructive manner when invited to discuss or to offer their own views and ideas, which they do with enjoyment.

- 2.35 Academic monitoring is a strong feature of the school. Processes are used to evaluate pupils' performance throughout the school, in line with its aims and targets. All data is stored on a data administration system. This is an outstanding system that tracks individual pupils' performance allowing staff to monitor pupils' progress as they move through the school.
- 2.36 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care and the attention given to the welfare of pupils is outstanding throughout the school. The school has built on these strengths since the previous inspection. There is a strong commitment to promoting sensible behaviour and respect for all who are in the school as well as providing a happy safe and caring environment, in line with the school's aim to enable pupils to respect peoples ideas and beliefs and to develop worthwhile relationships with others so becoming responsible members of society. Measures and procedures to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils are comprehensive and successful. They are constantly reviewed. There is a very well-planned structure to ensure staff are supported in the day-to-day pastoral care of their pupils. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and among pupils, is excellent. All staff work to support each child to discover his or her personal strengths and weaknesses, academic and non-academic, social and personal.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, adults provide very good role models for pupils through working harmoniously together. Teaching and non-teaching staff are polite to pupils and pupils respond courteously. Older pupils care and take responsibility for younger pupils. For example, in a house meeting older pupils supported younger pupils who were trying to build a tall tower in a competition.
- 3.3 The system for pastoral care is highly effective, with organisation and structure to promote good behaviour, consideration for others and discipline in all areas of school life. A Year 3 pupil said, "The school is very good at sorting out problems." EYFS children have a close and secure relationship with their teachers and know who to approach if they have a problem. The school's behaviour and discipline policy includes sections on rewards and sanctions. Effective measures to guard against harassment and bullying are in place and set out methods to deal constructively with unacceptable behaviour when it occurs. Pupils feel secure and confident, and know that they can trust their teachers to help them resolve any concerns they may have.
- 3.4 The school provides very carefully balanced and nutritious meals which are cooked on site using locally bought fresh foods, encouraging pupils to adopt healthy eating habits. They enjoy their well-balanced school lunch, demonstrating an understanding of healthy food. Meals are monitored to ensure they are of very high quality and enjoyed by all. Provision for taking exercise is extensive through the curriculum for swimming, games and physical education and by moving around the site to the various locations for sport, assembly and music. The EYFS children understand the need for good hygiene and appreciate that being active keeps them healthy.
- 3.5 The overall system for health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors is well organised and very effective. EYFS staff are appropriately trained in paediatric first aid and, through circle times, instil in the children a sense of responsibility for looking after themselves. A full range of policies set out all school procedures and processes. Accidents and incidents are recorded with care and staff are kept well informed of the medical needs of pupils. All members of staff are trained first-aiders and a medical room is available. A health and safety committee meets informally every week and formally each half term. The school ensures that all staff know what to do in the care of an emergency either on or off site and ensures that all reasonable measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. Fire drills take place regularly and care is taken to ensure that pupils move safely around the

buildings and premises. Staff make pupils aware of what should happen in the event of a fire if they are carrying out an independent activity away from the classroom. Pupils are well supervised. Risk assessments are undertaken in all areas of the school and those for the health and safety of pupils on school trips are thorough and effective. Comprehensive policies include critical incident management.

- 3.6 The child protection policy and procedures are thorough, secure and successful. All staff, including non-teaching members of the team, have attended appropriate training. Statutory checks have been carried out on all staff. Planning for disabled access has been carefully considered, as has planning for teaching pupils with disabilities. The school fulfils its duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained.
- 3.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.8 The school has now established outstanding links with parents and the community. It clearly places significant value on the strengths of these relationships. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and is consistent with the school's aim to equip pupils as confident members of a rapidly changing society and that, within a challenging, safe and supportive environment, the school intends to offer pupils the opportunity to reach their true potential and to develop a mutual respect and concern for others which embodies the value of citizenship. Staff in the EYFS have developed strong links with parents and are continually seeking to reinforce and develop channels of communication between home and school.
- 3.9 In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents expressed their satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children, the worthwhile attitudes and values the school promotes and the high standards of behaviour achieved. In the EYFS, parents confirm how happy their children are in school and welcome the opportunity for informal liaison with staff at the end of each day. Parents and pupils were in almost unanimous agreement that the dedicated teaching enabled pupils to make good progress and they were happy with the range of subjects and extra-curricular activities. In discussion with pupils, the inspectors found broad agreement with those views expressed by parents. A small minority of parents indicated that they had some concern about the level of help for pupils with learning difficulties and about the way in which their concerns were handled. The inspection team considered these points and concluded that the quality of the provision for pupils who require learning support is greatly improved and that the school does its best to solve problems and ease anxieties.
- 3.10 Parents are given excellent and varied opportunities to be involved in the activities of the school. The parents' association enthusiastically promotes social contact amongst parents and friends of the school by organising events such as an autumn social evening for new parents, karaoke and quiz evenings and the summer fete. Parents feel welcome in the school and loyally support sporting, musical and other cultural events. The parents' association has appointed a charity co-ordinator who, with the help of the headmistress, arranges for pupils to choose and support a charity for which they vote. Parents are thus fully involved in promoting and supporting the charity fund-raising activities of the school and are also welcomed into the school to support further activities, such as gardening club and school day trips. The parent/staff choir and 'scratch' choirs constituting staff, parents and past pupils are popular innovations and perform at the school concert alongside choirs and orchestras formed by the pupils.

- 3.11 In the spring term, the school organises an afternoon for friends and family, so giving an opportunity for parents, grandparents and nannies to enjoy displays and examples of their children's work.
- 3.12 Throughout the school, reports are sent to parents three times a year. These are clear and informative, give a resumé of work across the curriculum and set targets for future improvement. Following receipt of the written reports, parents are invited into school for formal meetings with teachers. Parents are also appreciative of the ready access they have for additional informal meetings with staff, should the need arise. Pupils' homework diaries are another very useful means of communication between home and school. At the end of each academic year, parents are invited to the school for a familiarisation meeting, where the curriculum content of their child's academic programme for the following year is made known and explained.
- 3.13 The school documentation available to parents gives detailed information about the curriculum, policies and procedures. The school website successfully promotes the school and includes appropriate documentation and policies for parents and prospective parents. It also has a secure area for parents to view their children's work, circulars and further school information relating to current parents and pupils. A new development is the podcast, which broadcasts pupils' recent classwork, concerts and outings. Three virtual screens around the school display messages or video clips for staff, parents and pupils to see. Additionally, the school calendar, weekly newsletters and twice-yearly magazine, *The Apple Press*, keep parents up-to-date and celebrate the achievements of the school.
- 3.14 A comprehensive complaints procedure is available to parents; no formal complaints have been received. Parents' concerns are taken seriously and most problems are dealt with informally and as swiftly as possible.
- 3.15 The school's good links with the outside community provide excellent support for and enrichment of pupils' educational experiences. Links with other schools in the group allow joint residential trips to take place. Sports fixtures are arranged between the schools as well as with other schools. Choirs compete in local school and community music festivals and each year children's art work is exhibited at an arts festival.
- 3.16 Visitors, as well as parents, are invited into school to enhance the curriculum. These include community police and fire service representatives, visiting authors and local environmental enthusiasts.
- 3.17 The school supports a local church with collections taken at harvest and Christmas. Harvest gifts are donated to a home for the elderly and a charity which supports single mothers. The senior choir sings for local elderly residents and takes baskets of Christmas food, which they have helped to prepare. Once a year the school participates in the 'Mustard Cress' scheme where children fill shoeboxes with small gifts to be sent to disadvantaged children in Eastern European countries.
- 3.18 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The school is exceptionally well governed by the directors, who are highly committed to the good of the pupils, the school and its continuing development. They ensure that the school's aims are being met and that a high quality of education is provided. The high quality of governance has been maintained and built upon since the previous inspection.
- 4.2 An overriding concern of the directors is their aim to provide the best possible learning experience for all the pupils. They meet regularly and are determined, through prudent financial planning, to ensure that the school's accommodation and human and material resources are of the highest quality in order to meet pupils' educational needs. Such close attention to the needs of both school and pupils ensures that the aims of the school are fully met, allowing pupils to achieve excellence and success in a wide range of learning experiences safely and within a well-resourced environment.
- 4.3 All directors have a thorough insight and a good working knowledge of the school through the continuous communication between one of the directors and the headmistress. In consultation with staff, including those in the EYFS, and senior managers, the directors are well informed and together they take a full part in the overall strategic planning, educational and staff development and management of the school, preserving the autonomy of the headmistress and providing critical support for her as necessary. Relationships with the headmistress and staff are very positive.
- 4.4 The directors take most seriously their responsibilities to sustain the ethos, quality and development of the school, and of ensuring its compliance with regulatory and legal requirements. They are well informed as to the responsibilities they carry for the welfare, health and safety of all the pupils and work closely with the school in the writing of policies, helping to evaluate their effectiveness through regular reviews. Directors also review the child protection policy and procedures annually. They involve themselves as much as is practicable in the life of the school.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. Structures are clear and comprehensive. The appointment of a deputy head since the previous inspection has allowed the headmistress to give more time to leading the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Leadership and management are strong and effective across the whole range of school activity, exercised always in a considerate and sensitive manner. The headmistress offers clear vision and together with a re-formulated senior leadership team allows significant delegation to take place. Senior staff, including heads of departments, are increasingly confident in their roles. Their ability to enthuse and motivate those in their departments and those around them is central in enabling pupils to be successful in their studies, achieve excellence and enjoy their learning. Such attention to detail extends to the high quality provision of pupils welfare, health and safety so ensuring that the schools aims are fully met and the ethos upheld. Leadership and management in the EYFS are effective.
- 4.6 The school's senior leadership team, which includes the head of EYFS, is well established and united in their overall focus of the school giving it clear sense of direction. They provide leadership of high quality in their own spheres of influence, setting high standards themselves and expecting the same from those for whom they are responsible. The school is

- aware that a minor inconsistency exists between some heads of department in fully understanding their roles and responsibilities. All staff feel involved in the school and part of its success and growth.
- 4.7 A very detailed and comprehensive school development plan, with achievable targets and covering a three-year period, documents areas for development with timescales and success criteria. Many targets have already been successfully achieved. Review dates are appropriately detailed. Senior managers together with one director share extensive consultation with all staff to ensure that planning is based on a thorough evaluation of current provision. Arising from the whole school development plan are detailed plans across the curriculum, including that for the EYFS, which support subjects with a view to their impact on pupils and the possible outcomes of proposed developments. Many new initiatives are now successfully in place and are beginning to impact on planning and pupil progress, for example assessment for learning and a more formal programme for whole school in-service training. The school is aware that the latter is not yet completely established and fully embedded in the day to day management of the school.
- 4.8 Appropriate, good quality, policies have been drawn up taking account of the different age groups and cover all aspects of school life. They provide detailed and appropriate guidance for staff and pupils and give parents a good understanding of the school's processes. The school regularly checks and reviews the effectiveness of its procedures in line with the school development plan. For example regular checks are made which focus on child protection and welfare, health and safety.
- 4.9 Management at all levels is highly successful in securing, supporting and motivating staff. Satisfactory in-service training opportunities, supported by a generous budget, are available to staff. Recruitment procedures are efficient and safe, and all checks on staff and regular assistants and visitors are applied fully and correctly. Procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning, for the evaluation of the work of departments and for professional review have been efficiently established. Induction arrangements for staff new to the school are excellent and effective. For newly qualified staff, the induction procedure extends to meet appropriate national guidelines. Staff morale is high and mutual support from managers throughout the school is very successful. A formal system for annual appraisal is in place, which serves to support individual teachers' professional development.
- 4.10 The school is located on one main site and has additional accommodation within easy walking distance. Teaching space is well used and accommodation is available for some specialist teaching. Libraries are well stocked though space is restricted for whole-class use. Outdoor games and swimming take place at local venues.
- 4.11 Routine administration is outstanding. Financial management by the bursar and her staff is detailed and clear. Budgeting procedures operate most effectively. Departmental needs are thoroughly analysed and priorities set. Prudent planning ensures that provision for material and human resources, and accommodation, is extremely good. Secretarial support for the varied activities of the school is excellent. The atmosphere in the school office is warm and welcoming towards visitors, staff, parents and pupils. Requests and enquiries are treated with courtesy and consideration, which matches the school's ethos. The playground and premises are very well maintained. Cleaners, caterers and maintenance staff take a great pride in the school and feel a part of its success.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

- 4.13 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Orchard House School has many outstanding features, meets its aims and aspirations exceedingly well and provides a high quality education for its pupils. The school prepares pupils extremely well for the next stage of their education through an excellent educational experience and through effective and frequently outstanding teaching. The inclusion of ICT in cross-curricular teaching is well established and allows pupils access both at home and at school to further their educational experiences. This enables pupils to learn and to achieve at a high level. Leadership and management are outstanding, supporting the aims of the school and giving it clear educational direction. The senior leadership team provides dynamic leadership. All staff are involved in the planning process though the school is aware that some strands of management have yet to be fully developed, including the formal planning for in-service training and the definitive roles and responsibilities of heads of department. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are outstanding, with a high degree of mutual respect promoting exemplary behaviour. Pupils are polite and courteous. They develop self-confidence, a sense of responsibility for themselves and others, and strong attitudes and beliefs. The school community is underpinned by strong family values which contribute to the outstanding quality of the pastoral care, the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, and very positive links with parents and the community.
- 5.2 Improvements since the previous ISI inspection in June 2003 are significant. All areas of concern have been resolved, most very successfully, such as the improvement in the training offered to teachers to update subject expertise as part of curriculum development, the balancing of the curriculum to improve provision for the teaching of science, RE, PSHCE and the major improvement to the library facilities. The school meets with greater regularity for assemblies, and weekly house meetings are held for all pupils.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses, but to improve its high quality provision further, it should take the following actions:
1. ensure that all heads of department have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities;
 2. ensure arrangements for whole school in-service training needs are more clearly identified and formally planned.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.
- 5.6 Any failures to meet EYFS requirements are detailed in Section 7.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 8th to 11th June 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with one of the directors, 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 a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 1st and 2nd June 2009 by one inspector. The inspector observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspector examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Frank Skipwith	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Rachel Eaton-Jones	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Paul Greenfield	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Angela Hartill	Former Head, HMC school
Mrs Janet Preece	Early Years Lead Inspector

7. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of Orchard House School consists of a Nursery and two Reception classes. Twenty three-year olds, who may attend full or part-time, attend The Nursery, which is a short walk away from the school. Forty-three children attend Reception classes on the main school site, sharing the grounds and facilities with the older pupils. Admission is in order of registration. Since the previous inspection by Ofsted in 2005, an outdoor classroom has been created and the school has increased its resources to promote diversity. Thirty-three pupils currently receive government funding. Two pupils require learning support and one receives help in learning English as an additional language. The EYFS is based partly on the Montessori system, for which the school is a training centre. The provision reflects the school's broad objectives and ethos, aiming to meet the individual needs of each child in a stimulating learning environment, with a particular emphasis on the happy child being an effective learner.
- 7.2 Provision is good with some excellent features. The EYFS succeeds well in its aims, through giving high priority to children's social and emotional development whilst paying careful attention to their emerging literacy and numeracy skills. The children are cared for very well. Staff regularly evaluate their practice in order to improve the children's learning experience. Strong links with parents and other agencies ensure children's needs are met. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their appreciation of the school's provision for their children. A typical response was, "The standard of teaching and pastoral care is exemplary".
- 7.3 Children make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points and most will reach or exceed the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception year. They express themselves clearly; many read proficiently and can write sentences independently. They demonstrate their facility with numbers whilst adding and subtracting buckets of sand outside. Progress is rapid because children develop high levels of curiosity and perseverance. They have particularly good computer skills, evident when they modified photographs to change their appearance. Whilst work with Montessori apparatus promotes independent learning, opportunities to investigate and solve problems are more limited. Children showed imagination when pretending to move as wild animals in a Nursery physical education (PE) lesson, though, on occasion, their creativity is reduced through over-directed activities.
- 7.4 Children's personal development is excellent. Their good behaviour reflects high expectations of mutual respect. Children understand how to keep safe, responding readily to adult guidance, such as when those in Nursery walk quietly with their partners to the nearby green for PE. They co-operate well, taking turns to use the computer and sharing their toys. The children understand the need for good hygiene, explaining that "germs on your hands get into your mouth when you eat", and appreciate that being active keeps them healthy. They enjoy their well-balanced school lunch, demonstrating an understanding of healthy food. Opportunities to exercise responsibility, such as when helping to serve their friends at lunch time, are much enjoyed. Children's understanding of the wider world is successfully developed through topics which bring representatives from the community into school, their regular walks around the locality and visits to a farm.
- 7.5 Committed staff, who use appropriate observations and assessments to plan activities, support children well in their learning. Each child receives suitable challenge due to thorough planning and regular evaluation of learning. The outside classroom, whilst providing activities in all areas, does not yet offer sufficient opportunities for children to explore and extend their learning from indoors. Children learn at an appropriate pace

because teachers use their assessments to establish flexible groups for activities such as sounds, handwriting and numbers. Those needing extra support are quickly identified. Their difficulties are addressed through effective support in class and, when necessary, by visiting therapists who liaise closely with teachers. Staff use praise and skilful questioning to encourage application and extend thinking. The enthusiasm and expertise of subject specialists in information and communication technology, art, music and PE enhance children's learning. Children's pride in their efforts and their self-esteem are strong because they may choose work to be displayed in their colourful classrooms or to go into their 'Best Books'. Learning resources, particularly the Montessori equipment, are well-organised to enable independent access. Lack of regular provision for thematic role play, however, reduces opportunities to develop, through play, their understanding of the world about them. Parents receive regular and useful information about their children's progress through termly reports and curriculum evenings. They describe how happy their children are in school and welcome the opportunity for informal liaison with staff at the end of the day.

- 7.6 Children's welfare is promoted extremely well. The high level of priority given to promoting good health and safe practices is reflected in careful risk assessments, regularly reviewed, and the good condition of toys and furniture. Staff are appropriately trained in paediatric first aid and, through circle times, instil in the children a sense of responsibility for looking after themselves. They show them by example how to treat one another with consideration and good manners. Children have a close and secure relationship with their teachers and know who to approach if they have a problem. To assist the settling in process, Early Years staff visit those nurseries from whom the children transfer.
- 7.7 Leadership and management of the EYFS are strong. Policies and procedures are updated regularly and thorough records kept. Teachers and assistants work well together, encouraged, through performance management and regular access to training, to develop their professional expertise and contribute to school development planning. Resources are generally plentiful, of good quality and used effectively. All systems to safeguard the children such as recruitment checks are conscientiously implemented. Regular self-evaluation and monitoring enable staff to identify priorities for future development. Useful links have been made with the local authority to increase the staff's skills and understanding of the EYFS. Excellent relationships with parents ensure that children receive a confident start in school.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.8 To improve further the good quality of its provision, the setting should:
1. continue to develop the outdoor classroom by providing more opportunities for the children to extend themes from inside, such as role-play and investigation;
 2. plan a greater range of activities where children may exercise their creativity with self-chosen materials.
- 7.9 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.