

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Cranford House School

Full Name of the School	Cranford House School
DCSF Number	931/6083
Registered Charity Number	280883
Address	Moulsford, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 9HT.
Telephone Number	01491 651218
Fax Number	01491 652557
Email Address	office@cranfordhouse.oxon.sch.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Claire Hamilton
Chairman of Governors	Mr Richard Bray
Age Range (of the whole school)	3 to 16
Gender	Mixed 3 to 7, Girls 7 to 16
Inspection Dates	9th to 12th November 2009
Early Years Age Range	3 to 5
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	19th and 20th October 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.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Cranford House is an independent, non-selective day school for boys aged from three to seven and for girls from three to sixteen. It is situated in a rural fourteen acre setting in the Thames Valley between Oxford and Reading; the school was founded in 1931 and moved to its present site in 1954. It remained in private ownership until 1980, when it became a Charitable Trust, administered by a board of governors. Until 1980, the school was a member of The Parents' National Education Union (PNEU) and followed its prescribed curriculum. Although PNEU membership has lapsed, the school continues to regard its ethos as being firmly rooted in the PNEU philosophy and its values, with an emphasis on recognising each pupil as an individual. The school is affiliated to the Church of England, and it admits pupils of all faiths and no faith. The accommodation has been adapted and extended over the last twenty years. The Nursery building and the Reception classrooms for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are situated close to the Lower school and have their own separate and enclosed outside areas. The most recent refurbishments include additional provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and after-school care, and relocation of the Centre for Individual Development.
- 1.2 The school's six aims are described in the staff handbook and on the school's website. Cranford House School seeks to develop to the full the potential of all pupils in a family-orientated framework, by building on their strengths, helping them with their weaknesses, and offering encouragement, support and guidance. It places emphasis on all-round education, tailored to the needs of pupils of differing abilities. The school also aims to cultivate self-knowledge in its pupils, side-by-side with an unselfish attitude to others and an awareness of their role in the community.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the number of pupils on roll was 344; forty-three of these are boys aged three to seven. Sixty children are in the EYFS, one more than at the time of the EYFS inspection. Thirty-two of these are in the Nursery and usually attend on a flexible part-time basis. One hundred and thirty-six are in Years 1 to 6 and 148 in Years 7 to 11. The school is divided into Lower, Junior and Senior schools, but the three sections operate as a single, all-through school. The school is non-selective but all prospective pupils are assessed to ensure that the school can meet their needs. Boys leave at seven; most of them move to local independent day and boarding schools. Girls leaving at sixteen proceed to further education.
- 1.4 Standardised tests administered by the school indicate that the overall ability profile of pupils is above the national average. However, the range of ability is broad; it includes a small number of pupils whose ability is below or well below the national average, as well as a significant proportion whose ability is well above or far above the national average. Overall, if pupils are performing in line with their abilities, they can be expected to achieve results in their GCSE examinations that are above the national average for all maintained secondary schools.
- 1.5 The pupils travel from within a twenty-mile radius of the school, and come from a range of rural and urban backgrounds. All pupils currently attending the school have English as their first language. At the time of the inspection the school had no pupils with a statement of special educational need. Fifty-nine pupils were on the school's internal register of learning difficulties and/or disabilities and fifty-two on the gifted and talented register. The recently created Centre for Individual Development incorporates the school's learning support provision and the gifted and talented programme.

- 1.6 The headmistress has been in post for five years. The current chairman assumed office in 2006 and a new director of finance and facilities was appointed in April 2009. The previous inspection by ISI was in 2003. An Ofsted inspection of nursery and after-school care took place in 2007.
- 1.7 National curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.
- 1.8 See section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a rich and varied educational experience of high quality. It fulfils its aim to develop the potential of each pupil within a supportive, family orientated framework. It has maintained and built upon the good standards evident at the time of the last inspection. The EYFS setting provides a stimulating environment in which imaginatively planned activities enable children to make excellent progress.
- 2.2 The broad and balanced curriculum supports effectively the development of pupils' academic, technical, physical and creative skills. Within and beyond the curriculum, careful provision is made for the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Speaking and listening skills are fostered well and outstanding opportunities are provided in music. The gradual transition from mainly class teaching in the Lower school to predominantly specialist teaching by Year 6, and the use of setting for English and mathematics in the Junior school are well managed.
- 2.3 In Years 1 to 6, as in Years 7 to 9, the curriculum encompasses the full range of National Curriculum subjects and is extended to include drama, religious education and modern foreign languages. The timetable for Years 10 and 11 is carefully constructed to ensure that almost all can study at least three of their four option choices; the majority can access all four. The number of courses pursued to GCSE varies between eight and eleven, based on individual ability projections in nationally standardised tests.
- 2.4 The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme is detailed and well planned. It confirms the strong emphasis the school places on pupils' personal development. At all stages, a well-planned and relevant programme of special events, visitors to school and educational visits enrich the curriculum. Recently, Year 1 visited Didcot Railway Centre, as part of their transport topic. The Year 10 GCSE geography group's residential trip strengthened their understanding of the varied physical features of the landscape in North Wales.
- 2.5 At all stages of the school, a substantial number of co-curricular activities significantly enrich pupils' educational experience. In the Lower school, these include multi-sport skills, sewing and drama. Junior school activities range from judo to science club and, for Years 5 and 6 include a popular adventure service challenge. For pupils in the Senior school, the many activities available include aerobics, fencing and dance and drama. Throughout the school, pupils are offered numerous sporting and musical activities. Links with the community have been forged through visits by different groups to the local fire station, to RAF Benson and to old people's homes nearby. Pupils participate in concerts, literary competitions and a plethora of local games fixtures. In Year 10, twenty pupils are participating in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Useful work experience is provided for Year 11 and is followed by careful evaluation.
- 2.6 Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Teachers communicate well and informative records are kept as pupils move up the school. This ensures that their progress is monitored and their individual needs are understood. The transition from the EYFS to Year 1 is well managed. Towards the end of their last term in Year 2, girls benefit from a taster day spent in Year 3. Boys are prepared well for their move from Cranford House at the end of Year 2. Year 7 induction takes place before the official start of the autumn term when new girls become more familiar with their surroundings and become better acquainted with each other during a busy week-end of activities. Pupils in the Senior school are thoroughly supported by a comprehensive and detailed careers programme,

covering advice on the choice of school for Years 12 and 13, preliminary university guidance and broader careers advice from local consultants. Year 11 pupils testified to the thoroughness of the support they had been given in planning the next stage of their education.

- 2.7 The curriculum is effectively planned. In all sections of the school, planning is thorough and schemes of work are detailed. Curriculum review meetings are regular. A detailed options booklet gives clear guidance for choice of GCSE subjects.
- 2.8 The school's Centre for Individual development (CID) is a particular strength. It provides excellent learning support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers in the CID liaise well with all teachers about pupils' individual difficulties. Such consultation, combined with small class sizes and in the Lower and Junior schools, additional help from teaching assistants, ensures that pupils receive a high level of continuing support in the classroom. Provision is innovative; it includes small literacy booster groups for the youngest pupils to support skills development as well as courses in learning strategies and thinking skills for pupils further up the school. Provision for the most able pupils and those identified as gifted and talented is a developing area.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 Pupils are well educated and achieve good standards in relation to their ages and abilities. The school fulfils its aim to recognise pupils' individual strengths and to maximise their potential. As a result, pupils are competent and confident learners who sustain high levels of concentration. Throughout the school, application and perseverance are clear characteristics of the pupils' approach to their learning in all areas of the curriculum including co-curricular activities. The good standards of learning and behaviour evident at the time of the last inspection have been maintained; detailed systems for the monitoring of learning and teaching have since been introduced. In the EYFS, the quality of pupils' learning and development is outstanding.
- 2.11 Throughout the school, pupils receive good grounding in the knowledge, skills and understanding they require; they become increasingly adept at applying their knowledge and thinking as they move through the school. In the Lower and Junior schools, pupils achieve well and make good progress. They listen carefully, explain their ideas clearly and develop the ability to think critically. By Year 6, they are fluent readers and can write successfully in a range of styles. They use mathematical skills confidently and have a sound grasp of scientific concepts. Across the curriculum, whether creating graphs, writing letters, or explaining a scientific process, pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills well. ICT skills are used effectively for research, data handling and the presentation of work. Pupils show creativity in their writing and in vibrant and confidently executed art.
- 2.12 In the Senior school, there is a significant range of learning and achievement. When pupils are given opportunities for independent learning and critical thinking, relative to their ability, they respond enthusiastically to the challenge. In an innovative assembly presentation, girls from Years 7 to 11 used drama, music and well-designed costumes to reinforce their message about recycling. However, evidence of pupils' critical thinking skills was limited. Nonetheless, by Year 11, they are confident and articulate young women who can apply their knowledge and well-developed skills across the curriculum.

- 2.13 There are no significant differences in relative attainment of pupils of different abilities, or in different areas of the curriculum, or at different stages of the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress, because of the strong support they receive in their individual lessons and in the classroom. Boys and girls in the Lower school achieve equally well. Sometimes, and particularly in the Senior school, the most able are not given the opportunity to demonstrate their best level of achievement, because tasks are not sufficiently challenging.
- 2.14 In the Lower and Junior schools, no externally marked national tests are taken. A range of nationally standardised tests used by the school confirms good levels of achievement. Results in GCSE over the last three years for which comparative data is available, have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. They testify to a substantial improvement in A/A* results during this period. Standardised measures indicate that pupils' progress in Years 9 to 11 is well above national norms. This represents good achievement relative to pupils' abilities.
- 2.15 Pupils benefit greatly from the opportunities they are given to participate and succeed as individuals and in groups in a wide range of activities. Their level of achievement across a wide range of activities, sporting, aesthetic and creative is a strength of the school. They are well supported by an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and highly committed staff.
- 2.16 Girls enjoy success in, singing and instrumental music in examinations of the Trinity Guildhall and Associated Board Music Examinations. A high proportion of results are at merit or distinction level. In music and drama pupils benefit from opportunities to work collaboratively throughout the school. Recent successful productions include a Nativity play by the Lower school, *Splash*, a musical comedy from the Junior school and a vibrant and exciting presentation of *Guys and Dolls*. Music groups and choirs perform frequently in school and in outside events including the Dorchester-on-Thames Festival Schools Concert and the Wantage Music festival. The jazz ensemble and choirs joined pupils from a local school to sing the Fauré Requiem. Two pupils have places in the National Girls' Choir, and one is a member of the National Children's Orchestra.
- 2.17 Pupils participate in numerous sporting activities. Lower school pupils enjoy the Under Sevens football tournament. Junior school girls pitch their skills against local maintained and independent schools in a range of sports, including cross country running and gymnastics. Senior school pupils participate in many local and regional sporting events and have been selected at a national level in synchronised swimming, rowing, show jumping and fencing. In the Oxfordshire Schools Science Day (Years 7 to 9) competition a pupil was awarded a Rutherford Appleton Laboratory Prize for excellence in science. Girls in Year 10 have undertaken demanding First Challenge trips to Norway and Morocco. Pupils engage in many successful charitable fund raising ventures helping them to gain a wider perspective.
- 2.18 Pupils are competent learners who are keen to develop their learning skills. When opportunities for independent learning are provided, pupils respond to them with enthusiasm. However, across the curriculum in the Senior school their ability to take notes, study and organise their work independently is inconsistent. Pupils settle down rapidly in lessons and apply themselves to the task in hand. They are highly motivated, sustain concentration and persevere. In discussion and in practical tasks they are keen to support each other in their learning. They work well in pairs or small groups to consolidate knowledge or enhance newly-acquired skills. Senior school pupils find peer assessment a valuable educational experience and resource.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.19 The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school and in the EYFS is outstanding. The high quality of relationships and the high levels of tolerance and understanding ensure that the school fulfils its aim to cultivate pupils' self-knowledge with an unselfish attitude to others and an awareness of their role in the community. The standards evident at the last inspection have been enhanced.
- 2.20 Pupils' spiritual development is strong and effectively nurtured. In collective worship, pupils benefit from regular opportunities to explore beliefs and values and to play an active part, often through music and drama, in assembly presentations. The recent Remembrance Day service, enhanced by girls' instrumental music, offered time for personal reflection and a chance to consider the concept of sacrifice. In religious studies lessons, pupils consider the beliefs and values of Christianity and other faiths. Year 1 pupils benefited from the opportunity to explore the Jewish faith first hand with a Jewish family. Opportunities to visit Moultsford Parish Church deepen pupils' understanding of the Christian faith and the values that underpin the school's ethos. For Lower school pupils, their participation in a Christingle service and making their own Christingle oranges beforehand was memorable. Pupils develop a sense of personal worth because their achievements are celebrated; they feel valued and their self-esteem is high. Pupils are sensitive to the aesthetic qualities of art, literature and music. Sixty girls sang mass in St Mark's Venice and took the opportunity to explore the art and music in the city. Pupils are aware and appreciative of the natural beauty of their surroundings. At school, quiet courtyards and green areas are features that give space for personal reflection at appropriate times of day.
- 2.21 Pupils have excellent moral awareness and understand the difference between right and wrong from an early age. They understand and abide by the rules that govern the school community. They are polite, courteous and are sensitive to the effects of their behaviour on others. The moral code is clear; the youngest pupils follow the Golden Rules and for older pupils appropriate codes of conduct place the emphasis firmly on the positive. At all stages pupils reflect thoughtfully on moral values. A periodic focus throughout the school on one particular value reinforces moral development. One younger pupil's understanding of the virtue of tolerance was reflected in the observation that life would be boring if we were all the same. Moral values are discussed in PSHCE lessons and are highlighted in assemblies. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils contributed enthusiastically to a stimulating discussion on prejudice and discrimination. Relative to their ages, all pupils show a strong awareness of environmental issues. They take good care of their surroundings, as is reflected in the fact that the school grounds are free of litter.
- 2.22 Pupils have an outstanding sense of social responsibility. They flourish in a supportive community, with strongly inclusive values. The qualities of cooperation, commitment and respect for one another are heightened through the shared experiences of playing in teams and taking part in plays, assemblies and musical events. Pupils' responsibility for each other is taken very seriously throughout the school. A buddy system ensures that pupils are well supported when they enter the Junior school; older girls read with younger pupils to the benefit of both. Senior school pupils show confidence as they take on wide ranging and significant responsibilities as house captains and team leaders, and in many other roles. They complete practical and organisational tasks conscientiously and fulfil a caring role in relation to younger pupils most effectively. In the school council, girls learn to participate in democracy at work. At appropriate stages, through their PSHCE lessons, pupils learn about the local community; they visit, and are visited by, public services to enhance their understanding of the importance of these services to the community. Staff reinforce and share the high social principles of the school through the quality of their relationships with pupils and by their concern for the welfare of all those involved in the school community.

- 2.23 Cultural awareness is excellent. Pupils consistently demonstrate a respect and appreciation for their own and other cultures. Music, drama and art play an important part in the life of the school and pupils' aesthetic appreciation is heightened in lessons and through the many events that enrich the curriculum. They benefit greatly from opportunities to contribute to assemblies and from their participation in concerts and plays and events such as the inter-house poetry and drama festival. Cultural diversity is celebrated in lessons as well as assemblies. This was evident in art with the design of Jewish Seder plates, and lamps for celebrations of Eid-ul-Fitr. In a Year 5 project on India, pupils produced informative booklets on traditions and life in that country. Numerous fund-raising events for charities also further pupils' understanding of problems and issues facing other cultures. They are encouraged to look outwards, and the many trips they make to destinations in this country and further afield are instrumental in broadening their perspective.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.25 The quality of teaching is good overall, and contributes successfully to the school's aim to realise every pupil's true potential. The school has built upon the good standards evident at the time of the last inspection; however, it is still the case that some teaching, particularly in the Senior school, is not sufficiently challenging. Teaching is supported by strong systems of assessment.
- 2.26 In all sections of the school teaching is frequently good and occasionally outstanding and in the Lower and Junior schools, the large majority of teaching is good or better. A wide range of teaching strategies extends all pupils' learning effectively. Questioning is skilful; it draws pupils into discussion and matches the level of questioning to their individual abilities. Teaching encourages pupils to apply themselves and to play an active part in their learning. Whether directing pupils in the use of a variety of apparatus to measure and determine a range of temperatures in Year 5, or guiding musical composition in a GCSE lesson, teachers foster carefully the confidence and skills pupils require to work independently and to be creative. A well-planned team challenge involved all Junior school pupils in a 'Moon Mission' and required them to think imaginatively as they constructed mechanisms to launch portable orbs (ping-pong balls) onto a landing pad.
- 2.27 However, in a significant number of lessons, particularly in the Senior school, teaching, while satisfactory was less effective. The pace was too slow and the teaching although methodical, did not question pupils rigorously in order to deepen their understanding.
- 2.28 Throughout the school, teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. Whether discussing the Civil Rights Movement, or the intricacies of chemical bonding, the genuine enthusiasm they transmit for their particular subject or stage of education promotes effective learning. They plan lessons carefully and provide activities that meet pupils' varying needs. Teachers relate well to their pupils and expect them to work hard. They create a purposeful but relaxed atmosphere in which pupils behave well, are responsive and enjoy learning. Senior school pupils described lessons as fun, but focused.

- 2.29 Teaching is supported by a wide and appropriate range of resources. Textbooks and equipment are well chosen. Teachers make good use of interactive white boards. Whether explaining a new concept, playing a mathematical game or exploring an internet site, teachers use the boards confidently and often imaginatively to engage pupils in tasks. Good planned use is made of the ICT suite.
- 2.30 The quality of teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high and, as a result, they progress rapidly. In individual lessons in the school's Centre for Individual Development, teachers use teaching strategies which are well matched to individual needs and learning styles. Planning is meticulous, detailed independent education plans are compiled and followed carefully. All teachers provide constructive, continuing support, because good formal and informal communication ensures that they are fully aware of pupils' individual needs.
- 2.31 Pupils' progress is evaluated against national norms through the use of nationally standardised tests at all stages of the school and in public examinations in the Senior school. These tests are an important component of thorough and rigorous systems of assessment that are used effectively in the planning of work and the monitoring of pupils' progress throughout the school. Meetings to track progress and set targets are regular. An individual on-going portfolio of work in Years 1 and 2 and half term assessments for effort and achievement in academic subjects allow progress to be assessed and monitored. This detailed assessment also helps to identify the specific needs of individual pupils including the gifted and talented.
- 2.32 In the Senior school, the comprehensive system of data management and target-setting using base-line testing is effective in promoting progress and raising standards. Senior pupils acknowledged the value and effectiveness of the assessment system in helping them to aim higher and to understand how to improve. Examples they cited included the criteria for speaking and listening used by the English department.
- 2.33 In the Lower and Junior schools, most marking conforms to the comprehensive policy. Marking is legible, accurate and frequent. Comments are constructive and frequently include useful advice on how to improve. The 'two stars and a wish' system identifies the strengths in pupils' work and the next area to improve.
- 2.34 The Senior school has a clearly stated marking policy; it states that marking should include constructive comments to indicate how a pupil may improve performance. Nevertheless, few examples were discerned in the scrutiny of pupils' work. Marks, ticks and brief terms of encouragement predominated. However, pupils reported that there was often oral feedback on their work. The policy includes the use of collaborative marking. Pupils' views of this system were mixed. In Year 11, they said that it helped them to reflect on their own work, whereas younger pupils felt that its effectiveness for them depended on who did the marking.
- 2.35 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 Throughout the school and in the EYFS the quality of pastoral care and provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. It reflects the school's ethos of maintaining a safe, secure and caring environment, in which all members of the school community can thrive. The high standards evident at the time of the last inspection have been enhanced.
- 3.2 The school places a strong emphasis on pastoral care, recognising that it has a considerable influence on pupils' personal development, on their rate of academic progress and on their confidence to participate in co-curricular activities. Pupils of all ages feel appreciated, listened to and well-cared for.
- 3.3 Pastoral care is initially the responsibility of form tutors, who are a strong source of daily support and guidance throughout the school. In the Lower and Junior schools, tutors know their pupils very well; they utilise the direct link they have with parents at the beginning and end of the school day assiduously to enhance their understanding of their pupils.
- 3.4 In the Senior school, form tutors mentor their pupils capably. An established system of paired co-tutors is effective as a result of frequent liaison between the two tutors assigned to each form, in order to ensure that essential information is conveyed to tutees promptly. Pupils are directed to the most appropriate member of staff to give them specialist advice, whether relating to their studies, careers guidance or work experience. Pupils value the peer mentoring system which has recently been introduced, following comprehensive training given to Years 9 and 10 pupils.
- 3.5 Throughout the school, the house system is viewed as the keystone of the pastoral structure. House points are eagerly sought and house successes genuinely celebrated. The house to which younger pupils belong enjoys close links to the one which they will join, when they transfer to the Senior school, thereby ensuring smooth pastoral transition. Whilst an assigned member of staff oversees the houses, the daily management of house activities, including house assemblies, is the responsibility of Year 11 house leaders, ably assisted by their peers. Such arrangements afford excellent opportunities for developing skills of leadership, collaboration and co-operative working, which prove beneficial, during the pupils' time at the school and in preparing them for their future lives.
- 3.6 High standards of behaviour and courtesy are promoted and sustained in line with the school's aims. The Golden Rules for younger pupils, age-related codes of conduct for senior pupils, circle time, PSHCE lessons, assemblies and displays serve to promote impeccable behaviour. The high expectations of staff foster the development of self-discipline amongst pupils, so that recourse to formal disciplinary measures is rare. Excellent relationships within the school create a friendly, tolerant and harmonious community, in which mutual respect, helpfulness, support of each other and good manners are essential elements, engendering a finely tuned sense of moral values. Pupils appreciate the system of rewards, gauged appropriately to their ages, including the headmistress's awards.
- 3.7 The school has a detailed anti-bullying policy, which includes measures to prevent cyber bullying. Pupils are confident that, were an instance of bullying to occur, it would be dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

- 3.8 The school undertakes the necessary measures to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare, health and safety for all ages. Designated child protection officers in each part of the school are appropriately trained. All staff, including non-teaching and auxiliary colleagues participate in a well-established training programme which ensures they understand the procedures to follow should an instance of child protection arise. Two designated governors have oversight of this area of the school's provision. The necessary recruitment checks are made in accordance with the school's safe recruitment policy. The admission and attendance registers are correctly completed and any unexplained absence is rapidly investigated. Detailed and careful measures are implemented to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils who stay for after-school care. A full disability plan is in place and recommendations are currently being acted upon, in order to increase accessibility throughout the school.
- 3.9 All measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are in place. The director of finance and facilities is responsible for their implementation and review. The health and safety committee meets regularly and their recommendations are acted upon promptly. Fire drills, which are conducted once a term, are meticulously recorded. Fire notices are prominently displayed to act as important reminders of routines to follow and all staff are trained in fire safety. Arrangements for minimising risks from other hazards are carried out effectively. Risk assessments for departments, activities, trips and expeditions are comprehensive; a clear structure is in place for reviewing and updating them annually.
- 3.10 Exemplary care is shown for the welfare of all pupils. Matron contributes significantly to pupils' welfare. The medical room is well-equipped and first aid boxes are located in strategic positions around the school. All staff have received first aid training and in all sections of the school some staff have completed higher level training. An accident book is scrupulously maintained. The response to any issues relating to health and safety is prompt and apposite.
- 3.11 The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle. It provides numerous opportunities for pupils to participate in physical exercise and to enjoy the ample outdoor spaces. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits through the PSHCE programme, science lessons and, in the Senior school, through food technology as well. The pupils really appreciate the new Willow Restaurant, with its emphasis on an ample choice of healthy, nutritious food, which is attractively presented. The catering staff have excellent awareness of the pupils' dietary requirements.
- 3.12 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

- 3.13 The school has an excellent partnership with parents and some outstanding links with the wider community, maintaining the standards noted in the last inspection report. The parents, staff and pupils assist in meeting the school's aim of cultivating self knowledge side by side with an unselfish attitude to others and an awareness of their role in the community.
- 3.14 Just over half of parents returned the questionnaires sent out before the inspection and were strongly supportive of provision in all sections of the school. They were particularly pleased with the school's attitudes to learning and high standards of behaviour, with the academic standards and levels of pastoral care, and the range of co-curricular activities offered.

- 3.15 Parents are provided with many worthwhile opportunities to become involved in the work and progress of their children and in the activities of the school, through attending parents' meetings, the Open Forum, matches and concerts. All parents are encouraged to contribute to the quality of school life through the very active Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The committee organises many social occasions, most recently a successful Quiz Evening. The PTA has a considerable influence in bringing the parent community together; in conjunction with staff and pupils in the school it is successful in fund-raising for a variety of charities. All parents are invited to meet with the headmistress informally over tea in the course of the year.
- 3.16 High quality information is provided for parents about their children's progress and future events taking place in school. Communications with parents include an informative prospectus, electronic newsletters and an attractive school magazine. Current parents are also able to access a new parents' portal, which is secure, on the school's website, and where parents are alerted to immediate announcements and messages. Parental handbooks provide further detailed information and valuable insights into school life.
- 3.17 Each section of the school has effective and appropriate systems for communicating with parents. Parents of girls in the Senior school are sent grade cards at the end of each term, following an academic review of each pupil's progress by the staff who teach them. Reports for Lower and Junior school pupils are detailed and informative; they set clear and useful targets and reflect the depth of teachers' knowledge and understanding of their pupils. All girls receive a summative report at the end of the academic year and 'settling in' reports are provided for parents of new Nursery pupils at the end of their first half-term. In response to parental surveys, the school has also developed opportunities for direct oral feedback through regular parents' meetings, open evenings and subject surgeries.
- 3.18 The school handles the concerns of parents with appropriate care. Parents in the Lower and Junior school are welcomed into school at the beginning and end of the school day. Such arrangements provide beneficial opportunities for informal discussions with staff, particularly if parents wish to raise concerns. Reading records in the Lower school and homework diaries in the Junior and Senior schools enable parents to comment on any concerns quickly and efficiently. The headmistress's open door policy ensures effective avenues of communication. The school adheres to its policy and procedures to ensure that the response to parental concerns is swift and accurately recorded. Parents are well informed about the formal complaints procedure, and this has been followed appropriately on the few occasions when it has needed to be used.
- 3.19 Links with the local and wider community are strong and positive throughout the school. External organisations and other schools make considerable use of the facilities for workshops and classes. In addition, the school hosts curriculum-based outreach projects with business partnerships, various sporting tournaments and competitions and a diverse programme of music performances and festivals. Local services such as the fire brigade are invited to enhance the pupils' awareness. Parents are also welcomed into school to contribute to relevant curriculum and enrichment subjects, where their areas of expertise are valued. The Senior school involves parents and the local community in its work experience arrangements. Pupils regularly visit places of interest in and around the area, nationally and internationally. Such trips and activities typically support and enrich learning undertaken in the classroom and co-curricular activities. The school undertakes numerous charitable events, both locally and in the wider world, for example, supporting a child in an Indian village to help with her education and participating in a concert at Dorchester Abbey to raise money for the Bereaved Children's Trust. Such events and activities allow pupils to reflect and actively support those who are less fortunate than they are.

- 3.20 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 As at the time of the last inspection, the school is well governed. The governors are motivated by their dedication to the school; they work hard to ensure that it fulfils its aims and retains its family ethos. They have a clear understanding of their strategic role in ensuring the school's continuing success. Equally, they are committed to delegating responsibilities relating to the management of the school to the headmistress and her senior leadership team.
- 4.2 The governing body's structure and management arrangements are well defined, ensuring effective oversight of the school. The board and its subcommittees meet regularly, although there is no education sub-committee. The governors recognise their responsibility to ensure that their members have relevant professional expertise across a spectrum of skills that will ensure that they continue to serve the school well. At the same time, they have the acumen to employ specialist external advice when required. Induction procedures for governors are exemplary.
- 4.3 The governors are kept well informed about the educational development of the school through regular written reports and the attendance of the headmistress at their meetings.
- 4.4 The finance sub-committee is central to the planning processes which prioritise the various demands on educational provision and on whole-school development. Planning is further enhanced by the skills of the director of finance and facilities, who is also present at governors' meetings. Governors are aware of their legal accountability, as they are of their other responsibilities, relating to such areas as health and safety and child protection.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Leadership and management are good and purposeful. Committed and energetic leadership and thoughtful management enable the school to fulfil its aim to foster the development of pupils within a supportive, family-orientated framework. Since the time of the last inspection the school has established a system of regular staff appraisal and has developed the roles of heads of department and subject co-ordinators. The quality of leadership and management in the EYFS is outstanding.
- 4.6 The extensive senior leadership team meets regularly. As well as the headmistress, director of finance and facilities, assistant head and director of strategy the team includes the heads of the Senior, Junior and Lower schools and of the Nursery. Their inclusion ensures that the school from EYFS to Year 11 is well integrated. However, in the Senior school the extent and complexity of senior management positions and responsibilities leads to some overlapping of roles and a consequent lack of clarity in line management. Well-established management structures in the Lower and Junior schools and a high level of staff commitment have ensured the continued smooth running of these sections of the school during the unavoidable and prolonged absence of two key staff members.
- 4.7 The roles of most heads of department, subject leaders and subject coordinators are well developed. They are knowledgeable and show high levels of commitment. The considerable teaching commitments of some staff, particularly in the Lower and Junior schools leave insufficient time for the sharing of best practice. Communication between staff in different sections of the school is effective and fruitful. Whole school policies are detailed and

- comprehensive. Frequent review and careful analysis of current practice is ongoing. Lower and Junior school procedures are well planned and academic policies are detailed.
- 4.8 A reflective approach and openness to new ideas are evident. As a result, the school has undergone considerable changes. Staff have participated in extensive developmental planning at whole school and departmental level. However, systematic and rigorous procedures to establish priorities, to monitor progress and to evaluate the impact of planning are not fully developed; some new initiatives have yet to be consolidated.
- 4.9 The school values highly its energetic and well-motivated staff. They in turn show high levels of commitment and are mutually supportive. The school has many part-time staff and most become as involved in the wider aspects of school life. It is difficult to ensure that all these staff are available for activities and duties outside their specific teaching commitment. Staff job descriptions are clear. Systems for professional development and associated staff appraisal for both teaching and non-teaching staff are well established. Relevant in service training opportunities are frequent; they contribute to school development planning and to individual professional development.
- 4.10 Thorough and effective measures to ensure safe recruitment are taken. The school participates in the national scheme for newly qualified teachers. Required induction procedures are followed and constructive mentoring is given. A thorough programme of induction for all new staff is in place. They are warmly welcomed and are given good support.
- 4.11 Financial resources are well managed. Accommodation is attractive, varied and mostly spacious. It provides a stimulating learning environment. Just a few classrooms in the Lower and Junior schools and a science laboratory are rather small. The ICT room is well equipped and used extensively. The large gymnasium requires some refurbishment. The relatively compact nature of the site and links between the teaching areas for all pupils contribute to the friendly ethos and the strong integration of all sections of the school. The grounds are a valuable educational resource. Well-equipped and age appropriate outside areas for pupils in the EYFS, Lower and Junior schools enhance pupils' learning experience. The recent addition of a retractable cover to the outdoor swimming pool now enables the school to provide swimming throughout the year. Examples of pupils' work are attractively displayed. The celebration of pupils' activities and achievements in corridors and outside classrooms engenders a feeling of pride and fosters their personal development.
- 4.12 Excellent relationships and effective communication are of key importance to the smooth running of the school. Pupils benefit from the presence of many adults on hand to offer support and guidance. Informal communication is enhanced by the use of a single staff room by staff from all sections of the school. The administration of the school is efficient. Extensive use is made of the school's intranet for storage and retrieval of a wide range of information including a strong system of academic profiling. The ethos of the school is fostered carefully by the highly supportive staff who make up the wider community of Cranford House School. Day-to-day routines are well established and clearly understood. The school community has a strong family feeling.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 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 Cranford House School, together with the EYFS, fulfils its aims in developing the potential of all pupils in a family orientated framework, by building on their strengths, promoting their personal development and offering encouragement, support and guidance. The EYFS is in all respects outstanding. Overall, the school provides a rich and varied educational experience. A broad curriculum, many co-curricular activities and a pastoral system which focuses on the individual, ensure that all pupils have the confidence to develop their skills, often to a very high level. Much good teaching promotes good learning. However, a significant proportion of teaching in parts of the Senior school is not sufficiently stimulating. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Staff are generous in the time and effort they expend to ensure that pupils develop essential skills and secure values, so that they are effectively equipped for the next stage of their life. The school is well governed. Good, purposeful leadership and committed management ensure that from the EYFS to Year 11, the school is well integrated. Openness to new ideas ensures that the school is dynamic. New initiatives, particularly in relation to teaching and learning, have moved the school forward during a period of considerable change; however, some of these initiatives are not consolidated. Organisation of the many senior management positions is complex and leads to an overlapping of roles and a lack of clarity in line management, particularly in the Senior school. A reflective approach and a strong awareness of the school's needs ensure that the school is well equipped to identify the measures required to improve still further its already high quality provision.
- 5.2 The school has progressed very well since the last inspection. Comprehensive data tracking systems have been established throughout the school. Examination successes at GCSE reflect a clear improvement in academic performance. In many areas of the school, facilities and accommodation have been enhanced significantly.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school should take the following steps in order to improve its educational provision further:
1. consolidate and review recent initiatives, particularly those relating to teaching and learning, to ensure that they are securely embedded;
 2. meticulously identify and disseminate best practice in teaching across all departments, to promote greater intellectual risk taking and challenge, and to provide further opportunities for independent learning;
 3. review and refine management structures, so that the vision for the school is efficiently implemented.
- 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 9th to 12th November 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 governors, observed a sample of the co-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 19th and 20th October by two inspectors. The inspectors observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff and governors. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Una Stevens	Reporting Inspector for the Senior School
Mrs Jill Moore	Reporting Inspector for the Lower and Junior schools
Mr Keith Barron	Senior Master, HMC school
Mr Richard Feldman	Housemaster, HMC school
Mrs Clare Margetts	Director of Studies, ISA school
Mrs Patricia Woodhouse	Headmistress, GSA school
Miss Judith Bate	Head of IAPS junior school
Dr Caroline Archer	Head of Department, IAPS school
Mr Ian Wood	Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Jenny Rush	Early Years Team Inspector

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

- 7.1 The EYFS at Cranford House, for children aged from rising three to five years old, accommodates 59 children (24 boys and 35 girls). Almost all of the 31 children in the Nursery, for three year olds, are part time. Twenty-eight children (ten boys and eighteen girls) aged four to five years, are full time in two Reception classes. A small number of children are considered to need extra help with their learning. Though a few children learn English as an additional language, none is at an early stage. The EYFS aims are the same as those for the whole school and, in particular, the EYFS aims to value good manners, courteousness, kindness to others, thoughtfulness and helpfulness.
- 7.2 The setting is highly effective. The premises form a stimulating environment because planning is highly effective in providing exciting triggers for learning. High quality nurturing care and support for learning are the basis for the very positive relationships. Children's welfare, learning and development are strongly promoted in a highly productive partnership with parents and others. As a result, children make great strides in their learning and personal development in a climate of care and welfare tailored to the individual. The school dealt quickly with the recommendations of previous inspections to develop profiling to monitor progress, and to ensure leadership of the EYFS is clear. It constantly strives to improve its provision even further. Given the strong and effective teamwork evident, and the refinements put in place since the last inspection, the capacity for further improvement is excellent.
- 7.3 First-rate leadership and management of the EYFS by well qualified staff ensure that each individual is catered for in a fully inclusive community. Policies and procedures are comprehensive and regularly reviewed. Leaders and managers constantly check and evaluate practice. Planning is adjusted readily in response to particular interests or questions posed by the children. Risk is carefully assessed and safeguarding checks, to ensure staff are suitable, are thorough. Links with parents and others are strong. A parent's comment: 'Cranford is a fantastic place for children to be introduced to school and learning,' is typical of their views.
- 7.4 Staff provide excellent support for every child, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in order to help them learn and develop, through a good balance of very well planned adult-led and child initiated activities. ICT is beginning to support children's learning but this aspect is at an early stage of development. Assessment is highly effective and fully embraces the requirements for this age group. Resources are excellent overall and children are able to enjoy use of the extensive grounds along with main school facilities such as the swimming pool, the dining room, and the dance studio. Popular high-quality additional activities are offered after school, including football, dance and swimming. After-school care facilities enrich provision even further. Risk is carefully assessed. The high level of care protects and promotes children's welfare. This includes the checking of safety in the outdoor and indoor space and the caring arrangements that are made when children are unwell.
- 7.5 Children learn and develop exceptionally well and the bubbly laughter and enthusiasm for all they do are testament to their thorough enjoyment of their activities. They make rapid progress, quickly showing exceptionally high levels of independence, imagination and concentration. They leave the EYFS with skills and attitudes well above those typical for their age. Almost all meet all the Early Learning Goals, the standard expected of five year olds, before they enter Year 1. They behave with consideration and courtesy beyond their years. These skills give them secure cornerstones for their futures, supported by their thorough grounding in basic skills. Children say they feel safe. They share their opinions

confidently and willingly listen to others. The excellent catering provision does much to encourage healthy eating, reflected in the children's understanding of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. In this supportive setting, children are enabled to become active, inquisitive and independent learners.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.6 To improve still further the high quality of its provision, the setting should:
1. develop the use of ICT to support children's learning.
- 7.7 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.