INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Wellingborough Pre-Preparatory and Preparatory Schools

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	**Wellingborough Pre-Preparatory and Preparatory Schools**
DCSF Number	**928/6010**
Early Years Number	**N/A**
Registered Charity Number	**1101485**
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Heads	**Mr Garry Bowe – Headmaster of Wellingborough School**
	Mr Richard Mitchell – Head of Preparatory School
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Chair of Governors	**Mr Jerry Higgins**
Age Range (of the whole school)	**3 to 13**
Gender	**Mixed**
Inspection Dates	**16th to 19th March 2009**
Early Years Age Range	**3 to 5**
Early Years Gender	**Mixed**
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	**16th to 17th March 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 Wellingborough Pre-Preparatory and Preparatory Schools form part of the larger Wellingborough School, which was founded in 1595 as a boys' school. The preparatory and pre-preparatory schools were established in 1913 and 1990 respectively. The school became fully co-educational in the 1970s. The two schools are located on the outskirts of Wellingborough in Northamptonshire and in relatively close proximity to each other on the same site as the senior school. Since the last inspection in 2003, numbers have remained largely stable in the pre-preparatory school and have risen slightly in the preparatory school. Information and communication technology (ICT) suites and a new library have been added in the preparatory school, which has also undergone a revision of senior and middle management roles and has increased its curriculum and sporting provision. During the same period, the pre-preparatory school has been provided with a new building, appointed a new headmistress as well as two new assistant head teachers, and also seen new developments in ICT.

1.2 At the time of the inspection, there were 169 pupils on roll, aged between three and eight years in the pre-preparatory school. Of these 100 were boys and 69 were girls. Apart from seven children in the nursery class, all pupils attend on a full-time basis. Of the 169, 57 children were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), ages three to five, and 112 were in Years 1 to 3 (ages five to eight). In the preparatory school there were 312 pupils in Years 4 to 8 (ages nine to thirteen) with 168 boys and 144 girls.

1.3 The preparatory school has identified 36 pupils as in need of additional help from the school, mainly in mathematics or literacy. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs and all have English as their principal language. A similar position exists in the pre-preparatory school where 18 pupils have been identified as in need of additional help. Again no pupils have statements of special educational needs although three pupils do not have English as their principal language and, as a result, receive additional help.

1.4 Pupils, most of whom live within a twenty-mile radius of the school, come from a variety of backgrounds and from families that strongly support their children's education and want them to be successful. The majority of pupils have parents who work in professional occupations.

1.5 Entry to the pre-preparatory school at the age of three is not on a competitive basis. However, the school follows a detailed and fair admissions procedure. Almost all pupils transfer at the age of eight to the preparatory school. For pupils seeking admission between the ages of 8 and 13, a number of tests are administered in an attempt to give a comprehensive profile of attainment and aptitude. Almost all pupils are able to transfer to the next stage of the school at 13, although a small minority leave at the age of eleven. The pupils cover a wide spectrum of ability, though their average ability is above the national average.

1.6 All pupils that applied in 2008 successfully transferred to the senior school, with seven of them gaining scholarships. Foundation scholarships are available to internal and external pupils at the age of eleven. Scholarships available for entry into the senior school at the age of thirteen cover a wide variety of areas, notably academic, sport, art, drama and music.

1.7 The school has an overall mission statement, supported by aims, which cover the whole of Wellingborough School. These indicate that the school seeks to promote excellence in learning through active involvement in a challenging curriculum. It also aims to develop in pupils a self awareness and sense of responsibility, valuing the individuality of the pupil as well as altruism, effort and achievement whilst fostering a spirit of community and commitment. In addition, it wants its pupils to feel cherished and respected in a community with values built on mutual trust and respect. Finally it aims for its pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens.

1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

2.1 The pre-preparatory and preparatory schools provide an all-round educational experience of high quality, consistent with their aims and overall philosophy. The EYFS provision is excellent and meets the needs of the children exceptionally well. Since the last inspection good progress has been made. In the pre-preparatory school a review has been made of staffing levels in order to provide sufficient classroom support and allow adequate time for management roles to be fully delegated and developed. In the preparatory school, a review of timetabling has resulted in lesson time being extended from 35 minutes to 55 minutes, thus ensuring that the school more successfully meets the needs of its pupils. A review of staff roles and responsibilities for all curriculum subjects has resulted in the role of head of department being more formalised, thus ensuring a greater oversight of each subject throughout the school. Finally, library facilities have been considerably improved, enabling the full development of pupils' reading and independent study skills.

2.2 Across both schools, emphasis is placed on providing pupils with activities that contribute to their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. Pupils are able to acquire the skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy in a well-planned and progressive way.

2.3 Pupils benefit greatly from the variety and breadth of the educational experience they receive. Curriculum provision is very good. In the pre-preparatory school pupils experience a range of subjects which are suitable for their ages and ability. Years 1, 2 and 3 follow National Curriculum programmes of study together with religious education, French and personal, social and health education (PSHE) which is taught largely through circle time. Physical education, music and ICT are taught by subject specialist teachers throughout: art and design and technology are taught by subject specialist teachers in Years 2 and 3. In the preparatory school, pupils in Years 4 to 6 also follow the National Curriculum programmes of study with religious education, French, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and drama being taught. In Years 7 and 8, Latin and Spanish are also added to the curriculum. All pupils in Years 4 to 8 have physical education once a week and one full afternoon of games. ICT is taught to all pupils across both schools which successfully enhances their work across many aspects of the curriculum.

2.4 The educational experience pupils receive in either PSHE or PSHCE reflects the schools' aims and contributes effectively to their progress in all areas of learning. It is enriched by extra-curricular activities and links with the community. The positive and caring ethos of both schools provides numerous opportunities for all pupils to develop personally and socially as well as academically.

2.5 All pupils in both schools have access to a broad range of sports through physical education and games. In the preparatory school, all pupils are given the opportunity to represent the school in competitive games.

2.6 In the pre-preparatory school, pupils in Years 2 and 3 can extend their learning through a variety of after school clubs which include cooking, sewing, chess and 'super-science', along with sports and music clubs. An extensive variety of excellent clubs and activities is offered to all pupils in the preparatory school. These include animal welfare, Russian, 'Warhammer' and chess, as well as the usual array of music and sports clubs. Such activities complement the taught curriculum and provide for individual interests as well as introducing new opportunities. Participation in clubs is optional, although uptake is very high.

2.7 Pupils in both schools are well prepared academically and socially for the next stage of their education, whether that be from the EYFS to Year 1, from the pre-preparatory school to the preparatory school, or from the preparatory school to the senior school. Arrangements include induction days, parental meetings and close staff liaison across the three schools.

2.8 In the pre-preparatory school, good policy documents are in place for almost all curriculum subjects. The PSHE policy and scheme of work are currently being developed as part of a comprehensive pastoral development plan. Subjects have basic three-year curriculum development plans, which include success criteria, and a rolling programme of policy review and update which is well in place.

2.9 In the preparatory school, planning for the curriculum is thorough and effective. In the best practice, subject handbooks are of a high quality, and contain sections on assessment and ICT, as well as guidance on meeting the needs of learners with difficulties and disabilities (LDD) and gifted and talented pupils. Such documentation helps to ensure the progressive and continuous development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school.

2.10 Provision for pupils with LDD across both schools is good. Procedures are in place for identifying pupils with particular needs, for example the screening of all pupils in Year 1 and monitoring the progress of such pupils throughout the school. Parents in the preparatory school are given full details of how the school can support a variety of needs if necessary. Strong links exist between the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools in supporting the needs of pupils with LDD. In the preparatory school a very good programme of enrichment activities is available for those pupils identified as being gifted and/or talented. Similarly, whilst the schools do not currently have pupils who do not have English as their first language on roll, good provision is available should the need arise.

2.11 The schools meet the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

2.12 In both schools, pupils achieve particularly well in their academic and broader education. In addition, pupils apply themselves effectively to their work, which they clearly enjoy. Significant levels of knowledge, skill and critical and creative understanding are achieved in the subjects they study, as well as in activities that they follow outside the taught curriculum. In the EYFS, all children achieve exceptionally well with most attaining the Early Learning Goals and many exceeding them. The good standards found in several subjects at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained in both schools and in many areas have been successfully improved upon. Such high achievement levels enable the schools to attain their overall aim in this area of promoting excellence in learning through effort and active involvement.

2.13 In the pre-preparatory school, pupils learn to read and write with growing confidence and enjoyment. Solid foundations are also laid for pupils' mathematical development and consequently they show a growing ability with numbers. Effective teaching and well-planned lessons are the main reason for this. Pupils' ICT skills are also well developed as good opportunities are provided for them to use these skills across the curriculum. Teachers also successfully encourage pupils to think creatively and to use their imagination when applying these skills to other activities, notably art, music, drama and design and technology.

2.14 During their time in the preparatory school, pupils in Years 4 to 8 build successfully on the very good start they have made in the pre-preparatory school. They are able to apply their rapidly expanding skills and knowledge to different subjects and a variety of situations. As a result, by the end of Year 8, pupils have listening and speaking skills that are well developed for their age. Furthermore, they are confident, articulate and able to converse easily with both their peers and adults. In addition, pupils show significant levels of creativity, particularly through their writing and investigative work in subjects such as history, geography, science and mathematics. Pupils' critical and creative skills are also particularly well developed in art, music and design and technology where many achieve high standards. Pupils also use their mathematical and ICT skills very competently.

2.15 In both schools, no significant differences in relative attainment between groups of pupils are apparent. Those with LDD as well as those who are identified as being gifted or talented make good progress, given their ability levels, and where applicable, in the pursuit of their individual education plan (IEP) targets. Pupils for whom English is not their first language also achieve at an appropriate level given their linguistic abilities. No marked differences in the attainment of boys and girls are apparent.

2.16 Pupils in both schools do not take externally moderated national tests. Consequently, direct comparisons between pupils' standards and those of pupils in maintained schools nationally are not possible. However, the evidence of lesson observations, discussion with pupils, and the scrutiny of pupils' work on display and in their books, show that at the age of eight, eleven and thirteen, pupils' standards are high overall in relation to their ability. By the time they leave the preparatory school at the age of thirteen, most pupils have achieved well across all areas of the curriculum.

2.17 The pre-preparatory school encourages a breadth of interests and celebrates pupils' achievements in creative areas and in sport both at school and at home. These include successes in football, netball, cricket and rounders' matches, successful participation at local music festivals and *Eisteddfodau*, and awards for rugby, gymnastics, swimming, ballet and equestrian events. Many pupils are accomplished musicians who achieve well in instrumental examinations, sing in the school choir and perform at school concerts. Individual achievements also include reaching the national final of the "Google" logo competition.

2.18 The preparatory school has a considerable list of both individual and team achievements in a variety of areas. Every pupil is encouraged to participate in sports teams, music, speech and drama in order to gain personal achievement. The school has attained some excellent individual and team successes in a variety of sports, notably as county regional champions in hockey at under-11 and under-13, from which pupils were selected to represent England. Pupils also represented England at under-16 level in gymnastics and others were national finalists in cross-country. Individual pupils were also selected to play for the county at tennis and others are currently county squash champions. In music, many pupils achieve particularly well in instrumental examinations and a number of pupils play in county and community orchestras. A number of pupils have also received awards in the national Primary Mathematics Challenge. Both schools are proud of the individual and team successes of their pupils which contribute greatly to their personal development. Nevertheless, they take care to ensure that pupils who do not possess such skill levels have access to coaching and tuition and, as a result, have the opportunity to achieve at a level appropriate to their ability.

2.19 Pupils' attitudes to learning and achievements in both the schools are outstanding. Pupils are friendly, helpful, interested and eager to talk about what they are doing and to share their views on their progress. Pupils are articulate and speak with confidence; they are able to express themselves by using the appropriate language for different subjects. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 1 gymnastics lesson and in a geography lesson in Year 7. Pupils are good learners, they study hard and learn effectively both on their own and co-operatively as seen in a Year 3 lesson on healthy eating. In all these examples, very good co-operation between members of the group contributed significantly to pupils' learning.

2.20 Pupils' capacity to take notes, study and organise their work is particularly good. Examples of this were evident in the pre-preparatory school, where Year 2 researched information from different sources for their science topic on the greenhouse effect. They consulted a number of text books and made notes for themselves.

2.21 Many examples of particularly well-presented written work are evident in the preparatory school, particularly in Years 5 and 7, and of independent learning in design and technology as well as history. Overall, pupils' work is well organised and good quantities are produced for the age group. Pupils in both schools settle down and apply themselves to the task they have been set in a positive manner, whether in club meetings, lessons or activities. They are enthusiastic and willing to persevere, as was seen in a Year 1 lesson related to handling money, a Year 2 French lesson where the pupils came in and immediately settled to the task and in a Year 6 ICT lesson on Victorian toys. Throughout, pupils' concentration levels are good and they show considerable enthusiasm for their work and activities. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and the learning experiences they are offered.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

2.22 Pupils in both schools have outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The personal development and well-being of children in the EYFS is also outstanding. The high standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained and in some aspects further promoted. This enables both schools to achieve their aim of being a caring community whose values are built on mutual trust and respect for all.

2.23 Pupils' spiritual awareness is good and is developed through assemblies and lessons across the curriculum. Pupils show an understanding of ideas beyond themselves; for example, in a Year 4 history lesson, they considered the plight of people who had suffered as a result of the Black Death. Developing this sort of empathy is a habit of mind that has been introduced in preparatory school assemblies by the headmaster and reinforced across the curriculum. Weekly chapel services further enhance the spiritual atmosphere in the preparatory school. The pre-preparatory pupils also visit the chapel at events such as their 'Christingle' celebrations and the Year 3 leavers' service. In addition, the school chaplain takes pre-preparatory school assemblies. All such significant events in the lives of the pupils serve to highlight spirituality in the pre-preparatory school.

2.24 In both schools, pupils' moral awareness is outstanding and there is clear evidence of the importance of moral character to the pupils. As some Year 7 pupils indicated, the preparatory school code of conduct, which states how they should behave and treat each other, is "a big thing". This is emphasised by staff, particularly 'club' presidents, and behaviour is recorded in the 'club' card, which again pupils take very seriously. Consequently, the behaviour of pupils around the school and in the vast majority of lessons is exemplary. In the pre-preparatory school, morality is encouraged by use of 'golden rules'. These form the basis of the school's circle time lessons, where pupils are taught that they have choices with the behaviour that they exhibit. Year 3 duties, which are arranged on a rota, encourage every pupil to take care of the school and accept responsibility. Pupils are

also given the responsibility of being leaders, and to lead their class out of assembly; this they do with great diligence. 'Thoughts for the Week', such as appreciating mothers on Mothers' Day, are discussed in assemblies and are reinforced in circle time.

2.25 Pupils' social development in both schools is outstanding. They are polite and courteous and, on the whole, they are willing to share their views and engage with visitors. Their personal development is enhanced by opportunities to play constructively, such as on the climbing wall in the preparatory school playground, and on outdoor table-tennis tables. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent, as seen in informal conversations in the playground or at the end of lessons. Indeed, pupils described their teachers as "friends" who are interested in them. The Year 8 leadership programme contributes well to pupils' social skills, including the link that the school has with a special school, as do outdoor pursuits and sports trips. Weekly 'club' meetings help to reinforce social interaction and teamwork across year groups, and the 'club' worked together most harmoniously when practising their song for the forthcoming singing competition.

2.26 In the pre-preparatory school, pupils nominate each other for 'Helping Hands' and these are displayed prominently, along with the reason that a pupil has been helpful. This builds on the 'Helpful Hands' trees used in the EYFS section of the school. A celebration assembly is held each week in order to praise pupils' achievements from within and outside the school. Certificates and trophies are also displayed on a celebration table in the school corridor. This reinforces the idea of praising and appreciating each other. As a poster in the pre-preparatory school says, "We are all good at something".

2.27 Pupils in both schools have a particularly good awareness of other cultures and are encouraged to understand other people's lives and points of view. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, pupils were asked to think about the slave trade and other race issues, and then to relate this to the election of the president of the United States of America. Outstanding artwork, such as paintings in the aboriginal style, adorns the preparatory school corridor walls. In addition, pupils in the preparatory school produce artwork of an extremely high standard in their lessons, making significant cultural links in the process. Foreign trips, such as the visit to the Cote D'Opale, in France contribute significantly to pupils' awareness of other cultures.

2.28 Events such as celebrating Chinese New Year, which included a themed lunch, develop pupils' cultural awareness in the pre-preparatory school. Displays of pupils' artwork, such as those that illustrate the Kodomo-no-hi festival in Japan, focus pupils' attention on other people around the world, and parent links are also well used to raise pupils' awareness of other cultures. Library books in the school are organised into a special section for other cultures and a French breakfast club is an imaginative and enjoyable taste of another tradition for pupils.

2.29 The schools meet the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

2.30 Throughout both schools, teaching is good and, on occasions, is outstanding. Consequently, it is instrumental in helping the aims of the whole of Wellingborough School to be achieved, particularly those aims related to the promotion of excellence in learning and in encouraging pupils to become successful learners. The quality of teaching found at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained and in certain areas, notably in the preparatory school, has been successfully built upon. In the EYFS, adults support children's learning and development very effectively.

2.31 In the best lessons, a considerable amount of work is expected from the pupils, and teachers make every effort to engage pupils' enthusiastically in their work. Many varied opportunities are created to enable pupils to increase their understanding and knowledge of a subject or particular skill.

2.32 Where teaching is at its best, teachers also encourage their pupils to think and learn for themselves. To achieve this they are highly skilled in using tasks and posing questions that are most appropriate for their pupils' differing ages and abilities. This was clearly apparent in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, where pupils were having the concept of place value and the idea of 'ten times larger' reinforced. Following a very good questioning session which inspired and motivated the pupils, the teacher used most appropriate resources to demonstrate the concept. This was then quickly followed by activities that were specifically geared to groups of pupils of different abilities. The careful selection of tasks and appropriate questioning ensured that all pupils made significant gains in their learning.

2.33 Teachers' obvious enthusiasm and their own considerable subject knowledge enables them to give work to their pupils which not only motivates them but also successfully challenges them. Pupils' behaviour is managed well in both schools and this, together with the challenging work, ensures that pupils are able to express themselves in a variety of ways. The very well planned lessons ensure that pupils clearly understand what they are expected to do in order for them to learn a particular concept or skill. Almost all lessons move at a sufficiently brisk pace and good use is made, by both teachers and pupils, of the time available.

2.34 Highly successful lessons are also characterised by a number of other factors. For example, teachers involve their pupils in a wide variety of activities such as investigations, discussions, theoretical or practical work, in order to maintain their enthusiasm for learning. In addition, effective use is made of the resources that are available to support pupils' learning. Furthermore, pupils' learning is increased as a result of them being asked to work in pairs or small groups in almost all subjects and many lessons. Indeed, the sharing of apparatus and encouragement of working together are successfully developed from the youngest pupils in the pre-preparatory school right through to the oldest ones in the preparatory school. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson, following a brisk and purposeful introduction, pupils worked in small groups using maps of different settlements in order to draw conclusions as to why they had been situated on a particular spot. High quality intervention by the teacher and stimulating discussions amongst the pupils ensured that all made excellent gains in their knowledge and understanding of settlements and the factors that affect their location.

2.35 On the relatively few occasions when teaching does not reach such high standards, it is usually as a result of the work being insufficiently challenging for the class or a particular group, such as the higher ability group, within that class. The lack of variety in the type of teaching methods being used also contributes to this situation. In addition, on some occasions, the rate at which pupils are required to learn is too slow. Consequently pupils lose interest and do not achieve a sufficient amount in the available time.

2.36 Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils exist in both schools. These are based largely on the mutual respect that has been created. As a result, pupils are confident and feel able to express their views, ideas and opinions freely. Consequently they respond in a positive and productive way. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their pupils and are therefore able to give sensitive help, particularly to those pupils who have specific learning difficulties. All pupils' needs are recognised, understood and generally appropriately addressed.

2.37 Good and effective use is made by teachers of both schools' stock of high quality resources. Teachers choose resources carefully to aid pupils' understanding of what is being taught. In one or two instances, too much reliance is placed by teachers on duplicated worksheets that are, on occasions, not always appropriate to pupils' differing abilities and needs. ICT is well used by teachers to assist pupils' understanding, notably in the ICT rooms and through the appropriate use of interactive whiteboards in most classrooms. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 5 design and technology lesson, where pupils were using a computer aided design program to help them with their designs for a calendar based on the work of the artist Piet Mondrian.

2.38 Both schools have well-stocked libraries and other teaching rooms. These are well equipped with books and other resources that are again effectively used to support pupils' learning. Of particular note is the quality of support given to pupils by teaching assistants.

2.39 Good systems and strategies are in place to assess and record pupils' attainment and progress in both schools. A range of standardised tests, covering reading, spelling, and measurements of progress, are used, beginning in the pre-preparatory school and carried out also in the preparatory school. Some assess potential as well as ability. In other subjects, end of unit and end of year tests are carried out, some of which are assessed according to the National Curriculum attainment levels. Many teachers use the everyday assessment of their pupils' work in the classroom to monitor their progress and to inform future planning. Teachers right across the schools also record grades for effort and achievement, according to set criteria, which are reported to parents.

2.40 In both schools, the results of standardised tests are used to identify pupils who may require extra support, the gifted and talented and under- or over-achievers, so that teachers can more effectively meet the needs of individual pupils. In the preparatory school, results are also used well to identify any emerging trends in attainment. However, in the pre-preparatory school this is less well developed. The monitoring of individual pupils' progress is developing appropriately in both schools.

2.41 Separate marking policies are in place in both the schools. In the pre-preparatory school the marking policy is consistently applied both within and across year groups. In the preparatory school, the quality of marking is not always consistent. In the best practice there is clear evidence of both positive and evaluative comments, designed to take pupils' learning forward. However, a proportion of the marking is cursory, consisting of a tick only. In addition, some comments offer praise but no advice for improvement. On a limited number of occasions some work is left unmarked. The school is aware of these issues and has begun to take steps to address them.

2.42 The schools meet 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 Both schools provide an outstanding quality of pastoral care and they are most successful in ensuring the welfare, health and safety of all their pupils. Consequently they achieve their aim of providing a safe and happy environment in which pupils are given the best possible opportunities to learn and develop. The very good standard found at the time of the previous inspection has been further improved. In the EYFS, the promotion of children's welfare is excellent in all aspects.

3.2 Very good arrangements are in place to ensure the best provision for pupils. In the pre-preparatory school the emphasis is on proactively 'nipping in the bud' any issue before it can become a problem, as well as on celebrating pupils' achievements. The class teacher is key to pastoral care although the pupils know they can turn to anyone if they need to. A Year 2 pupil said, "We love the teachers who are kind and take care of us". Recently one boy helped another on with his tie. This resulted in the recipient nominating his helper for a "Helpful Hands" award. In Years 4 the form tutor is the first point of contact, whilst in Years 5 to 8 it is the 'club' presidents backed up by the form tutor. If needed, further support is provided by the assistant head teacher (pastoral). The pupils clearly know to whom they can turn. The 'Life Skills' programme, which has been extended since the last inspection to include Years 4 and 5, and the 'Habits of Mind' skills scheme support the work they do well.

3.3 Staff know their pupils well and are widely liked and respected. An atmosphere of mutual respect is clearly evident, particularly in subjects such as art and music. In the pre-preparatory school, outstanding relationships between staff and pupils as well as between pupils and pupils are particularly evident, notably in the playground. This is also the case in the preparatory school where, for example, a member of staff was observed helping a boy with a broken shoelace while another was demonstrating forward defence strokes (in anticipation of the coming cricket season). Pupils are also aware of what kind of behaviour is expected of them and are extremely courteous and friendly. They respond extremely well to the 'club' card which becomes a snapshot of the pupils' week. The school council provides a good avenue for the pupils to be heard. Recently deliberations have been on winter coats, scarves and a new, longer pleated skirt for the girls.

3.4 Measures to safeguard and promote pupils' health and well-being are secure and firmly established. Health-related fitness is part of the physical education programme. In a Year 3 science lesson for example, pupils demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a healthy meal. Child protection measures, including a very good child protection policy, are in place and are effective. Training in this area is recent and is part of the induction training for new staff. Staff are all checked and cleared with the Criminal Records Bureau. The administration of medicines is tightly controlled by the appropriate staff and good quality records are maintained. All necessary measures have been taken to reduce the risk from fire; fire practices are held regularly and recorded.

3.5 Health and safety policies are comprehensive and regular committee meetings are held, chaired by the bursar. Fenced-off play areas and walkways have recently been completed. Thirty-nine qualified first aiders, across the whole of Wellingborough School, are available. The new medical facility and its staff provide a comprehensive service. Risk assessments are undertaken of all areas of the school on an annual basis and a clear policy is in place for the management of risk for all outings. The quality of the food is good, with an appetising and nutritious menu being available to the pupils. All pupils are encouraged to eat a balanced

meal. Attendance and admissions registers are completed in accordance with regulatory requirements. The schools have an appropriate plan for disability access.

3.6 The schools meet the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

3.7 Both schools have established an excellent partnership with parents and the community and are meeting their stated aims to work closely with their respective parent bodies. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection where links with parents and the community were found to be good. In both schools, parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction and support for the educational provision. Very good communications and a strong partnership with parents also support the children in their learning and development in the EYFS.

3.8 Pre-preparatory school parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very appreciative of the school's provision. In particular they appreciated the worthwhile attitudes and values which the school promotes, the quality of the teaching, the range of subjects and the help and guidance given to their children. Their main areas of concern were the range of extra-curricular activities, the provision for LDD and how the school handles concerns. Inspection findings show that senior staff recognise that the range of after school clubs is less extensive for Years 1 and 2 than it is for Year 3 and are considering ways to expand what is available. The provision for pupils identified as requiring additional support is now comprehensive, with a clearly defined procedure in place. Handling concerns is seen as a priority and any such concerns are handled promptly, following the appropriate procedures.

3.9 The parents of preparatory school pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated strong support for most of the school's provision. They particularly appreciated the quality of the teaching and the range of subjects which their children experience. They also expressed a high level of satisfaction with the worthwhile attitudes and values which the school promotes, the help and guidance which their children receive and the range of extra-curricular provision. One of the main areas of concern raised by preparatory school parents was related to homework. However, inspection findings show that the quantity of homework pupils receive is appropriate to their age. Another concern was the amount of information parents receive about their child's progress. Again, inspection findings show that the recent review of the timing of the distribution of progress reports and parents' meetings, which has resulted in them being bought closer together during the second term, facilitates swifter discussion and thus deals with parents' concerns in a more appropriate way. The issue of how the school handles concerns was also raised. Inspectors found that there is a detailed procedure in place which ensures that parents receive a timely and appropriate response.

3.10 Both schools have very good systems in place for communicating with parents. In the pre-preparatory school progress reports are sent out twice a year and parents are invited to meet with the teachers to discuss these. A full written report is sent out at the end of the school year. Following the outcomes of a parents' forum, review targets are now included in the report documentation. The reporting cycle is the same in the preparatory school. During an academic year, all parents are given reports which provide a comprehensive summary of their child's progress and attainment. Such reports are good and, in the best examples, indicate clearly both where a pupil has done well and also what they need to do to continue to improve.

3.11 Many other channels, such as newsletters, texting, e-mails and the website, are in place in order to keep parents up-to-date about life in both schools and to give them relevant

information. Teachers also provide parents with documentation relating to the syllabus and curriculum content which their children will cover. This is made available on the preparatory school's website and in the pre-preparatory school's library.

3.12 Parents are encouraged to participate in the life of the schools and in the parent forum, which meets to discuss school issues. A recent example was when a very large number of parents attended the forum related to the teaching of reading. Similarly, meetings for preparatory school parents have addressed such matters as cyber-bullying, life skills and drugs education. Parents have also been involved in an art workshop and an adult choir.

3.13 In the pre-preparatory school, links with the local community are fostered through a range of educational visits, and professionals, for example dentists, paramedics and opticians, visit to talk about their roles. The school also works in partnership with two local teacher training centres with students visiting to gain experience. The preparatory school also undertakes a wide range of local trips and residential educational visits further afield, and has developed a mutually beneficial link with a nearby school for pupils with learning difficulties. Funds are also raised to support the work of a local hospice. Both schools undertake a wide range of fund-raising initiatives and have collected a significant amount of money for a variety of national and international charities, such as 'Water Aid' and the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance. Local organisations are encouraged to use the schools' facilities out of normal school hours. Examples include martial arts and other sports clubs.

3.14 The schools meet 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 quality of governance of both the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools is good. Wellingborough School itself is a company limited by guarantee. Governors are members of both an overarching council as well as the governing body. The council meets twice a year at their annual general meeting and six months later for an update meeting on the progress being made. The role of the council is clear and effective in overseeing the major developments of the school.

4.2 The full governing body, of which both the head teachers of the preparatory and pre-preparatory schools are members, although not voting members, meets three times a year. It is appropriately constituted and adequately supported by a number of sub-committees. These include finance, buildings, strategic planning, marketing, a foundation committee and an education committee. The governing body is well led and its effectiveness is further enhanced by the wide range of professional skills and training that governors and other council members bring. Such skills include in-depth knowledge of business, industry, law finance and education. An overriding commitment clearly exists to provide the very best for the good of the pupils of both schools as well as for the schools' continuing development. Consequently, both schools are well positioned to continue the process of achieving the overall school aims. The good quality of governance found at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained.

4.3 The governing body, largely through its committee structure, and particularly since the relatively recent establishment of the education committee, is becoming increasingly effective in its oversight and knowledge of both schools. Governors' meetings are carefully minuted and agreed and governors have good working relationships with the head teachers of both schools. Opportunities are in place for members of staff to make presentations about their areas of responsibility to the governing body or one of its committees and plans are well in hand to continue to extend this initiative. A number of governors regularly attend school events, such as plays, concerts, sports fixtures and religious services. The practice of governors visiting the schools during the school day to observe the schools at work is growing. Governors have a good oversight of both child protection issues and their responsibilities regarding health and safety.

4.4 Increasingly effective communications between the head teachers and the governors help to ensure that the governors have contact with members of staff, through both formal and informal channels, and are supportive of them. As a result of the developing communications systems and growing effectiveness of the sub-committees, governors are able to play a supportive and, in some areas, a leading role in several aspects of the life of both schools with sound advice and appropriate levels of challenge being provided.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

4.5 The senior staff of both the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools provide particularly good quality leadership and management under the overall guidance and oversight of the headmaster of Wellingborough School. Consequently, this goes a long way towards helping the schools fulfil their overall aim of promoting excellence in learning as well as helping pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. Much of the success in this area is reflected in the quality of education the school provides and in the care it takes of its pupils. Both head teachers have strong leadership and management qualities, a clear vision, an ability to motivate others and a strong determination to move their respective schools forward. As a result of these factors, and in conjunction with other senior staff, the standards found in this area at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. The leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding.

4.6 The headmaster of the whole school, the preparatory school head and the head of the pre-preparatory school meet regularly in order to ensure clarity of direction and operation within Wellingborough School as a whole. Both the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools' senior managers have a very good oversight of their schools' work and provide them with a clear sense of direction. Both schools have highly effective senior management teams who are supported by heads of departments or curriculum co-ordinators. Systematic procedures to monitor teaching and the curriculum are developing well in both schools. In the best examples, senior staff and heads of department/curriculum co-ordinators monitor the work pupils produce and the teaching they receive in a particular subject right across their respective schools. However, this is not always the case particularly in the pre-preparatory school. In addition, whilst work is well underway in developing links between the two schools at head of department/subject co-ordinator level, this is not yet completed sufficiently in several areas in order to provide curriculum continuity for pupils from three to thirteen years and beyond.

4.7 An appropriate school development plan covering the whole of Wellingborough School is in place. This covers areas such as buildings and marketing developments over a period of time. The preparatory school has its own good quality three-year development plan covering such areas as curriculum, teaching and learning, pastoral care, premises and ICT. It identifies the personnel to be involved, timescales, resources needed and dates for further review. However, no costings or in-service training implications are identified for each particular development. At present no comparable document exists for the pre-preparatory school.

4.8 School development planning is supported in both schools by curriculum development plans which are, by and large a compilation of subject development plans. They cover an appropriate period of time and address a variety of different issues such as aims, success criteria, personnel involvement and timescales, with varying degrees of detail. Again few costings or in-service training implications are indicated. A sound pastoral development plan is in place in the pre-preparatory school. The schools rightly recognise that their approach to the planning process is not detailed enough.

4.9 Good quality policies and procedures are in place to cover most areas of school life in both schools. However, as with the planning process, some confusion exists as to which policies cover the whole of Wellingborough School and which are age-specific to the respective pre-preparatory and preparatory schools. Systems are largely in place in both schools to check the implementation and effectiveness of the various policies and procedures. Regular checks are made of issues such as child protection and health and safety. However, some policies such as the marking policy are not fully implemented by all staff, particularly in the preparatory school.

4.10 In both schools teaching and support staff are effectively deployed. Good staffing levels help to ensure that high quality support and guidance are given to all pupils, particularly those requiring additional help with their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff recruitment is well managed with the statutory staffing checks being made and records securely kept.

4.11 New staff, including when applicable newly qualified teachers, have an effective and supportive induction programme in both schools. The strategy used for newly qualified teachers follows the national guidelines. Many in-service training opportunities are available for staff and an adequate budget is provided. However, the lack of overall clarity in the school development planning process means that priorities for in-service training are not closely linked to overall school priorities. Formal appraisal systems are in place in both schools and these are effectively used to support an individual's professional development.

4.12 Both schools are located along with the senior school on one large extensive site. Very good use is made by both the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools of the excellent facilities that are available. Throughout both schools teaching space is good and well used, with a range of age-related specialist accommodation such as science laboratories, ICT rooms, music and art rooms being available. Senior school facilities are also available if required. Excellent provision is made for both outdoor and indoor games.

4.13 A very good stock of high quality resources is available in both schools. These, together with the generous specialist accommodation, support both teaching and pupils' learning. In almost all instances these resources are located near areas where they are needed and are effectively managed and used. The libraries in both schools are very well stocked and managed. They are used appropriately by staff and pupils who see them as an integral part of the school and as an asset to the learning process. Procedures for budgeting are sound but, as with in-service training budgets, are not always closely linked to the school or subject development planning process.

4.14 The high quality support and assistance provided by the administrative and other staff ensures that both schools are run efficiently on a daily basis. Communications within the schools are effective as a result of good in-house in-service training, staff and subject departmental meetings and staff notice boards.

4.15 The schools meet the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

4.16 The schools participate in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meet its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

5.1 Wellingborough Pre-Preparatory and Preparatory Schools provide a high quality of education for their pupils. They both achieve their aims and meet the needs of their pupils. The schools have many strong features some of which are outstanding. Numerous opportunities are provided to help pupils towards achieving their full potential. Achievement levels at the ages of both eight and thirteen are particularly good. In addition to the taught curriculum, the highly valuable educational visits made by pupils in both schools, as well as the outstanding extra-curricular programme in the preparatory school, also play their part in enabling pupils to achieve the educational standards that they do. Good quality and on occasions outstanding teaching, a well-balanced curriculum, very effective leadership in both schools and the high quality relationships that also exist in both schools enable considerable achievements to be made by the pupils. In response, pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning. They are highly responsible members of their schools' communities and behave exceptionally well. The pastoral care provided for the pupils in both schools is outstanding, as is the provision made for their personal development. Links with parents and the community in both schools are also exceptionally strong.

5.2 Many of the strengths found at the time of the previous inspection in 2003 have been maintained or built upon. Significant progress has been made in addressing issues related to classroom support in the pre-preparatory school and in timetabling issues in the preparatory school. In addition, heads of department have been established in the preparatory school to oversee subject development and library facilities are now of high quality. The schools are well aware that: school development planning is not detailed enough; subject-leader liaison between them is not yet fully developed; the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders in the pre-preparatory school are not yet fully established; and the preparatory school's approach to marking pupils' work is inconsistent.

5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

5.4 Neither the pre-preparatory school nor the preparatory school has any major weaknesses. In order to develop further the education they provide, they should take the following action.

1. Review, in conjunction with the senior school, their school development plans so that:
   - in the pre-preparatory school a full development plan is put in place which includes timescales, personnel, success criteria, in-service training implications and costings related to each initiative;
   - in the preparatory school, costing and in-service training implications are included.
2. Encourage and develop further the subject-leader liaison between the two schools and, where appropriate, with the senior school.
3. In relation to the pre-preparatory school, the school should review the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders so that all have a clear understanding of what the role is and are appropriately qualified and/or experienced to carry out that role.
4. In relation to the preparatory school, the school should establish a more consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work in accordance with the school policy.

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 16th to 19th March 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 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 16th and 17th March 2009 by one inspector. The inspector 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 inspector examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Graham Nunn	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Felicity Lawson	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Dr Wendy Bowring	Headmistress, IAPS school
Mrs Sarah Bridgman	Assistant Headmistress (Academic), IAPS school
Mr Brian Hays	Deputy Headmaster, IAPS school
Mrs Linda Nickell	Teacher, ISA school
Mrs Penny Oates	Headmistress, IAPS pre-preparatory school
Mr Malcolm Priestley	Head of Department, IAPS school
Mrs Linda Hudson	Early Years Lead Inspector

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

7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting is part of the pre-preparatory school and is located in a new extension to the pre-preparatory building. The setting currently has 57 children on roll. There are two Nursery groups with fourteen children in each and two Reception classes. No children are assessed as having learning difficulties or disabilities and one child has English as an additional language. A very small proportion of children come from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The children benefit from the extensive grounds and the facilities of the pre-preparatory school, including the ICT suite, and from specialist teaching in music, ICT and physical education. The aims of the EYFS, which are the same as for the whole school, and the maxim that 'little children learn best by doing' are exceedingly well met and overall the provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all the children. This is the first inspection of the setting.

7.2 All children make exceptionally good progress and their achievement is outstanding, with the majority attaining the Early Learning Goals and many working beyond them. Children are very competent and can work independently, with partners or in groups. They are eager learners and work and play with enthusiasm. Critical thinking opportunities are apparent across the curriculum such as in a weighing and balancing activity observed in the Nursery. Use of ICT is strongly promoted both in the ICT suite and the classrooms. The children are articulate and enjoy sharing their ideas and knowledge with adults and peers, are comfortable with making choices, enjoy challenges and show high levels of concentration as observed in the concertina folding of the correct number of legs for an octopus. Opportunities for creative development are numerous, including for example role-play as 'Postman Pat'. Many of the art and craft activities, using a variety of different materials, are displayed in the classrooms.

7.3 The personal development and well-being of the children is excellent. The children are confident, respond well to instructions and show a high regard for each other and their teachers. Nursery and Reception children are polite and friendly to adults and classmates and willing to help and support each other. They enjoy the many opportunities for responsibility afforded to them such as delivering the registers to the office. Their awareness of staying safe is very good, as indicated by their use of designated paths to the dining room. Lunchtime is a very positive experience for them and they demonstrate good manners and high levels of skill as well as the ability to make healthy eating choices. Scope for physical activity is provided throughout the day and children participate with great enjoyment but also with an excellent awareness of risk, as observed in a PE lesson.

7.4 The support of the children in their learning and development is outstanding. Planning and organisation across the whole EYFS is exceptional and particularly so in the Nursery where there is an excellent example of best practice. There are opportunities for learning through purposeful play and exploration based on topic work. However, children do not have enough opportunity for musical activities, apart from the regular weekly music lessons. The teaching staff are very effectively supported by extremely capable and enthusiastic assistants. The excellent balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities and the careful deployment of adults fosters children's learning and development very well. The monitoring and assessment of children's progress is rigorous, based on observations, and is used to inform teachers about the next steps in learning so that all children's needs, irrespective of ability, are catered for. The quality and quantity of resources available to support the teaching are outstanding and are used imaginatively. Very good communications and a strong partnership with parents further support the children in their learning and development.

7.5 The promotion of children's welfare is excellent. All aspects of welfare are fostered with consistency and sensitivity by highly committed and caring staff. This results in happy, confident children who interact positively with each other and with adults. High expectations, based on the assumption that the outcomes will be positive, as seen on the wording of child-friendly notices, have encouraged the behaviour of the children to be exemplary. The classrooms and corridors are spacious, light and airy, with colourful displays which celebrate the children's learning and achievements. However, one of the Reception classes cannot access the outside learning area as easily as the other three EYFS classes. The environment both indoors and outdoors is safe and secure, maintained to a high level and is used by all the children.

7.6 Leadership is outstanding at all levels within the EYFS. Record keeping, policies and procedures are thorough and well maintained ensuring that the provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of the children. All staff are checked for suitability to work with children and the quality of risk assessments and actions to eliminate risks is excellent. The head teacher of the pre-preparatory school, alongside those with responsibility in the EYFS department, is enthusiastic, embraces improvement and has high aspirations for the quality of care and development of the children as shown in the self-evaluation. The staff work as a team with a common sense of purpose leading to a genuine community spirit and a culture of mutual support.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

7.7 To improve still further the high quality of its provision, the setting should:

1. provide further additional opportunities for musical activities in the classroom;
2. continue to seek ways to provide adjacent access to an outdoor learning space for all Reception children.

7.8 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.