



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

VINEHALL SCHOOL

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Vinehall School

Boarding welfare provision was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

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|---------------------------|--|
| Full Name of School | Vinehall School |
| DfE Number | 845/6004 |
| EYFS Number | EY388231 |
| Registered Charity Number | 307014 |
| Address | Vinehall School Vinehall Road Mountfield Robertsbridge East Sussex TN32 5JL |
| Telephone Number | 01580 880413 |
| Fax Number | 01580 882119 |
| Email Address | rfollett@vinehallschool.com |
| Head | Mr Richard Follett |
| Chair of Governors | Mr William Foster-Kemp |
| Age Range | 2 to 13 |
| Total Number of Pupils | 251 |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (138 boys; 113 girls) |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): 5 5-11: 153 3-5 (EYFS): 29 11-13: 64 |
| Head of EYFS Setting | Mrs Tessa Richardson |
| EYFS Gender | Mixed |
| Inspection Dates | 21 Jan 2015 to 22 Jan 2015 |

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspection occurs over a period of two continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2012.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted informal discussions with children and examined samples of work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with a governors' representative, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and an assembly. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Ann Stranack

Early Years Lead Inspector

Mrs Fiona Trembath

Team Inspector for Early Years
(Head of Pre-Preparatory Department, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Vinehall School is a preparatory day and boarding school for boys and girls from the ages of 2 to 13. It is situated in 47 acres of Sussex countryside near to the village of Robertsbridge. It was established for a small number of local children in 1938 in a Victorian country house. The children in the pre-preparatory department (pre-prep), for those up to the age of seven, including the four classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), are housed in a single-storey purpose-designed building surrounded by outdoor learning areas within the grounds. There are options for early morning care from 8 am and after-school care until 6 pm for children aged 3 and above. Boarding opportunities are available for the older pupils. The school has charitable status and is overseen by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide an excellent all-round education within a high quality learning environment. Whilst acknowledging that each child is individual, the school strives to ensure that all pupils will reach the highest standards that they can achieve. The EYFS, for children up to the age of five, aims to place great importance on the child's social development, fostered in a caring environment where courtesy, self-respect, independence and consideration for others are highly valued. It seeks to encourage children to learn to make mistakes without experiencing a sense of failure and to understand that learning is fun.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, a monitoring system has been introduced for assessment purposes throughout the school. Drop-in sessions for parents have been introduced to highlight learning through play, reading and mathematics. Improvements to the outdoor learning environment include a canopy for shade.
- 1.4 There are currently 251 pupils on roll, including 19 boys and 15 girls in the EYFS. Of these, five children are under the age of three and attend part-time. Fourteen of the older children attend full-time. None of these children has English as an additional language. Three children have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and are receiving support, and none has a statement of special educational needs. Most children are of white British origin, and come from professional or business backgrounds.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| School | NC name |
| Nursery | Nursery (ages 2 to 3) |
| Kindergarten | Nursery (ages 3 to 4) |
| Reception | Reception |

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with statutory requirements

- 2.1 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Strengthen the sharing of best practice and expertise within the setting by creating more opportunities for all members of the EYFS team to meet together.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

3.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 3.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. Detailed planning by all staff, including specialist teachers, gives priority to the prime areas of learning, ensuring that from the youngest age children can express themselves with confidence and enjoyment, run around safely and use cutlery competently. Literacy is carefully introduced, so that, for example, all children self-register at suitable levels according to their age. The extremely well-resourced and spacious areas, both inside and outside, are used to develop all seven learning areas, with an age-appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The youngest children benefit from specialist teaching for music, gymnastics and ballet; by Reception this also includes swimming, ball skills and information and communication technology (ICT). Outstanding displays throughout the setting stimulate an enthusiasm for learning. Excellent teaching enables most children to reach or exceed their expected levels in all learning areas.
- 3.2 The careful assessments made by the highly experienced and motivated staff ensure that each child's planned next steps are suitably challenging. Staff are fully aware of each child's abilities. The children respond to high expectations set, making rapid progress. Learning challenges are identified quickly and strategies to assist, including parental involvement, implemented. This targeted support helps children with SEND to make extremely good progress. The EYFS is exceptionally successful in fulfilling its aim for all children to reach the highest standard they can achieve, within a high quality, well-resourced learning environment.
- 3.3 Parents very much appreciate the excellent communications with the staff and the many opportunities they have to support their children's learning, for example participating in the weekly 'puzzle it out'. A detailed handbook for parents enhances their familiarity with the EYFS. Helpful reports for parents highlight the progress their children make. Questionnaire responses and discussion show that parents are overwhelmingly supportive and extremely appreciative of the experienced staff. They are particularly enthusiastic about how well their children are looked after and how exceptionally well the school is led and managed.

3.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 3.4 Provision for the children's well-being is outstanding. A true sense of confidence is given to the children, especially the youngest, and their parents by their key person, as strong emotional bonds are developed. The happy, secure children explore with enthusiasm and enjoyment all the opportunities presented to them. They are encouraged to use their imagination to develop ideas, for example with dinosaurs. All staff are outstanding role models for courtesy, respect and consideration for others, supporting the setting's aims. The 'golden rules' and the 'pre-prep pals', puppets representing key values, are well understood. These promote excellent standards of behaviour within the setting and increasingly sophisticated co-operative play.
- 3.5 Starting in the youngest class, staff set high expectations for independence and the children respond with pride. This was illustrated by hand washing before eating. Lunchtime provides a very happy, well-mannered social occasion. As snacks are prepared and discussed, children learn about healthy eating. The lively gymnastic sessions reinforce the importance of physical exercise. The older children enjoy participating in optional extra-curricular activities such as 'multi-sports'. Regular reviews of risks facilitate independence and exploration within the safe but stimulating school grounds.
- 3.6 Excellent staff teamwork and careful planning prepare children well for transitions. Within the pre-prep, the children mix happily with older pupils during the day and during the well-organised before- and after-school care. For lunch and some sessions, children visit the main school.

3.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 3.7 Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors and leaders give excellent support to the EYFS. The highly qualified and effective team of practitioners has a clear understanding of all learning and development requirements. The new electronic systems for monitoring individual children's achievements are highly successful. All staff receive the necessary training in child protection, health, safety and medical interventions, and have been suitably checked on appointment. All members of the team work extremely well together to ensure that all children are treated equally and are very well cared for in an exciting and safe learning environment.
- 3.8 The staff communicate extremely well and have many informal discussions, but formal meetings including all practitioners are not held very frequently. All contribute to the regular sessions of EYFS self-evaluation and agree priorities for development plans. Very effective systems are undertaken for both staff supervision and appraisal. The staff appreciate the encouragement given towards their own personal professional development. The children benefit from the positive impact these initiatives have on their learning. The setting has an outstanding partnership with parents, who enthusiastically support activities and appreciate the opportunities for daily communication with staff. Very productive relationships are established with the local authority and therapists, who support children and advise staff on interventions as required.

3.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 3.9 The overall quality and standards of the provision are outstanding. All children, including the most able and those with SEND, make good progress in relation to their starting points, particularly in language and literacy. The youngest respond with enthusiasm to stories and enjoy drawing, for example triceratops. The oldest are beginning to read instructions and write words and simple sentences. Thinking skills are highly developed. Nursery children were thrilled to discover what happens when ice melts and Reception responded to the challenge of positional clues to find an imaginary bear in the woods. The youngest enjoyed counting the number of children present and the oldest were competent when weighing and measuring. Nursery children took successful photographs using a tablet computer, and in Reception children instructed programmable toys.
- 3.10 The children's personal and social development is outstanding. The EYFS children enjoyed attending a pre-prep assembly. They demonstrated excellent concentration whilst listening to the story, fully understanding the message to try again if not succeeding at first. At all ages they respect other children's ideas during circle time. The youngest co-operate as they play alongside each other, for example investigating a torch beam. The oldest support each other when completing puzzles. The requirements for safeguarding and care are met well; children feel safe and secure. The staff understand all aspects of the children's development extremely well, so that the children thrive in a happy, protected environment.
- 3.11 The EYFS has continued to provide the high standards reported at the previous inspection. The introduction of a whole-school system monitoring children's progress has been particularly successful, and the variety of ICT equipment for children's use has been considerably increased. Improvements are the result of the team's very effective evaluation of practices and the leadership's drive to provide the absolute best. The setting demonstrates a strong commitment to ongoing improvement to secure excellent opportunities for the children.