



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
LAXTON JUNIOR SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Laxton Junior School

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

Full Name of School	<b>Laxton Junior School</b>
DfE Number	<b>928/6051</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>309921</b>
Address	<b>Laxton Junior School East Road Oundle Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE8 4BX</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01832 277275</b>
Email Address	<b>info@laxtonjunior.org.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Mark Potter</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Julian Tregoning</b>
Age Range	<b>4 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>254</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (122 boys; 132 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): <b>35</b> 5-11: <b>219</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>254</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Rachel Waterhouse</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>04 Feb 2014 to 07 Feb 2014</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2008.

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, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 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.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr Graham Gorton

Reporting Inspector

Mrs Alison Edwards

Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, IAPS school)

Mr Mark Turner

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Mrs Sue Rix

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(a) Main findings</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(b) Action points</b>	<b>3</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>8</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	9
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	10
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>11</b>
(a) The quality of governance	11
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	11

## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Laxton Junior School was founded in 1973 as part of the Corporation of Oundle School; it prepares pupils primarily to move to Laxton, the day house of Oundle School, but also prepares pupils for other secondary schools in the area. The school moved in September 2002 to purpose-built premises on the edge of Oundle, Northamptonshire, and at that time doubled in size to become a two-form entry school educating pupils from the ages of 4 to 11. Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster has been appointed.
- 1.2 The Corporation of Oundle School is a charitable trust, and both Laxton Junior School and Oundle School are administered by the same governing body. There is a specific junior school committee, which is formed from within the full board. The chairman of this committee reports directly to the full board.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection, there were 254 pupils on roll (122 boys and 132 girls). There were 35 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 63 pupils in Years 1 and 2 and 156 in Years 3 to 6. The school is exempt from the learning and development requirements for children in the EYFS. Pupils are drawn mainly from professional families near Oundle, but the catchment area is predominantly within a 15-mile radius. Standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the national average. There are 21 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), with all fluent in the language. Twenty-eight pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), with seventy-one pupils across all age ranges receiving specialist learning support. A few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 1.4 The school's overarching aim is to provide an education of the highest order. The school seeks to identify and foster every pupil's talents, encouraging them to be self-confident and to learn a sense of value. It strives to achieve excellent results through a broad and enriched curriculum, whilst maintaining a happy atmosphere through a secure pastoral system which celebrates care for others and a strong sense of community. The school aims to successfully prepare each child for the next stage of their education.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' achievement and progress in all areas of school life is excellent. In the EYFS and at all ages, pupils are very well educated and the school is successful in its aim of giving pupils the opportunities to fulfil their academic potential and in preparing them effectively for their next school. By the end of the EYFS, children have met and in some cases exceeded all the Early Learning Goals. At the end of Year 6, pupils leave as competent learners with a positive outlook on life. Individual needs of pupils across the ability and age range are clearly identified; there are many opportunities given for extending gifted and talented pupils and excellent provision is made for those with SEND and EAL. The academic curriculum is very broad and challenging, and class sizes enable pupils to receive individual attention. Teaching and assessment are excellent, generally providing children with clear guidelines as to how they can improve, and a variety of teaching styles ensures that progress is rapid. However, planning in some subjects and by some teachers does not consistently identify strategies for challenging more able pupils. The excellent extra-curricular programme provides opportunity and choice and is much appreciated by pupils. Pupils approach their work with confidence and enthusiasm and their attitude to learning contributes significantly to their progress and achievement.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent. In line with the school's aim, pupils are confident, articulate, mutually supportive, respectful, caring and happy. They enjoy excellent relationships with their peers and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The high quality of the pupil teacher relationships is a strong feature of the school. A warm atmosphere of mutual respect is evident. The pastoral care of pupils is excellent. Pupils feel safe, well known and well supported; they have a wide choice of adults to whom they can turn with any concerns. The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 2.3 Governance is good and for the most part the governors fully discharge their responsibilities. However they have not ensured that all volunteers in the EYFS are correctly recruited because their process for monitoring compliance is not sufficiently rigorous. The governor committee of Laxton Junior School actively supports the development of the school. Strong and caring leadership and management across the school focuses extremely well on improvement through a thorough and detailed development plan. The school maintains excellent links with parents, carers and guardians. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents were appreciative of the quality of care given to their children, the high standards of behaviour and the appropriate range of subjects and areas of experience. The school has responded positively to the recommendation from the previous inspection through a continued focus on the school's strategic plan.

**2.(b) Action points****(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that all the required recruitment checks are carried out on volunteers according to the support they give the school [Part 3, paragraphs 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].

**(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that the excellent teaching practice found in many lessons is reflected in all, so that planning for the challenge of more able pupils is consistent.
2. Devise a reliable process for the governors to monitor compliance with the regulatory requirements.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school fulfils its aim to prepare each child for the next step in their school careers. Pupils are well prepared for each stage of their education and transfer smoothly to their next schools. Pupils participate thoroughly in all aspects of their education and leave the school as confident learners with an enthusiastic outlook on life.
- 3.3 Children in the EYFS make strong progress relative to their needs and abilities. The children can read simple texts, use phonics to construct words and write simple sentences. They use mathematical language well, such as terminology for weight and measures. They develop confident skills on the computer so they are able to access and benefit from educational games and they independently use a programmable toy. In music, children can repeat rhythms of increasing complexity and know some musical terms in Italian. Children are successful during tasks which involve investigation and exploration and have the ability to concentrate for sustained periods of time. They demonstrate the skills necessary to be active learners and to think critically.
- 3.4 From Year 1, pupils achieve high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of the curriculum. They read confidently and expressively from an early age. High reading levels show a significant depth of understanding for their age when, for example, discussing genres and others' perceptions of different styles. As pupils move through the school, they read and write with increasing fluency and for a wide variety of purposes. Much of this writing is of a high standard, showing clear evidence of creativity and critical thought. Pupils are extremely articulate and express themselves with confidence, as seen when older pupils debated the issue as to whether it was ethically sound to reintroduce extinct animals. Numeracy skills are of a high order and are applied well to investigation and problem-solving activities. In science, pupils are prepared to experiment for themselves and to test hypotheses. Pupils achieve to a high level when faced with ambitious, varied and challenging content in the subjects studied.
- 3.5 Pupil achievement is enhanced by the opportunities provided to become independent learners and to use information and communication technology (ICT), which is integrated successfully in most areas of the curriculum. Pupils' creative skills are excellent as demonstrated in many activities, such as the senior percussion ensemble. Pupils display imagination in art, design and technology and drama, and achieve high standards in a wide range of sporting activities in local and regional competitions at both individual and team level. Pupils perform well in ballet and music examinations, as they do in competitions in chess and in general knowledge quizzes.
- 3.6 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. Inspection evidence, consisting of lesson observations, pupils' written work and curricular interviews with them, confirms this judgement. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make an excellent rate of progress in relation to pupils of similar ability.

- 3.7 The attainment of pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent due to the time and attention that is given to their specific needs in lessons. Their progress is equally successful due to detailed planning and the provision of effective access to all curricular areas. The achievement of pupils who have been identified as able, gifted and talented is generally strong particularly when careful planning focuses on their specific needs. The pupils' overall achievement is supported by their excellent attitudes to learning, their positive behaviour, and the strong relationships enjoyed between themselves and their teachers. Pupils are full of enthusiasm for all they undertake and approach lessons with determination. They are loyal to teachers and the school, and both enjoy and persevere with their work, showing excellent application to their studies. Pupils work very well together, and effectively use opportunities for collaborative work in lessons. Their support of one another is second nature.
- 3.8 Pupils of all ages, including those in the EYFS, have wide-ranging opportunities to develop independent and critical thinking skills and they respond by exhibiting high levels of self-motivation and initiative.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 Children in the EYFS benefit from a broad, rich and stimulating curriculum that enables them to acquire a strong grounding in reading, writing and mathematics and which encourages them to explore, investigate and be creative, so that the needs of all who attend are met. A wide range of high quality resources, both indoors and out, is used effectively to enhance children's learning.
- 3.11 Those pupils with SEND are identified early and the excellent level of extra support is provided through carefully planned lessons, individual tuition and small group sessions. Comprehensive and detailed individual education plans (IEPs) are provided for all pupils who have any extra need and staff work closely with them to ensure rapid levels of progress and high levels of achievement. No special provision is currently made for those with EAL, as they are fluent in English; however, staff ensure that they can access all areas of the curriculum. More able pupils are extended effectively in most lessons through the high expectations of their teachers who provide suitably challenging work.
- 3.12 Throughout the school including the EYFS, the curriculum is wide-ranging and highly effective in its coverage of the requisite areas of learning, enabling the school to meet its aim to ensure that each pupil's individual abilities and potential are fully appreciated and nurtured. Subject time is well balanced and clear priority is given to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Specialist teaching in subjects such as art, music, physical education, French and science enriches and extends the curriculum for pupils of all ages including those in the EYFS. A comprehensive and effective personal, health and social education (PHSE) programme underpins the school curriculum and every opportunity is taken to embed this into school life, whether this be through discrete lessons, assemblies or through other subjects such as science or physical education.
- 3.13 There is wide opportunity across the curriculum for pupils to respond creatively and follow their interests, and to develop higher level technical skills and analytical thinking. These in particular make an extremely good contribution to pupils' achievements. Planning includes collaborative and open-ended learning

opportunities; for example every two years the Science Fair enables pairs of pupils to prepare and present on a scientific topic of particular interest to a panel of judges.

- 3.14 Resources are plentiful across the school and used skilfully and imaginatively to enhance the learning of pupils of all abilities. A well-stocked, organised and colourful school library provides plenty of stimulating and thought-provoking resources to support the curriculum across the school.
- 3.15 The provision for creative curricular areas, such as music, art and drama, is outstanding and gives a wide range of opportunities for achievement, participation and enjoyment for all ages and abilities. A broad range of well-planned day and residential visits related to curricular themes, including trips to places of historical interest, theatres and local landmarks provide pupils with excellent opportunities to extend their knowledge and experience, and provides authentic context for the curriculum.
- 3.16 The curriculum is supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities available to all pupils, including those in the EYFS, which makes a strong contribution to their personal development. Clubs appeal to a wide range of interests and change frequently to provide variety. Some clubs, such as fencing and karate, are operated by external specialists, adding further to the quality and range of physical opportunities being provided by the school's staff. Instrumental tuition is diverse and facilities available are used to great effect. The 'Fast Lane' strings group in Year 2 provides an accelerated learning experience on violoncello and violin, and exemplifies the school's provision for meeting the needs of talented pupils.
- 3.17 Pupils benefit well from strong community links, visiting the church at Christmas and for Candlemas, enjoying visits from the clergy, and forging links with chosen local charities. A wide range of successful fund-raising events is undertaken by each house, with local, national and international charities being supported. This enables pupils to contribute to, and understand their part in, the wider world. Pupils also take an active part in locally organised events such as the Oundle Festival of Literature, providing them with an excellent opportunity to contribute to the activity of their immediate community.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.18 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.19 This high quality of teaching largely fulfils the school's aim to enable pupils to reach their full academic potential. Teachers share with pupils an infectious interest and enthusiasm which stimulates their learning and contributes to their excellent progress. They know their pupils extremely well and generally plan to meet individual needs effectively.
- 3.20 The excellent rapport noted between teachers and pupils generates an affirmative and positive atmosphere in which pupils develop confidence and learn effectively. In interviews, pupils reported that teachers were always keen to help if they had difficulties, and this was confirmed in the very positive response to teaching in the pupil questionnaires. Pupils with SEND are very well supported in lessons and in specialist individual support given. Information from assessment is meticulously recorded and monitored by the learning support department, and teachers make good use of this to inform the next steps in their pupils' learning. The needs of the most able are generally well met, with opportunities for challenge and extension

provided in a number of lessons, although this features less consistently in planning in some subjects. The needs of pupils with EAL are extremely well met; whilst those currently in the school are fluent in English, when necessary teachers respond positively to the specific nature of their requirements enabling them to become successful learners.

- 3.21 Lessons of the highest quality are taught at a brisk pace, using a variety of stimulating tasks which readily catch and hold pupils' attention. Pupils engage with genuine interest and work purposefully both independently and collaboratively to complete them. Teachers show a passion and depth of understanding for their subject and communicate this to extremely good effect. Excellent use is made of resources to stimulate interest, enhance understanding and encourage further investigation, for example in the use of practical investigations in mathematics and science, enabling pupils to demonstrate independent ideas and reasoning of a high quality.
- 3.22 Children in the EYFS and pupils throughout the school benefit greatly from specialist teaching, ensuring excellent breadth to their learning. Teachers have high expectations and engage and motivate pupils to succeed; for example in a science lesson in the EYFS, children concentrated well, made predictions and were excited to discover which of the materials they tested were waterproof. Staff in the EYFS know the children very well and as a result employ a range of activities which support each child's interests and needs. Careful initial assessments of the children's starting points and regular perceptive checks of the children's progress are used to plan the next steps in each child's learning as they move through their year in the EYFS. Careful screening identifies any areas of weakness and appropriate support is given to ensure progress. Children of high ability in the EYFS are given stimulating and challenging activities, such as in the infants' chess club.
- 3.23 Teachers are making increasing, highly effective use of ICT to enhance the variety of activities in class. Interactive white boards are widely used to stimulate interest and support learning, and pupils are encouraged and guided in the use of the internet for further research. In addition, the variety of approach afforded by hand-held devices is being used with imagination and flair, such as in the recording of sound bites and voiceovers for the school's open day. Several year groups have their own 'blogs', enabling them to share with others their learning experiences through writing and photographs.
- 3.24 The best marking gives explicit guidance on how to improve, as well as praise for what is good, and this is combined with constructive comments in oral feedback. Pupils respond positively to this feedback, taking pride in the improvements it enables them to make in their work. In some areas, however, marking is inconsistent in the use of feedback to guide future learning. Regular assessment is carried out, both formally and informally, and the school has excellent systems for using this information to plan the next steps in learning and to monitor progress at all levels.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 Through its spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, the school meets its aim to have a lively and happy ethos based on a Christian framework of mutual respect extremely well.
- 4.3 In the EYFS the children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted highly effectively at all times, in keeping with the family ethos of the school. Children demonstrate high levels of awareness in relation to one another and are always happy to share and co-operate. Children show tolerance and understanding of one another's differences and are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- 4.4 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Pupils discuss, explore and ask questions about spirituality; for example, they asked inquisitively, 'Why do we pray?' Children experience a sense of awe and wonder at the size, age and beauty of the structure of regional places of worship when they visit them. Pupils reflect very well upon their relationship with God in whole school and other assemblies, communal singing and prayer. There are many excellent opportunities for pupils to heighten their spiritual awareness through music and art; for example, children painted pictures of their souls in response to a discussion of their views on what a person is.
- 4.5 Pupils' moral development is excellent. A clear code of behaviour helps children from an early age to develop a sense of right and wrong and an understanding that choices made will result in consequences through a system of rewards or sanctions. As children move through the school they become more self-aware and independent in their thinking. They develop the ability to be able to make better judgements about their rights and responsibilities, as well as those of others. Pupils wrote their own interpretations of the school rules with careful thought, appreciation and understanding.
- 4.6 Pupils' social development is excellent. They speak with great pride about the friendly and supportive atmosphere in the school. Older pupils have many opportunities to exercise social responsibility; they help younger children in the playground, in clubs and help staff in the library and in preparing the hall for assemblies. House captains provide leadership by praising examples of good behaviour or nominating charities for fund-raising at house meetings. In this way the school meets its aims of achieving a community in which happiness and mutual respect are of paramount significance. Pupils show strong political awareness as seen in their understanding of how a democracy works through electing their own school council members.
- 4.7 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. They have a strong knowledge of their own culture and show a mature empathy and depth of understanding for lifestyles and cultures which may be different from their own. Tolerance underpins the pupils' cultural appreciation. Opportunities to celebrate western cultural tradition and to appreciate and enjoy the diversity of other cultures and faiths are plentiful. Pupils' British cultural identity and understanding of tradition was demonstrated in their taking part in a 'Last Night at the Proms' sing-along, complete with Union Jacks and singing 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Pupils' excellent cultural awareness is demonstrated through the appreciation of events such as Chinese New Year, with

pupils painting Chinese characters in art and sharing the festival and associated traditions in a whole school assembly. Others derived much pleasure and interest and increased their understanding through handling African artefacts, wearing African masks and playing African drums. Pupils' experience and depth of understanding is further enhanced through educational visits and visitors, for example through a residential visit to York to support a study of the Vikings.

- 4.8 By the time the pupils leave the school, the development of their personal qualities is excellent, rooted in positive and polite day-to-day interactions with all members of the school community. Pupils grow in confidence and are self-aware, kind and tolerant. They become emotionally literate and develop a high level of self-worth. They benefit from the supportive and warm environment provided by the staff and have harmonious relations with one another.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.9 The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.10 These arrangements contribute strongly to pupils' excellent personal development and to the school's aim to create a lively and happy ethos. Parents and pupils are extremely appreciative of the care the school provides, as indicated in their overwhelmingly positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires.
- 4.11 In the EYFS, provision for the children's well-being is excellent. Consistent routines and the careful teaching of expected behaviour, together with a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the classrooms, enables children to develop strong and secure relationships with their peers, fellow pupils and their key person. The older children act as buddies to the Reception children, helping and encouraging them during playtimes and accompanying them to lunch, acting as responsible older brothers and sisters. The promotion of the children's happiness and security by staff enables them to enjoy their learning, develop independence and play co-operatively.
- 4.12 Throughout the school, staff provide outstanding support and guidance for the pupils. Teachers know the pupils in their care extremely well. Pupils turn to them readily for help and advice and know that any difficulties they have will be well supported. An excellent pastoral system ensures that all pupils are treated with individual care. The school has highly effective procedures to monitor any pupil concerns, which are shared and discussed with staff, recorded and responded to with diligence and care.
- 4.13 Relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves, are outstanding and are key to the school's ethos and the pupils' personal development. Form teachers carefully foster relationships within peer groups, and this is extended across other ages in house meetings. A culture of consideration and kindness for others permeates all social and learning contexts. Pupils of all ages appreciate the nature and value of good relationships. The success of these relationships, widely evident throughout the school, is frequently praised and rewarded by staff who amply demonstrate the qualities they seek to promote. Notice boards provide attractive visual reminders of the qualities that matter to the school.
- 4.14 The school promotes healthy living extremely well. Pupils benefit from an excellent range of physical activities, in and outside curriculum time, which makes full use of the facilities available for regular exercise. They gain an appreciation of how to stay healthy through the PHSE programme and their learning in science. The food

provided is nutritious and appetising, with healthy choices for lunch and a variety of fresh fruit available for breaks and throughout the day.

- 4.15 The school is highly effective in promoting good behaviour. A clear reward structure operates to promote success in all areas and this is greatly valued by the pupils. Sanctions, which are generally seen by pupils as fair, are logged and monitored centrally so that all staff are aware of any issues raised. The procedures for anti-bullying are rigorous and pupils are confident that, should any incident of bullying occur, this would be swiftly and effectively dealt with. The behaviour and bullying logs seen indicate that sanctions are rarely needed, but when they are, they are used appropriately and consistently.
- 4.16 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.17 From Year 1, pupils' views are sought and responded to through the means of a school council which meets regularly, with members elected by each year group. Pupils make sensible and interesting suggestions, including the idea for a kindness week which has been implemented and to which pupils have responded with enthusiasm.

#### **4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.18 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.19 The school, including the EYFS, gives a high priority to the safeguarding of pupils and to ensuring their health and safety, in line with the school's aims and in support of their excellent personal development. The safeguarding arrangements are effective on a day-to-day basis. However, insufficient checks on the suitability of volunteers in the EYFS were carried out. Staff receive appropriate training in child protection that is kept up-to-date. Notices around the school provide a constant reminder about safeguarding, demonstrating the importance that the school places on this area.
- 4.20 The school has clear procedures for the administration of medicines, and for looking after pupils who are sick or injured. Staff and pupils alike accept responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe. Members of staff are appropriately trained in first aid, including suitable paediatric first aid qualifications in the EYFS. Records are kept of any accidents or injuries and the school has clear procedures for informing parents. The school ensures it monitors carefully the welfare of those pupils who have SEND.
- 4.21 Suitable arrangements reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked, and fire evacuation drills are practised half-termly. Potential risks in classrooms, around the school site and on visits out of school are identified and evaluated. The school site is checked regularly by the Oundle maintenance team and any potential hazards are dealt with quickly and efficiently. The school is kept extremely clean and excellent attention is given to food hygiene.
- 4.22 The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The full board of governors are committed to the success of the school and are fully supportive of its aims. The board has a wide range of professional expertise and a good range of sub-committees largely oversee all areas of school life.
- 5.3 One such committee is the Laxton Junior School committee which is made up of four board members, and their excellent work is supported by attendees from the senior leadership team (SLT), and key personnel from Oundle School. The work of this committee forms part of the discussions which take place at full board meetings. The committee has an excellent understanding of school life, including the EYFS, and a secure knowledge of performance and standards throughout the school. Governors on this committee have a strong insight into the working of the school and are effective in exercising their monitoring role on a day-to-day basis, by providing support, challenge and stimulus for growth and improvement. Formal and informal communication enables governors on the committee to review the school's improvement plan and the long-term vision for the school. They visit the school on a frequent basis and are in regular contact with the SLT providing excellent support in all appropriate matters. Through regular attendance at the school, committee members know staff very well and there is strong mutual respect between the two groups. Other governors on the full board are not as well known to the school's staff.
- 5.4 Close liaison by the full board of governors with the finance and administrative teams together with the SLT ensures that high levels and quality of staffing, accommodation and resourcing are maintained and regularly reviewed. The full board endeavours to discharge its responsibilities for statutory requirements through participation in training, and it has carried out the annual review of the child protection policy and the efficiency with which the related duties have been undertaken. However, the governors have not monitored with sufficient care the school's compliance with regulatory requirements, in particular that all recruitment checks on volunteers in the EYFS have been undertaken.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians is good overall.
- 5.6 Staff are extremely well led and managed. The senior leadership team leads the school with flair, imagination and determination. Staff talk about the way school leadership promotes the strong team work and happy working environment. Mutual and collaborative support underpinned by strong leadership is a prominent feature of the school's success in this aspect.
- 5.7 The SLT are clear about their aim that the pupils should be confident and happy as well as challenged in all sections of the school, including the EYFS. Leadership and management provide clear educational direction, as reflected in the high quality of the pupils' education and the excellent standard of their personal development.



There is a strong management structure within the school, supported by clear job descriptions, which enables all staff members to give of their best and to contribute to pupils' academic and social well-being. In interview, staff spoke passionately about their roles within the leadership structure. They are supported and effectively challenged by senior leaders. Subject leaders carry out clear roles and responsibilities extremely well which have a growing impact on teaching and learning.

- 5.8 The senior leadership team meets regularly. Its meetings are thorough and detailed in content with agendas addressing all aspects of school life. Transparency across the staff is assured by the fact that an agenda is set and the meetings are minuted and circulated to all. At all levels of responsibility, the leadership and management of the school are generally strong in discharging their delegated responsibilities, to meet the needs of all pupils. Policies are reviewed regularly and implemented consistently.
- 5.9 Leadership and management are effective in self-evaluation, setting priorities and ensuring that they are achieved. In the EYFS, the evaluation and monitoring of practice is well-established and its development plan links to the whole school development plan, identifying clear targets for improvement. In all areas of the school, leadership and management are actively involved in developing strategies to improve teaching and learning. Positive attitudes to sharing good practice amongst staff forms part of the school's drive to continually improve. Subject leaders identify the importance of effective curriculum planning, and working more closely together when possible. Consequently, the SLT are able to schedule priorities and enable strategic planning and associated budgeting. This represents a positive response to the recommendation from the previous inspection to maintain a focus on development planning.
- 5.10 Management at all levels is generally successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff and ensuring they are suitably trained for their roles, particularly in relation to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. An excellent induction process for newly appointed staff covers all the necessary areas of policy and implementation. In the EYFS all staff are appraised regularly, teaching is monitored and supervision of staff is carried out. However, sufficient care and attention has not been given to the checking of volunteers in the EYFS; all regular staff in the school have been recruited carefully and have received enhanced disclosures and a barred list check. Training and support is offered both from senior management and from externally provided courses. Throughout the school, regular peer observation coupled with a three-yearly full appraisal cycle carried out by the SLT is a strong feature of performance management.
- 5.11 Links with parents, guardians and carers are excellent. In keeping with its 'family' ethos, the school has established highly effective links with parents which strongly support the pupils in their care. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents were highly satisfied with the education and support provided for their children. Parents are unanimous in their appreciation of the extensive range of information that is available through daily contact books, monthly newsletters, the annual school report, emails, the school website, the music 'blog', and, for the younger age classes, the class 'blogs'. In the EYFS, the school works closely and effectively with parents and external agencies to ensure that effective support for children needing particular help with their learning and development is provided. Questionnaire responses indicated that parents of

children in the EYFS are extremely appreciative of the advice, help and support they receive from staff.

- 5.12 There are many opportunities throughout the school for parents to be actively involved in school life. Parents are invited to a rich selection of events throughout the year, such as assemblies, concerts and performances. Opportunities are given to have lunch with their children and to assist on trips and visits. There are many parent volunteers supporting the school in various ways.
- 5.13 Throughout the school, parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's academic and social progress through information evenings and a variety of excellent publications such as the curriculum handbook, information on the teaching of number and calculations, and anti-bullying information. Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with an excellent handbook containing thorough information about the school. High quality, detailed and helpful reports are sent home twice a year. There are three parents' conferences each year, as well as opportunities to share children's work. In addition, staff are available for discussion and respond promptly to emails.
- 5.14 The school has an appropriate complaints procedure. Parents confirm that any problems are dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- 5.15 The parents' and friends' association (PFA) is very active and provides many opportunities to socialise and support the work of the school, such as coffee mornings, and is also involved in fund-raising for local and national charities. Members of the PFA provide valuable help on open days. Each year group has a PFA representative who is able to act as a further channel of communication with the school and who ensures new parents are welcomed into the school community.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**