



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
WIDFORD LODGE SCHOOL**

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Widford Lodge School

Full Name of School	Widford Lodge School		
DfE Number	881/6005		
EYFS Number	EY309279		
Address	Widford Lodge School Widford Road Chelmsford Essex CM2 9AN		
Telephone Number	01245 352581		
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Email Address	admin@widfordlodge.co.uk		
Head	Mr Simon Trowell		
Chair of Proprietors	Mrs Louise Gear		
Age Range	2 years 6 months to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	253		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (146 boys; 107 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	1	5-11: 200
	3-5 (EYFS):	52	
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Jo Taylor		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection Dates	20 May 2014 to 23 May 2014		

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 June 2010.

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. 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. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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 proprietor, 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

Mrs Linda Donowho

Mr Mike Crossley

Dr Simon Willcocks

Miss Jackie Scotney

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Widford Lodge School was founded as a day and boarding school for boys in 1935. It became a day school only towards the end of the 1980s and has admitted girls from 1995. The school premises consist mainly of a large Victorian villa and other buildings situated in about five acres of woodland on the outskirts of Chelmsford. It also owns a nine-acre playing field a short distance away. The school is still owned by the founding family, who also form the board of directors. The school is now a limited company. One member of the family acts as bursar, registrar and is the chair of the proprietors.
- 1.2 The school aims to educate its pupils through a broad and balanced curriculum so that they can meet the challenges of the wider world. It seeks to provide a purposeful, safe and secure environment whilst taking into account the values of honesty, courtesy and respect for others.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 253 pupils on roll; 146 boys and 107 girls. There were 53 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), of whom 33 were in the pre-school and one was under the age of three; the majority join the school at this stage and most attend on a part-time basis for at least three mornings a week, before becoming full-time pupils in Reception. Sixty pupils are in Years 1 and 2 and 140 are in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are drawn from the Chelmsford area and come predominantly from business and professional families. Most pupils are of white British ethnicity and a small proportion is drawn from a range of other nationalities and cultures. The school has identified 26 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 22 of whom receive additional support; none has a statement of special educational needs. Five pupils use English as an additional language (EAL), but none of these require extra support. From the results of nationally standardised tests, the ability profile of the school is above the national average.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the EYFS and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Pre-School	Nursery (age 2-4)
Kindergarten	Reception (age 4-5)

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements, and of their learning, is excellent. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND and EAL, are very successfully educated, as are the more able. The school amply fulfils its principal aim to educate its pupils through a broad and balanced curriculum, which has been reviewed since the previous inspection, so that pupils can meet the challenges of the wider world. Pupils develop high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills, which they apply effectively over a broad range of academic and creative subjects, games and activities. Their love of reading is reflected in the high standard of their writing and the school encourages this through its focus on everyday reading for all of its pupils. Pupils visibly enjoy learning and appreciate the opportunities available. Their achievements are reflected in their success in their entrance examinations to academically selective schools. The pupils' success is also promoted by excellent teaching and their exemplary attitudes to learning, which contribute particularly well to their progress. In lessons, teaching methods are particularly effective in motivating and enthusing pupils, and challenging them to work collaboratively and think for themselves. A clear structure of assessment data is now used across the school to monitor pupils' progress; however, marking of pupils work does not always indicate direction for improvement for pupils. Older pupils in the EYFS are not given sufficient opportunities to apply investigative skills in activities of their own choice.
- 2.2 The personal qualities of pupils within the context of the school's life are significant. Pupils collaborate exceptionally well and are tolerant and respectful with regard to each other's views. Of particular note is the caring relationship between the older and younger pupils. The relationship between pupils and staff and amongst the pupils themselves is a strength of the school and pastoral care is excellent. Pupils are given many opportunities for responsibilities and accept these with enthusiasm and pride. The provision for the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of pupils is excellent and effectively supports their outstanding personal development. Pupils' responses to pre-inspection questionnaires were extremely positive about the school. A small number commented that teachers are not always fair, but, in speaking to pupils and observing the care given to them, no evidence was found to support this.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is excellent. The chair of the proprietors has a keen oversight of all aspects of school life and plays an active part in its success. She is fully focused in her dedication and determination to achieve the highest possible success for all pupils throughout the school. The safety and welfare of the pupils is a high priority and all policies are reviewed regularly with regard for recent statutory guidance on safeguarding. Leadership and management are excellent, with effective policies and procedures which support pupils considerably in their academic and personal development. Recruitment procedures are efficient and safe, and all checks on staff, regular assistants and visitors are now applied fully and correctly. The strong relationship between the chair and the leadership team of the school adds much to this success. Monitoring across the school falls mainly on the shoulders of the leadership team and opportunities for subject co-ordinators to fully monitor the teaching of their subjects are limited. Links with parents are excellent; they are extremely satisfied with all aspects of the school's educational and pastoral

provision. Since the previous inspection, the management structure has been reviewed and roles have been clarified.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Further develop marking to ensure that targets regularly inform pupils how to improve their learning.
 2. Develop the role of the subject co-ordinators further to enable them to monitor the teaching of their subjects more effectively and consistently.
 3. Broaden opportunities for older children in the EYFS to apply investigative skills in self-chosen activities.

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 Across a wide range of areas, including academic subjects, music, art, sport and performing arts, in accordance with the school's aim to educate its pupils through a broad and balanced curriculum so that they can meet the challenges of the wider world. Pupils demonstrate strong factual knowledge, effectively apply their skills in all subjects and show excellent understanding of the curriculum as a whole.
- 3.3 Throughout all stages of the school, pupils are highly skilled in literacy. They write with fluency and present their work at an extremely good standard. They read with enthusiasm and skill; this is supported by daily reading sessions for all pupils from books of their own choice. Pupil's verbal skills are of particular note; they think and reason for themselves and are able to confidently explain their point of view, whilst listening carefully and respectfully to their peers. Numeracy skills are of a high order and are applied particularly well to investigative and mathematically challenging activities. Scientific knowledge is acquired through a wide range of activities which often include opportunities for independent thought and reasoning. Computer skills are well developed from an early age.
- 3.4 Pupil's physical skills are also well developed throughout the school because pupils take part in a wide range of sports and activities. The school's inclusive approach enables pupils of all abilities to take part in these activities against other independent schools and local primary schools. Whilst pupils enjoy their success, such as that of the under-9 boys' rugby at the regional heats of the National Schools Rugby Tournament, and the under-11 girls' netball teams who represented their school at the National Finals, pupils say that they appreciate that all abilities are at some time given an opportunity to represent their school. Pupils achieve individual success in speech and drama examinations, many achieving distinctions. They are successful in individual music examinations as well as performing in the school choirs and instrumental concerts, and several pupils join Chelmsford Young Strings. A testimony to their creativity is the high standard of art work displayed around the school.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at age seven have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. Results in reading and mathematics have been exceptional, outperforming results in writing. Results in national tests at age eleven have also been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. Results in mathematics in 2013 were exceptional. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make progress that is at least good, and for some pupils excellent, in relation to pupils of similar abilities. This high rate of progress was confirmed in lesson observations, pupils' written work and curriculum interviews with them. Less able pupils and those with SEND make excellent progress because they are well supported. They are withdrawn from lessons for individual work, and also given extra help in class by their teacher or classroom assistants. More able pupils, and those with particular talents, are well catered for in lessons and in the opportunities provided for them in extra-curricular activities. The majority of pupils transfer at the age of eleven to academically selective independent and maintained senior schools. Pupils are successful in gaining places to a senior school of their

choice with a good number demonstrating high achievement in winning scholarships.

- 3.6 Pupils have an excellent work ethic and they are enthusiastic learners from an early age. They are highly motivated and co-operative, and keen to be involved in lessons and activities, displaying an excellent level of concentration throughout the day. The respect for one another amongst pupils, and between pupils and staff, is a strength of the school. Each has high expectations of the other. As a result, pupils' behaviour in class is generally excellent. Pupils work very well both together and independently, they say they enjoy school and demonstrate a willingness to succeed.

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

- 3.7 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The school provides a curriculum that is suited to pupils of all ages and abilities and fulfils the school's aim to educate its pupils through a broad and balanced curriculum, so that they can meet the challenges of the wider world. It is effective in promoting the pupils' excellent standards of achievement whilst providing a range of creative, linguistic and technological experiences with a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and science. The curriculum offers an excellent level of challenge for the pupils and provides a secure framework for them to use their initiative, work independently and collaboratively, as well as engage in self-directed research. It is strongly supported by the extra-curricular provision.
- 3.9 The curriculum covers the requisite areas of learning. Specialist teaching increases as the pupils progress through the school. From Year 1 to Year 4, pupils are supported by class-based teaching and benefit from specialist teaching for games, music, information and communication technology (ICT), art and French. Additional specialist teaching from Year 4 enhances the curriculum further for the older pupils. Since the previous inspection a curriculum review has taken place. History is now taught chronologically from Year 3 onwards and the school comes together on history days which allows all the pupils to study the same historical period in depth. The school uses ICT as a valuable tool to support particular aspects of the curriculum, as well as being taught as a discrete subject, providing opportunities for the early development of computer programming. The introduction of the Virtual Learning Environment, which is an online educational platform that is used as an extension of normal school lessons, allows pupils to share an interest and have assignments set and monitored by staff.
- 3.10 There is clear progression in the development of the curriculum, and planning across all subjects is meticulous. It is closely monitored by curriculum co-ordinators and prepares the pupils extremely well for the next stage of their education. The breadth of the curriculum is further enhanced by the use of cross-curricular links between subjects such as English, history and geography.
- 3.11 Curricular support for those requiring additional help is successful, and the systems for identifying and supporting such pupils work well. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) liaises with staff, and children being identified as requiring support are given individual education plans. Work is appropriately matched to their needs in lessons and excellent use is made of teaching assistants. Pupils identified by the school as being able and talented are well catered for in lessons and through extra-curricular opportunities. For example, they organise theme days for the whole

school, centred on their particular interest and they work in groups to prepare for high-level debates. Pupils with EAL, although not needing extra support in lessons, are made aware that support is available should they want it.

- 3.12 The extra-curricular framework provides strong support to several aspects of the curriculum particularly in sport and music. Pupils express great enthusiasm for activities provided by members of staff, and lunchtime and after-school activities are extremely well attended. A number of older pupils expressed the desire for some clubs with a more academic focus. The inspection team believes the range of options offered is wide and varied. The curriculum is enriched by the day and residential trips that support the topics being studied across the school. Pupils' experiences are further broadened by a wide range of visiting specialists and workshops. The school has excellent links with the wider community; for example, pupils raise money for a number of local charities, sing in the local church, visit a residential home for the elderly and enjoy very close ties with a local school for pupils with SEND. These activities afford the pupils opportunities to develop social and personal skills, considerably enrich the curriculum and are of great benefit to them.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.14 Teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' progress. It fosters pupils' interest in learning, strongly supporting the school's aims. Pupils of all ages and abilities are enabled to acquire knowledge and skills which facilitate learning and high achievement. Particular strengths of the teaching are meticulous planning and the use of resources. Clear learning objectives are evident within subject documentation and lesson plans; consequently, lessons take account of the needs of all pupils. Lessons are structured carefully with optimum use of time and the use of a range of strategies to ensure pupils are engaged in lessons, promoting genuine interest and enthusiasm from the pupils. The most effective and challenging lessons reflect high quality subject knowledge and activities which are well matched to the pupils' individual abilities. In these lessons, the pupils respond enthusiastically as teachers skilfully question them to challenge their thinking.
- 3.15 Pupils with SEND or EAL who need additional help are well supported by the SENCO and her team and very good targeted use is made of teaching assistants in lessons. Teachers regularly and skilfully match specific tasks to different pupils' needs including the pupils identified as more able. These pupils, particularly in mathematics, are taught in small groups in order to challenge their thinking further.
- 3.16 All teaching is encouraging, supported by high expectations of pupils. This allows pupils to develop the confidence to contribute to their lessons with great enthusiasm and perseverance, work independently and take risks which leads to excellent achievement. Many teachers incorporate the use of ICT effectively in lessons; however, the use of ICT is not consistent across all subjects.
- 3.17 Since the previous inspection there has been a more secure focus on monitoring pupils' progress effectively and a comprehensive assessment programme is carried out. Data is used well to check that progress over time is as high as it should be for most pupils. Marking is regular, and a significantly high proportion of it is congratulatory and summative. Pupils feel that they make good progress with their work through the support of their teachers and they value the oral feedback they

receive, saying it helps them to make further progress. Pupils own assessment of their learning through a 'traffic light' system, check lists and peer marking in some subjects give pupils regular opportunities to reflect on, and evaluate, their work, but these do not always set targets to inform pupils of what they need to do to improve. 'Skills ladders' used in humanities, where skills are listed, enable the pupils to know which skills they have acquired and which ones they are working towards.

- 3.18 Teachers have very high expectations for pupils, and praise and encouragement are used to good effect. All staff know their pupils well and the excellent relationships are marked by mutual respect, creating an environment conducive to learning and exemplary behaviour from pupils in class.

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 The personal development of the pupils is of the highest quality throughout the school and is promoted by exceptionally strong relationships with staff and excellent pastoral care. In accordance with the school's aims, the pupils display a strong sense of respect of self and others and individuals are valued for their contribution to the community. By the time pupils leave the school, their confidence, poise and personal growth are excellent.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Their self-worth is strongly evident and fostered through many aspects of school life. The pupils reflect and explore their feelings and emotions very well, and develop values and principles to widen their perspective of life during personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, music, art and assemblies. In a recent assembly, pupils reflected carefully on why they should trust God, and older pupils demonstrated great spiritual awareness when challenging metaphysical concepts in religious studies. Both music and art provide stimulating platforms for spiritual awareness and reflection with an art master class resulting in a thoughtful origami display depicting a desire for world peace. Pupils are caring and considerate towards others; they recognise the abilities and skills of all members of the school community and are able to evaluate and reflect upon their own achievements, offering mature, self-critical observations of their work and behaviour. They carefully consider the values and beliefs of faiths other than their own and the well-planned programme of religious education adds to the pupils' development.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral development is excellent; pupils show a keen sense of fairness, distinguishing easily between right and wrong. Their understanding of the need for rules and boundaries is grounded on a sense of mutual and collaborative responsibility. Kindness, courtesy and concern for others are highly regarded. Pupils are very adept at making judgements about their rights and responsibilities demonstrating a willingness to make a difference through the school council. Pupils' knowledge of ethical and moral issues is further developed well through their PSHE programme.
- 4.5 Pupils interact with each other with tolerance and mutual respect, showing outstanding social development. From an early age the pupils develop excellent co-operative team-working skills in their choirs and orchestras and in classroom activities, and they are proud of the many responsibilities they are given, such as house captains, charity organisers, and head boy and girl, as well as representatives on the school council. Pupils also demonstrate strong political awareness as seen in their understanding of how a democracy operates through the election of their own school council members; pupils feel valued and have a voice within their school community. Throughout the school, pupils have a broad knowledge of public institutions and services appropriate to their ages. Pupils are effectively encouraged to develop an empathy with those less fortunate than themselves, taking part in community initiatives and supporting local and international charities, such as one in Kenya, by holding fund-raising events.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. They demonstrate a conspicuous understanding of their own culture as well as those lifestyles and cultures very

different from their own. This is strengthened through literature selected for whole class reading in English and through activities such as writing to pen friends in Zambia and designing and creating Aboriginal art. The pupils' depth of understanding has been further developed through the school's European Languages Day, Africa Day activities and the Chinese New Year whole school events.

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

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The pastoral guidance provided by the school fulfils its aim to encourage its pupils to take into account the values of honesty, courtesy and respect of self and others and makes a strong contribution to their personal development. Across all aspects of the school's life, staff provide exemplary pastoral support for pupils, who in turn feel extremely well nurtured and valued. Efficient procedures work extremely well to bring out the best in each individual while ensuring that concerns are dealt with promptly. Staff are excellent role models, and the class teacher takes responsibility for the academic progress and welfare of the pupils, strongly supported by the senior leadership team. Throughout the school, relationships between pupils and staff, and amongst the pupils themselves, are excellent and form the foundation of both the ethos in the school and its quality of care. Older pupils proudly escort younger pupils safely to class after drop-off in the mornings, reflecting the school's values and beliefs and the welcoming, caring and supportive nature of the school community.
- 4.9 The school's policies and procedures for promoting an ethos of positive behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying work very well. In class and around the school, respect for others is evident. Pupils said in interviews that, on the rare occasions when bullying does occur, it is usually mild in form and dealt with quickly and effectively. The rewards and sanctions system is clearly understood and a positive motivator. A small minority of pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that staff were not always fair in the way they gave rewards and sanctions. However, no evidence was found to support this in discussions with pupils and staff during the inspection, or in examination of bullying and behaviour records where sanctions were appropriate and fairly applied. Pupils feel that the school is a welcoming, happy, caring place where people get on well with each other, and a very high proportion of pupils said in the questionnaire that they like being at the school.
- 4.10 Healthy eating and the need to take regular exercise are seen as very important aspects of the pupils' education, and this is re-enforced by the strongly inclusive sporting programme. Catering arrangements, appreciated by pupils and parents, ensure an excellent choice of food. The school has a suitable plan for educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.11 Channels of communication are excellent. A vibrant school council ensures pupils' views are heard. Representatives are selected by ballot from Year 3 upwards on a yearly basis. In addition, termly meetings are arranged with every pupil through form tutors to ensure opportunities exist to hear the views of all pupils.

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

- 4.12 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.13 The safeguarding arrangements, including safer recruitment procedures, now show the required attention to detail in both their recording and implementation. The school's concern for every pupil comprehensively guides all actions, and effectively promotes rigorous welfare, health and safety arrangements, supporting the school's aims and making a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Of particular note is the care taken when pupils walk to the school field for games. The chair of the proprietors who takes responsibility for health and safety is kept fully informed of any health and safety issues at every stage. There are particularly thorough arrangements for staff training in safeguarding and child protection procedures, and the policy is comprehensive in its detail.
- 4.14 All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards, with thorough risk assessments covering all areas of the school. Regular fire drills are held and appropriate records are kept. All staff have received clear guidelines on fire safety and are given regular updates. Electrical testing is comprehensive and is recorded appropriately.
- 4.15 Pupils who are ill or injured are cared for in a suitable medical room and careful records are maintained. All staff receive training in first aid, with many trained in paediatric first aid. Staff are well informed about individual pupils' needs and conditions, including any pupils with SEND or EAL, and pupils are looked after with great care.
- 4.16 The completion of admission and attendance registers is detailed and rigorous. Attendance is promptly recorded and monitored on a daily basis, with any concerns being immediately followed up. The registers are appropriately stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governance for the school is provided by the chair of the proprietors, along with the board of directors. The work of the school is meticulously overseen by the chair, who has a strong commitment to the fulfilment of the aims and the preservation of the ethos of the school. Responsibility for the educational and strategic development of the school is shared between the chair and leadership team who work particularly well together. Careful financial planning by the chair together with the board of directors enables them to make the level of investment in staff, accommodation and resources necessary to maintain provision of the high quality of education in which the school excels.
- 5.3 In her role as bursar and registrar, the chair of the proprietors spends time in school each day as well as attending weekly management meetings and being part of the whole school community. This enables close contact with staff, pupils and parents ensuring she is very much part of school life. Together with regular detailed reports from the head, this gives the chair an exceptional overview of, and opportunities for monitoring, the work of the school, providing challenge and support for the leadership team in its plans for future development.
- 5.4 The chair, together with the directors, is effective in discharging the responsibility for child protection, welfare health and safety and ensures that the school meets all statutory requirements, including undertaking the annual review and evaluation of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school.

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 excellent.
- 5.6 Leadership strongly supports the school's aims, so that pupils work productively in a nurturing, safe and secure environment. The vision and determination of the leadership and the committed and supportive management provide clear educational direction, as illustrated by the high quality of the pupils' education, the pupils' enthusiasm for learning, and the excellent standard of their personal development.
- 5.7 Since the previous inspection, senior management has been re-structured and its responsibilities have been clarified. Management processes have been developed and carried out in response to the recommendations at that time. Whole school policies provide practical and achievable guidance for staff across a range of school activities, contributing significantly to the pupils' academic progress and personal development.
- 5.8 Communication and consultation are purposeful and informative, and enable all staff to make their views known and to contribute to policy and practice. Within this ethos, the leadership team have produced an effective and detailed plan for improvement in which priorities have been identified along with the names of staff taking responsibility. It includes clear criteria for judging success, the timescales for

completion and outlines a range of improvements which it is intended will enhance the educational experiences of the pupils.

- 5.9 Monitoring of teaching and learning and the delivery of the curriculum is undertaken by the senior management team through the scrutiny of pupils' work and the observation of lessons. In addition, the role of the subject co-ordinator is clearly defined. They regularly oversee the comprehensive planning and schemes of work. They understand the value of the lesson observations and book scrutiny, and a system for them to carry these processes out regularly in their subjects to support colleagues is developing. However, in practice it lacks consistency across subjects.
- 5.10 Senior staff in the prep and pre-prep departments meet together regularly. This facilitates smooth transition for pupils and helps develop and implement the school's efficient policies. It also provides time to discuss and implement new initiatives. The school pays careful attention to the development of all staff and a new comprehensive appraisal system is undertaken. This determines priorities for additional professional development and further monitors teaching and learning.
- 5.11 Systems for pastoral care are carefully monitored and all staff are trained according to their responsibilities in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. All appointments of staff and volunteers now follow scrupulously the principles of safer recruitment, and the necessary checks are suitably recorded in the central register and individual files.
- 5.12 Teaching and classroom support staff are deployed effectively and they make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning and welfare. Secretarial, administrative and other non-teaching staff fully understand their roles and play an active part in supporting pupils.
- 5.13 Links with parents are excellent. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents indicated that they were happy with the education and support that the school provides. All parents felt that their children were well looked after by the school, and that the school was well led and managed. This positive view was echoed by the parents who were spoken to during the inspection. They placed great importance on the traditional values that are embedded throughout the school.
- 5.14 Relationships between the school and parents are strong. Parents spoken to during the inspection week felt that the staff go above and beyond what is expected of them to listen and respond to their needs. Parents indicate that their questions receive timely responses. The school has a clear and appropriate complaints procedure. On investigation, inspectors found that parents' concerns are heard promptly, recorded appropriately and in detail, and treated with care and consideration; as a result the vast majority can be dealt with swiftly and informally.
- 5.15 There are many opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of the school. The active Friends of Widford Lodge, which is made up of representatives from each year group, organises a wide range of fund-raising events that benefit charities, as well as the whole school community. These include the summer ball, Christmas fayre, and uniform sales. Opportunities exist for parents to support their children, for example, in special assemblies, plays and sporting events.
- 5.16 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with a wealth of relevant information about the school through a variety of publications, including the fortnightly newsletter and welcome booklets. The school website enables

prospective and current parents to access up-to-the-minute news and details of events.

- 5.17 Parents are provided with informative progress reports twice yearly. These outline the work covered, and the progress that children make. In the winter term reports, areas for future development are identified in core subjects, which are beneficial to parents and pupils alike. Formal parents' evenings provide opportunities for the sharing of information about pupils' personal development and achievements between teachers and parents.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

- 6.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. Well-qualified, knowledgeable staff provide a balanced curriculum across the areas of learning. This enables the majority of children to meet the expected levels of development for their age, with many exceeding them by the end of the EYFS. Children's experiences are enriched through the provision of specialist taught lessons, such as physical education and French. In these, children display well-developed skills for their age. Staff provide a successful balance of adult-led and self-chosen activities, particularly so for younger children. For example, children think critically whilst choosing to re-visit a measuring activity; they are keen to build and compare towers of cubes. Although older children have opportunities to engage in self-selected activities both indoors and out, access to these is inconsistent across the week. This sometimes limits their ability to spontaneously investigate and apply their prior learning in meaningful situations.
- 6.2 Across the EYFS, care is taken to plan activities that meet individual children's needs. This helps them to make very good progress. For example older children benefit from activities which are matched to their needs during literacy and mathematics sessions. Here, more able children are presented with appropriate challenge, and those who need it receive appropriate support and reinforcement. Children with SEND or EAL are well supported by staff who complete individualised plans that help them target their specific needs and they are provided with excellent intervention. Staff make learning fun; they often weave children's interests into activities, such as using dinosaurs to count. They use questioning extremely well to extend children's learning, encouraging them to explore and develop their creativity. Staff are enthusiastic role models who engage in children's play sensitively, enhancing their experiences as a result.
- 6.3 Parental partnerships are a great strength of the setting. These commence before children join through home visits alongside plentiful induction events for both parents and children, so helping foster close partnerships. A very small number of parents felt that they were not encouraged to be involved in events and other aspects of school life. Inspectors found no evidence to support these views. Social activities are arranged by the Friends of Widford Lodge, effective communication systems continue throughout the time children attend the EYFS and include face-to-face dialogue, notes in home-school diaries, parents' evenings and invitations to look at children's learning journals. Parents receive detailed reports, including a progress check at age two and a summary of the Early Years Profile at the end of the EYFS. During the inspection, parents spoke highly of these reports, stating that they demonstrated that the staff knew their children extremely well. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents were extremely happy with the school's provision.

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

- 6.4 Provision for children's well-being is outstanding. Excellent systems ensure that secure attachments are made with staff. The key persons know the children in their care extremely well and nurture appropriate relationships. Children benefit from being part of the whole school family which encourages all members of the community to care for one another; consequently standards of behaviour are excellent. Within classes, and across year groups, children engage with their friends maturely, happily involving others in their play. They demonstrate high levels of independence; for example, older children willingly take on roles of responsibility, such as being the register monitor. Even from an early age, children independently solve problems; for instance, they discuss the need to take turns whilst using the class computer in pairs.
- 6.5 Through regular discussions and topics, staff introduce the importance of a healthy lifestyle and keeping safe. These are introduced in ways that are relevant to children; therefore they retain these facts and reflect upon ideas in discussions. For example, younger children know how important it is to wear a crash helmet on a bike, and older children know why it is important to wear a hat in the sun. Children approach their own care needs with growing independence as they progress through the EYFS. They are taught the importance of a healthy diet.
- 6.6 Excellent systems ensure that children are ready for their move into the next year group. Staff work closely together to ensure that children are well prepared and that knowledge is shared between staff, parents and the children themselves. This enables children's experiences to be effectively built upon year on year.

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

- 6.7 Leadership and management of the early years provision are outstanding. The chair's involvement in the life of the setting is effective. She has up-to-date knowledge of her responsibilities. Management demonstrates an excellent understanding of the EYFS requirements and keeps abreast of changes when the need arises. Staff have a clear vision and drive for continual improvement, and progress since the previous inspection has been significant. The EYFS framework has been successfully adopted across the age range. The management of the setting has a very good oversight of the planning and practice across the EYFS, and this has assisted in developing a consistent approach across the classes.
- 6.8 Excellent systems for safeguarding and welfare help to keep children safe from harm. These are well known by staff and procedures are followed well. All necessary checks have been undertaken on staff. The management team ensure that training is kept up-to-date, and a suitable number of trained paediatric first aiders are deployed across the EYFS classes.
- 6.9 Staff are reflective practitioners, and this is demonstrated in their self-evaluation and development plan. The desire for ongoing improvement is evident, with the drive and enthusiasm of the management team filtering down to all EYFS staff. Every member of staff's views are valued, and the openness to new ideas ensures that the setting continues to evolve. As a result staff have created a high quality setting which provides children with an excellent start to their school career.

- 6.10 Key persons meet their line manager individually to discuss the children in their care, and clear records are kept of these discussions. This is in addition to an ongoing system of appraisal. Comprehensive induction sessions are carried out for new staff to ensure that they fully understand their responsibilities prior to commencing work. Staff are keen to embrace new initiatives. They have opportunities to attend regular training, and are supported in gaining higher qualifications. The knowledge gained on such courses has an impact on their practice and improves children's experiences.
- 6.11 Effective links have been fostered with parents and external agencies in order to secure appropriate interventions for children who require additional support. Staff share information and adopt consistent learning strategies to help children make progress.

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

- 6.12 The overall quality and standards of the early years provision are outstanding. Overall, children make excellent progress in relationship to their starting points, and by the end of the EYFS the vast majority of children achieve or exceed the Early Learning Goals. Consequently they are well prepared for the next steps in their learning. All children, including those with SEND make very good progress due to the excellent levels of support they receive whilst in the EYFS. Standards of speaking, literacy and maths are strong. Younger children explore mathematical concepts, numbers and letters through play; they paint using letter stamps, write their names and associate numeral to quantity whilst using play dough. They express themselves clearly, describing their activities confidently. Older children continue to build upon these skills. They confidently read tricky words and independently put them into a sentence. They are secure in counting for a range of reasons, such as during lining up time. They demonstrate a growing knowledge of the properties of 2D shapes, as was seen during an outdoor shape hunt and an ICT lesson where children confidently navigated a mouse to create their own shape pictures. Children's personal development is at a high level. They are self-assured, independent and happy learners who demonstrate that they are comfortable in their environment, both indoors and out. Their relationships with staff are strong and they know who to turn to should they require assistance.
- 6.13 Staff understand their responsibilities for children's safeguarding and welfare; this is apparent from the watchful approach taken to protect children from harm, and through the implementation of the school's thorough policies and procedures. The setting has made excellent progress since the previous inspection, and all actions and recommendations set have been successfully fulfilled. Staff are fully aware of the need for continual improvement in order to maintain and build upon the high standards of care and education they have already achieved.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.