

Stratford Preparatory School

Church House, Old Town, Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 6BG
Telephone: (01789) 297993 Facsimile: (01789) 263993 Email: secretary@stratfordprep.co.uk

Dear Parents,

Inspection Report

It gives me great pleasure to enclose a summary of the long awaited Independent Schools Inspectorate report on our school. I also enclose a copy of the Ofsted report on our Montessori nursery which we received last year.

In the seventeen years since Stratford Preparatory was founded my staff and I have strived to ensure that each of our pupils achieves to the very best of their abilities in a caring environment. We are here to give your child the best possible start to his/her academic life. We are very pleased that the inspection team agree that we are achieving this primary aim.

The enclosed report is recognition of the hard work and determination of our teaching and other staff, the hard work and good character of your children and the strong support which we receive from you as parents. An overwhelmingly positive endorsement of our school.

Our examination results achieved the highest praise. The report notes that the results of our pupils in national tests are well above the national average by the time they reach Infant 3. By the time that our pupils reach Junior Four their examination results are extremely high - far above the national average.

As you know, our school is noted for its academic success and I am pleased to inform you that this year's results are a fine example. Even by our own high standards we have achieved exceptionally well in both grammar and private school entrance exams. As soon as I am permitted to publish these results I will let you know just how well our Junior Four pupils have done. Well done Junior Four.

Although these results are undoubtedly important (and pleasing), I must stress that examination success is just one element of a well-rounded education. I am very pleased that the inspection team have also noted the care, attention and time devoted by our staff to the emotional development of each of our pupils. I note in particular that the inspection team have described our provision for personal development and pastoral care as very good.

The inspection team also noted that our staff give generously and freely of their time and that we have created a happy and harmonious school.

Our pupils repay us by being described as hardworking, very well behaved, polite, caring and considerate of their teachers and each other. They are enthusiastic in their work, enjoy the company of fellow pupils, and show respect for their teachers and all other members of the school. The way in which our pupils conduct themselves outside

of school whilst on school trips and when taking part in local community events was also praised.

It is a joy to see our past pupils embrace senior school life with enthusiasm. Many are now entering the world of work and have achieved excellent results. It is also a joy to teach your children on a day-to-day basis; they make this school a lovely environment to work in.

You, as parents, were mentioned throughout the report for your support and strong participation in school life. What more can we ask. I always wanted the school to be noted for being welcoming, productive and for parents and teachers to work in a mutually supportive way. We have all achieved this and it has been recognised in this wonderful report.

Thank you staff, parents and our lovely children.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Quinn
Principal

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Notes of explanation from the Principal

In addition to evaluating our school, the inspection team have made recommendations which they believe would help our school to build further on its strengths. I note our plan of action in relation to these recommendations for your information.

The inspection team noted that if we were to further broaden the range of teaching styles that we employ, our pupils may make even further progress. Our school has a formal approach to teaching, a fact that I believe is favoured by our parents and a method that is favoured by me. With this formal base in mind, we will be undertaking a careful review of the alternative and additional teaching methods which we may be of benefit to our pupils. We are always keen to ensure that all methods of teaching that would improve the progress that our children make are implemented. It is with this in mind that we have in the last few weeks installed inter-active whiteboards in some of our classrooms. Our children will continue to benefit from any teaching tools, technology and methods which help them to make even further progress.

The inspection team also stated that our monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour. Although we do not share this opinion we are currently undertaking a review of all aspects of our policies relating to the monitoring of our teaching and of our pupils. As you may be aware, we are creating a new position of Deputy Head with effect from September 2006. One of the Deputy Head's primary responsibilities will be to assist me in a close review of our monitoring policies and processes, and in making any improvements to ensure that these policies and processes may only be described as extremely rigorous.

It would appear that the distribution of some subjects in the school timetable at the time of the inspection was a little imbalanced (for example handwriting and comprehension being taught on the same day). We see this as a legitimate criticism and will revert to the format of lesson distribution that we have previously utilised. This will eliminate any imbalance.

You may also note that two regulatory recommendations were made by the inspection team. I note that the restraints to the nursery windows were fitted the day after the inspection team left, and the seating and work surfaces in our Art/DT Room have been replaced.

We are grateful to the inspection team for their recommendations, which will help us to iron-out any areas in which we are not reaching our full potential. Thankfully these recommendations are minor in nature.

Enjoy the report.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Stratford Preparatory School

Full Name of the School	Stratford Preparatory School		
DfES Number	9376094		
Address	Church House, Old Town, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 6BG		
Telephone Number	01789 297993		
Fax Number	01789 263993		
E-mail Address	cq@stratfordprep.co.uk		
Name of Principal	Mrs Catherine Quinn MBA, B.Ed. (Hons), Dip. RE		
Proprietor	Mrs Catherine Quinn MBA, B.Ed. (Hons), Dip RE		
Age Range	2-11	Gender	Mixed
Number of Pupils	152	Number of Boarders	None
Inspection Dates	October 10th – 14th, 2005		

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 163(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

MAIN FINDINGS

Overall Summary

Stratford Preparatory School provides a good, broad education in a harmonious atmosphere and benefits from strong support from its parents. Pupils reach good standards for their ages and abilities; they are articulate and confident and are well-prepared for the next stage of their

education. Results in national tests at age 11 are far above the national average. Staff are loyal and hardworking and teaching is good, although the limited range of teaching styles and approaches used in some subjects restricts the progress which pupils make. The ethos of the school is very good, and the school takes very good care of its pupils, providing very well for their personal development. The programme of monitoring of teaching, learning and standards is not yet fully effective because it lacks rigour.

What the School Does Well

Significant strengths of the school include the following:

- the ethos of the school is very good;
- the quality of teaching is good and this enables pupils to achieve very well in national tests at ages 7 and 11 and to attain good standards in most subjects;
- staff are loyal, hardworking and fully committed to the care of the pupils;
- pupils are friendly, confident, polite and articulate and they are proud of their school;
- the provision for pupils' personal development and for their pastoral care is very good;
- parents give the school their strong support.

What the School Should Do Better

The school's strengths outweigh its weaknesses; to improve further the following should be addressed:

- the timetable lacks balance because lessons in some subjects are not evenly distributed throughout the week;
- the limited range of teaching styles and approaches used in some subjects restricts the progress which pupils make;
- monitoring is not yet fully effective as it lacks rigour.

Standards of Attainment and Progress in Subjects

Pupils achieve good standards and make good progress in most subjects. Pupils in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 are attaining well; in Years 3 to 6, attainment is good overall in relation to pupils' abilities in English, mathematics, science and art and design. Standards are in line with their abilities in ICT and RE.

Results in national tests at the age of 7 over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained primary schools so they are good for pupils' abilities.

Results in national tests at the age of 11 over the last three years have been far above the national average for all maintained primary schools so they are high overall for pupils' abilities. They have been high in English and good in mathematics and science.

The Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and their Behaviour

The quality of pupils' learning and behaviour is good; they are well motivated and concentrate well on their tasks. They listen carefully to their teachers and settle quickly to their work.

However, their skills as independent learners are not well developed. Pupils of all ages learn much from each other because of the strong relationships between them.

The Quality of Teaching

The overall quality of teaching is good and teaching contributes effectively to pupils' attainment and progress. In two-thirds of lessons, teaching was good or better and in nearly a third it was very good. In one lesson it was excellent. Occasionally, the teaching approaches used are not well matched to pupils differing abilities and so restrict the progress they can make. The school benefits from a loyal and committed staff.

Other Aspects of the School

Attendance

Pupils' attendance is good and enables full advantage to be taken of the opportunities available in the school.

Assessment and Recording

Methods for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress are good; they are efficient, thorough and appropriate for the age of pupils, their particular needs and their stage of development and are fully in line with the school's published policy. This represents very good progress since the last inspection. The school has not yet fully developed the use of assessment at departmental level in order to improve curricular planning.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is sound. The school provides opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities to receive a broad and quite well-balanced education, enriched by a programme of activities, educational visits and good access to ICT. The curriculum contributes effectively to pupils' intellectual, physical and personal attainment and development. However, within some subjects the allocation of periods during the week is unbalanced.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

The quality of staffing is sound. The school is staffed with a suitable number of well-qualified and experienced teachers, supported by good classroom assistants. However, the timetabling of some part-time staff limits their effectiveness in the classroom and their deployment. Subject specialists contribute well to the quality of pupils' learning; for example, in music from Reception to Year 6. Policies for the induction of staff are appropriate and good opportunities are provided for attendance at courses for professional development.

Resources for Learning

Resources for learning are good for the ages and abilities of the pupils, including those who are under five and those with special educational needs. They effectively support the teaching, learning, study and recreation of the pupils at all levels. This good provision has a positive effect on the pupils' quality of learning. Provision for ICT is good and the school is committed to expanding the number and variety of new learning resources.

Libraries

Library facilities are satisfactory and offer appropriate support for the curriculum. The range and quality of library stock are good and they effectively support pupils' attainment, progress and quality of learning. However, insufficient opportunities are planned for older pupils to develop private study or research.

Premises and Accommodation

The premises are suitable for their purpose, providing adequate accommodation for the numbers and ages of the pupils. The buildings are in good condition and are well used to support curriculum provision. The use of off-site facilities for games, swimming and sailing enables the school to offer a good range of sports.

Links with Parents and the Community

The school has good links with its parents and very good links with the wider community. Parents who responded to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection were very happy with the work of the school in almost every area although some parents expressed concern regarding the provision of homework. The inspection team found that, in some subjects, pupils were sometimes given tasks which could not realistically be achieved in the recommended time set for homework. However, in the majority of lessons homework tasks were given which were appropriate for the allocated time.

Pupils' Personal Development

The provision for pupils' personal development is very good and is a strength of the school. The provision for their social, moral and cultural development is very good and that for spiritual development is good.

Pastoral Care

Measures to promote pupils' safety, health and well being and to ensure a healthy, safe environment for pupils are very good and the premises are in good repair, clean and hygienic. The school makes very good arrangements for the pastoral care of the pupils.

Governance and Management

The management arrangements of the school are good and ensure that the school's aims are met, a good quality of education is provided and planning secures good resources for teaching and learning.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

The school provides a good range of activities which many pupils participate in and enjoy.

Progress Made by the School since its Last Inspection

Since the last inspection the school has made progress in teaching the curriculum in ICT but, as yet, not all teachers have the skills necessary to support the pupils or to extend the use of ICT across other subjects. Good progress has been made in developing the strategic plan but further development is still needed so that it focuses fully on improving teaching, learning and standards. The roles and responsibilities of the senior management team have been defined and assessment

procedures for the attainment of pupils have been implemented. Full use is not yet made of library facilities. Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged in all lessons although planning includes extension activities.

Compliance with the Regulations for Registration

DfES Standard		Does the school meet the regulatory requirements?
1. Quality of education:	1.(2) Curriculum	Yes
	1.(3)-(5) Teaching	Yes
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils		Yes
3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils		Yes
4. Suitability of proprietors and staff		Yes
5. Premises and accommodation		It meets almost all of the requirements
6. Provision of information		Yes
7. Manner in which complaints are to be handled		Yes

Actions Required for Compliance with the Regulatory Requirements

In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:

- (1) fit restraints to the first floor windows of the Nursery and Reception block [Regulation 5.(j)];
- (2) provide seating and work surfaces of an appropriate height in all classrooms [Regulation 5.(r)].

In addition to the actions set out above, the school is asked to address any issues highlighted in *What the School Should Do Better*. These are set out as recommendations for the school in Section 2 of the report.