



THORNGROVE SCHOOL  
ISI Inspection Report 2013





**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**THORNGROVE SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Thorngrove School

Full Name of School	<b>Thorngrove School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>850/6033</b>		
Address	<b>Thorngrove School The Mount Highclere Newbury Berkshire RG20 9PS</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01635 253172</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01635 254135</b>		
Email Address	<b>aking@thorngroveschool.co.uk</b>		
Headmaster	<b>Mr Adam King</b>		
Proprietors	<b>Mr Nicholas Broughton, Mrs Constance Broughton</b>		
Age Range	<b>2½ to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>197</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (121 boys; 76 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>143</b>
	2.5-5 (EYFS):	<b>16</b>	11-18: <b>38</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>197</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>0</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Miss Helen Byrne</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>14 May 2013 to 17 May 2013</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 September/October 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. 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. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' 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 Danice Iles

Mrs Andrea Harris

Mr Grant Whitaker

Mrs Penny Oates

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)

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) Recommendation(s) 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 Thorngrove School is a co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of two and a half and thirteen. It was founded in 1988 by the present principals who are the proprietors; they jointly led the school until the appointment of the present headmaster in 2009. One of the principals now acts as bursar. On the edge of a country village a few miles south of Newbury, the classrooms and specialist accommodation, including the sports hall, are modern, purpose built and architect-designed; they sit in 25 acres of grounds with gardens, woods and streams which give ample space for playgrounds, sports fields and outdoor activities. The school has a Christian tradition and welcomes pupils from all faiths and none.
- 1.2 The school is divided into three sections; Years 6 to 8 comprise the Upper School, the Middle School includes Years 3 to 5, and the Lower School consists of Nursery to Year 2. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is situated on the ground floor of the main building and has direct access to its own outdoor play area; the Nursery was opened in April 2012.
- 1.3 Overall, the school aims to develop the academic and extra-curricular potential of every pupil within a nurturing family atmosphere and a positive supportive community, where teamwork and friendship are encouraged.
- 1.4 There are 197 pupils on roll; 16 in the EYFS, 143 in Years 1 to 6 and 38 in Years 7 and 8. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Three pupils including one in the EYFS, have English as an additional language (EAL), but do not require support with the language. The school has identified 36 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); 22 of these receive learning support from the school for a variety of needs, mostly of a dyslexic nature. The ability profile of the school is above the national average; there is a fairly wide spread of abilities with most pupils having an ability which is above average.
- 1.5 Most pupils are British, with a few of other European nationalities, and there is a small diversity of other ethnic groups, cultures and religions. The majority of pupils' families live within a radius of five miles from the school, and have business or professional backgrounds.
- 1.6 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 the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent. Pupils of all ages and abilities are extremely successfully and happily educated. The school amply fulfils its principal aims to develop the academic and extra-curricular potential of every pupil in a positive and supportive community. Provision for the education and care of children in the EYFS is excellent, as are its overall quality and standards. Children are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education, although monitoring of the educational programme lacks formality at present. From Year 1 onwards, pupils develop excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skills over a wide range of academic and creative subjects, complemented by an extensive range of clubs and other extra-curricular activities. In an educational environment of the highest quality, the pupils enjoy their learning and make rapid progress in relation to their abilities. They are attentive and engaged in their lessons and activities, and respond with enthusiasm to the inspiring and extremely well-resourced teaching.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. Within a happy, family atmosphere underpinned by the Christian faith, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is a major strength. The pastoral care is outstanding and pupils respond to the caring, nurturing ethos and the high expectations of their staff with quiet, thoughtful confidence and natural courtesy. Older pupils have a mature sense of responsibility and set an excellent example to the younger age groups. Arrangements for welfare and health and safety, including safeguarding, are meticulous. Pupils benefit from the beauty, richness and freedom of the country setting which gives extensive opportunities for games and activities. Outdoor and indoor facilities for physical exercise are outstanding, although provision for showering is limited at present. Pupils and staff enjoy delicious and nutritious meals, which are also much appreciated by parents when they have the opportunity to join their children. The excellent links with parents are an important strength of the school; they value the supportive, encouraging, friendly atmosphere.
- 2.3 The governance, leadership and management are excellent. The proprietors have made an important commitment to the school since its foundation, setting an enduring expectation of the highest possible standards in all that is provided for the pupils. The bursar works closely with the senior management and is in a position to give effective advice and support when necessary. The leadership and management are of the highest quality, they are committed to continual improvement and development across the school. Their methods of evaluation and development-planning are extremely effective and they involve all sections and departments, including the EYFS where the need to extend its monitoring procedures has been identified. The management structure which has been put in place since the previous inspection is highly effective and successful. There is a shared vision and determination and the recommendations of the previous inspection have been successfully addressed.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

### **(ii) Recommendation(s) for further improvement**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement(s).

1. Further enhance the facilities for sports in the hall by the provision of additional showers.
2. In the EYFS, build on existing procedures for monitoring achievement and learning.

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

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

- 3.1 The overall achievement of the pupils is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are extremely well educated from the EYFS onwards and the school is entirely successful in meeting its principal aim. Pupils show well-developed knowledge, understanding and skills in all areas of the curriculum and in a broad range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, standards are excellent. Many children achieve, and some exceed, the expected goals by the end of Reception. The most capable Reception children use phonic strategies confidently to write extended sentences, for example describing what they could see in photographs which they had taken themselves. In Nursery, children take impressive care when counting, as when planting out and watering seedlings. Within a nurturing environment, children are happy to explore their surroundings and investigate, be creative and rise to the challenges which the staff prepare, as well as those they create for themselves. A very wide variety of planned opportunities for indoors and outdoors provides some exciting experiences, as when teams of Reception children were challenged to plan and build a nest from materials found in the garden. All children, including the highly able and those with SEND or EAL, make at least good, and often excellent, progress through the EYFS in relation to their starting points and capabilities. They display good levels of confidence, curiosity and concentration, and show increasing skills of independence.
- 3.4 Overall, pupils speak clearly and confidently, listen carefully, and read fluently. They are articulate when asking questions and expressing their own views. Their literacy and numeracy skills are highly developed from an early age, with pupils reflecting a wide vocabulary. Logical and independent thought is frequently evident, and creativity is encouraged in art and design, as well as in design and technology (DT). Mathematical skills are used effectively across the curriculum. Physical development plays an important part in school life and high standards are expected and reached. The standard of music and drama is very high, with pupils achieving accomplished performances. By Year 8, pupils have excellent ICT skills.
- 3.5 A significant number of scholarships, academic, art, drama, sport and music, have been gained for entry to senior independent schools. The school has an excellent record of enabling all pupils to achieve entry to their first choice of senior school. There have been important successes in sporting and extra-curricular activities also, with two national judo champions, two girls in county hockey teams, and all twelve entrants in the most recent London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) examinations achieving distinctions.
- 3.6 The school does not enter pupils for National Curriculum tests therefore pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average. However, on the evidence available including lesson observations, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of their work, attainment is judged to be excellent in relation to national targets in English and mathematics and to age-related expectations in other subjects. Standardised tests in English and mathematics also indicate that pupils achieve results in these subjects which are higher than national norms. The curriculum is challenging, with advanced work in English, mathematics and science in preparation for Common Entrance examinations in Year 8.

- 3.7 Their level of attainment indicates that pupils are making a high rate of progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. There is clear evidence of progress in the complexity and maturity of their writing. The excellent and understanding support for pupils with SEND and EAL assist them to make significant progress. High awareness of the needs of the most able pupils, with challenging and extension activities readily available, enable them to make rapid progress in relation to their abilities.
- 3.8 Pupils' success in academic work and other areas of the curriculum owes much to their excellent attitudes to work. They are eager, involved and equally happy working in groups or independently; their effort and application are excellent. They enjoy learning and take great pride in how their work is organised and presented. They sustain high levels of concentration and motivation during lessons, making the most of the challenges set. The introduction of an assessment for learning strategy and clear target setting has encouraged pupils to be positive and focused.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The curriculum is highly effective in its coverage of all the required areas of learning. It is suitable for all ages, abilities and needs and positively supports the school's aim to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum to all its pupils. The clubs and activities in the extra-curricular programme greatly enhance the educational experience for all those who participate.
- 3.11 In the EYFS, the needs of the range of children who attend are met extremely effectively. Staff are very successful in fulfilling the school's aim to build a nurturing setting that develops the confidence of every child. They know all the children extremely well as individuals and recognise their unique qualities and needs. Clearly structured and individualised programmes in all aspects of the EYFS curriculum ensure that children are developing as they should and are acquiring the skills needed for the next steps in their learning.
- 3.12 The breadth of the curriculum greatly enriches pupils' learning. French begins in Nursery, while Spanish is introduced in Year 3, German and DT in Year 4, and Latin and drama from Year 5. The presence of drama, art and music as both curricular and extra-curricular activities underlines the importance given to the creative arts. Information and communication technology is thoroughly embedded throughout the curriculum with specialist teaching from Year 3. Physical education (PE) and games have an important place in the curriculum, and all levels of ability have opportunities to represent the school in matches.
- 3.13 An extensive programme of regular outings and trips is linked to the curriculum and contributes significantly to pupils' understanding and achievement. It includes trips to historical places of interest, wildlife parks, museums and art galleries, as well as visits to the Houses of Parliament and the First World War battlefields, all of which are eagerly anticipated.
- 3.14 The curriculum is very well supplemented by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which is exceptional for the size of the school. Many of these activities make an important contribution not only to pupils' academic achievement, but also to their wider cultural education. These include choirs, musical ensembles and bands, wind and brass, drama and art. The choice ranges widely from judo and American football to ballet and chess. In conversations, pupils were highly complimentary

about the range of activities on offer and said they sometimes found it difficult to make their choices.

- 3.15 Ever stronger links are being established with the village and the nearby town communities. Dance days, sports relays, and a school Brownie pack all involve local primary schools and make use of the extensive facilities on offer at the school. The choirs enjoy singing in the local church and entertaining the elderly in retirement homes. A weekend event and family picnic is hosted annually by the school for a town church. A wide range of charity events, such as the 'Summer Extravaganza' and the 'Headmaster for the Day' competition have instilled in pupils the importance of giving in order to help others.

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

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 Teaching, from the EYFS onwards, is highly effective in promoting pupils' progress and in supporting the school's aims to provide a demanding teaching programme that will allow every child to flourish and to maximise the use of the school's facilities in order to develop the potential of every pupil.
- 3.18 In the EYFS, small classes facilitate careful questioning by the staff which engages and motivates individual children and enables them to express themselves clearly and contribute with confidence. In addition, a wide range of high quality and plentiful resources, well used by staff within a stimulating environment which includes extensive grounds and woodland, enables excellent all-round development. The staff have high expectations of the children's work and behaviour. They are unfailingly positive and constructive in their dealings with the children and they are constantly attentive to ensuring that each child is occupied in such a way as to maximise their learning. A clear desire to foster children's individualised learning is very well demonstrated by the staff's analysis of pupil attainment.
- 3.19 The careful organisation and planning of teaching shows that staff have a thorough understanding of their pupils and their individual needs. In replies to their questionnaire, a few pupils did not agree that homework helped them to learn. However, this view was not expressed in their written comments or in interviews, nor held by parents, who were overwhelmingly supportive of homework. The inspectors found that the marking of homework and classwork is extremely constructive; teachers' comments seen on pupils' work were encouraging and informative, often setting specific short-term targets. Pupils remarked in interviews that they find the marking of their work helpful, especially when it is returned soon after the lesson. Regular informal and formal assessment of pupils' learning also makes an important contribution to achievement. Thorough testing occurs through examinations, topic tests and the annual use of standardised tests.
- 3.20 Teaching is characterised by the excellent subject knowledge of the staff, their enthusiasm and encouragement for their pupils in well-paced lessons with frequent changes of task. A wide variety of teaching methods is used to stimulate pupils' interest. The very effective use of a generous range of resources was observed in many lessons. Most classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards, and pupils benefit from the creative and motivating use made of them. Pupils and teachers also benefit from a large and well-stocked library at the heart of the school. In response to a recommendation from the previous inspection, staff have

broadened the opportunities for pupils to use ICT to undertake independent research.

- 3.21 Pupils throughout the school gain significantly from the contribution of specialist teaching staff and from their lessons in the splendid new multi-purpose hall and in the very well-equipped specialist rooms for music, art, DT, and science.
- 3.22 An important element of the teaching, which was particularly successful and consistently excellent in the Upper School, was the strong encouragement of pupils to be independent and to think and reason for themselves where appropriate, and also to work together and listen to each other's contributions.
- 3.23 Pupils with particular learning needs are supported extremely well. Teachers foster a highly positive relationship with their pupils. They clearly know the pupils well as individuals, recognise their strengths and cater effectively for their special needs or personal learning styles. The most able pupils enjoy the frequent challenges they are set, while caring, experienced specialist teaching is arranged for those with SEND or EAL. Individual education plans and the requirements of statements of special educational needs are given careful attention. Teaching assistants in many areas of the school are deployed very effectively to support the learning of individuals or small groups, and make an important contribution. Classroom behaviour is of a very high standard.

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

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

- 4.1 The personal development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils show great maturity for their age and are quietly confident in their conversations with adults. They are friendly, well mannered and at ease with themselves. The school is very successfully achieving its aim to encourage a positive and supportive community of parents, children and staff and to engender teamwork and friendship throughout. Pupils are attentive and responsive in assemblies; for example, they listened to and warmly applauded the younger year groups playing their first examination pieces in one assembly, while on another day they deeply appreciated the emotional intensity in the performance of a song which had been prepared for an external audition.
- 4.3 The pupils have an excellent moral understanding; in a section assembly dealing with the issues of world hunger and fair trade, pupils showed a clear appreciation of the ethical, in addition to the social, political and economic, aspects of this topic. Their awareness of ecological issues is enhanced by the eco club. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and show a great respect for the school's expectations of good conduct and trustworthiness. Their behaviour around the school is very good, opening doors for visitors and greeting them with warmth and courtesy.
- 4.4 The quality of pupils' social development is excellent. They are considerate and responsible young people. In classrooms, they listen to and respect one another. They are able to work in a thoughtful and independent fashion. They are courteous and respectful towards staff and visitors. The house and section systems offer a sense of community and pupils are keen to contribute by taking part in competitions and gaining house points. Older pupils relish the opportunity to take on positions of responsibility, such as acting as school prefects, and as mentors and guides to the younger pupils. They are helpful and resourceful as they quietly and purposefully organise the chairs for assemblies and clear away afterwards, setting an excellent example to younger classes.
- 4.5 In a wider sense, pupils illustrate the development of their social awareness in debating issues such as fairness and justice and participating with interest in current affairs discussions. They develop an awareness of those less fortunate than themselves and a desire to help those in societies adversely affected by social, economic or political issues. The school council affords them a voice in decision-making processes, such as choosing good causes to support and ways of fund raising for these.
- 4.6 In the EYFS, children's personal, social and emotional development is also excellent. They are continually encouraged to behave well in a welcoming and stimulating environment where equality is promoted. They listen carefully to adult guidance, taking turns and sharing toys and equipment sensibly. They develop high standards of behaviour, courtesy and respect towards each other and work in harmony. Careful attention is given to ensuring a smooth transition to the next stage in their education.
- 4.7 The quality of pupils' cultural development is excellent. In a school where pupils of different nationalities and religious traditions are growing up together, they all

develop a deep understanding for and respect of each other's faiths and cultures. Parents from different countries contribute positively to this awareness. An appreciation of music, art and literature, both national and international, permeates the ethos of the school. School concerts and plays are ambitious and successful, while artwork inspired by the artist in residence adorns the grounds.

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

- 4.8 The school's arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.9 Throughout the school, committed and caring staff provide an affirming environment in accordance with its aims. As a result, pupils feel safe, happy and confident. Positive relationships are evident between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Although a very small minority of pupils responding to the questionnaire said that they did not feel supported, inspection findings do not support this view. Discussions found that pupils of all ages took the view that teachers "look after you", and are "very kind". Older pupils added that they felt valued and supported.
- 4.10 Children in the EYFS feel safe and happy. They are confident to share their concerns with their staff, who ensure careful supervision in a safe and secure environment. Each child knows the member of staff who is his or her special person, and who will always do her best to help in an individual way. The contribution of the EYFS provision to children's well-being is excellent. Staff are excellent role models and all the adults form strong bonds with the children.
- 4.11 Extremely effective pastoral policies and procedures support the school's aim to build a friendly, nurturing setting that develops the confidence of every pupil. There is a strong sense of community and teamwork, and pupils recognise the help and guidance afforded to them from all staff.
- 4.12 The house and pupil mentoring systems provide another vehicle for the effective delivery of pastoral care and this is further supported by the good communication, both oral and written, between all staff, and continually facilitated by the school office.
- 4.13 From an early age, children are helped to understand that healthy eating is important. They also learn about the need for physical exercise during their outdoor play and specialist PE lessons. Pupils from the EYFS onwards have food which is appetising, delicious and healthy, and lunch times are pleasant, social and conversational occasions. The school's excellent indoor and outdoor facilities provide ample opportunities for physical exercise. Pupils play in matches and competitions and the importance of learning skills from an early age is stressed.
- 4.14 The school's behaviour policy is implemented appropriately, resulting in a happy and productive working environment. Parents are extremely appreciative of all that is done on a pastoral level. Pupils generally consider that any kind of bullying or antisocial behaviour is dealt with effectively. They expressed the view that such behaviour was rare but managed quickly and appropriately if it did occur, and with understanding if there were special circumstances. A culture of positive praise and reinforcement is promoted at the school. The school council meets regularly and actively seeks the views of pupils. The form representatives are proud to be members and most pupils thought that their views were taken into consideration.

- 4.15 Although a small minority of pupils in their questionnaire replies considered that sanctions were not always applied fairly and the school did not always respond to their opinion, there was virtually no indication of this in either their written comments or in interviews. The overwhelming majority of written and spoken comments were appreciative of every aspect of the school, particularly the teaching and the kindness, friendliness and fun.
- 4.16 The school has an extremely suitable plan to support educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.17 The school's arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.18 The school's arrangements take full regard of the statutory guidance for safeguarding. Staff receive regular safeguarding training at the appropriate level and safeguarding policies and procedures are detailed, comprehensive, and effective. Meticulous attention is paid to reducing risks from fire and other hazards; carefully recorded and evaluated fire drills take place on a termly basis.
- 4.19 All staff place a high priority on careful and effective safeguarding of pupils throughout the school and their welfare is afforded great significance. Safe recruitment checks ensure that adults are suitably qualified. All the required records, policies and procedures concerned with the safety of the pupils are in place and are implemented rigorously.
- 4.20 Efficient risk assessments, overseen by senior management, are prepared and updated for all areas of the school, its facilities and activities and off-site visits also. Comprehensive health and safety policies ensure that the pupils are cared for in a safe environment. All this supports the school's aim to use facilities and settings both on and off site, in a safe and stimulating way. The hall which is used for drama and PE has good changing facilities but provision for showering is limited. High standards are evident in the cleanliness, upkeep and presentation of the attractive premises, buildings, gardens and grounds.
- 4.21 The first-aid policy is comprehensive and the majority of staff have a first-aid qualification. In the EYFS, a member of staff with a paediatric first-aid qualification is always present. Suitable facilities and kind and proficient care are provided for sick or injured pupils. Systematic and comprehensive records are maintained of medicines administered at school, and of accidents and incidents. Particularly careful attention is paid to the needs of pupils with SEND.
- 4.22 Attendance and admission records are accurately completed and the registers are 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 excellent overall.
- 5.2 The proprietors, one of whom is the bursar, take their responsibilities very seriously and, as its founders and former headteachers, they are highly committed to the continued success of the school. Their combined professional experience, together with daily contact on financial matters and a comprehensive flow of information from the headmaster, enables them to provide effective oversight of the school. The proprietors are well known and respected within the school and have an excellent insight into its working.
- 5.3 The proprietors are very much in sympathy with the aims of the school, and their professional background in education enables them to understand and fulfil successfully their responsibilities for standards. Expert financial planning and advice has resulted in accommodation and resources of the highest quality. Although not directly involved with the management and routines of the EYFS, governance ensures that the setting is well equipped. The proprietors are aware of significant aspects of the setting, where standards have improved since the previous inspection.
- 5.4 The proprietors effectively discharge their responsibilities for statutory requirements, child protection, welfare and health and safety throughout the school, including an annual safeguarding review. They have made arrangements for an annual independent appraisal of the headmaster. The school development plans are important well-organised working documents and are reviewed and evaluated annually, together with other policies. The proprietors have high expectations of the school and offer determined support, challenge and encouragement for its continual improvement.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is excellent overall.
- 5.6 The leadership and management of the school are extremely successful in maintaining the happy, family ethos of the school, thus achieving the vision and values of its founders. Their planning and self-evaluation are very effective. From the EYFS onwards, at all levels of responsibility, the leadership and management of the school work effectively together, in accordance with the aims of the school, to fulfil their delegated responsibilities, particularly those for policy implementation and development planning, and those related to the safeguarding of pupils and their welfare and health and safety. Policies and guidelines are reviewed systematically and necessary training, initial or updating, takes place regularly in all areas of the school.
- 5.7 In response to a recommendation of the previous inspection, an effective system of staff appraisal has been introduced which strongly encourages the continuous professional development of staff, including those in the EYFS. The members of the senior management team have high expectations and provide clear educational direction to staff. This is reflected in the high quality of the pupils' education, as

illustrated by their high levels of all-round achievement, in the excellent teaching and in the extremely high standard of pupils' personal development. Since the previous inspection, significant progress has been made in assessment, tracking and target setting, and the circulation of data and information to relevant staff. There is a clear determination to maintain the progress which has been made on the academic front and also the high standards of buildings and facilities, the generous resources and the peaceful beauty of the gardens and grounds.

- 5.8 Improvement has also been made in the management structure. The role of departmental heads has been strengthened considerably and they now have clearly defined responsibility for observation of teaching, work scrutiny, cross-curricular links, a budget and a development plan for their department; a system of peer coaching has also been introduced with the combined effect of a significant improvement in teaching, learning and achievement. The division of the school into sections, lower, middle and upper has also been successful in achieving greater focus on pastoral care and liaison with parents.
- 5.9 Leadership and management are highly effective in self-evaluation, identifying priorities for forward planning, and ensuring that they are achieved. All staff are involved in self-evaluation and have an opportunity to contribute to the school improvement plan which reflects a robust capacity for development.
- 5.10 In response to another recommendation of the previous inspection, the comprehensive improvement plan for the EYFS, which reflects a strong commitment to continuous development, is devised alongside that for the whole school and then incorporated into the whole school development plan. The EYFS setting has shown good capacity for improvement through the changes it has made since the previous inspection. Every opportunity for further training is taken and new knowledge is shared. However, although monitoring of the EYFS educational programme is carried out, it is not extensive and there is not a cohesive plan for future scrutiny.
- 5.11 Management is also successful in appointing, developing and motivating staff of high quality, as illustrated in the excellence of the teaching, and ensuring that they are efficiently inducted and well trained in all aspects of the education and care of their pupils. All the necessary checks for suitability are made on staff. The response of the staff to the vision of the senior leadership and management has been extremely positive with the result that pupils are educated and cared for by a highly committed, responsible and enthusiastic body of staff, teaching and non-teaching.
- 5.12 The quality of links with parents is excellent. Of the parents who responded to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, a very large majority voiced considerable satisfaction with the school and the education which it offers and would recommend this school to another parent. Most felt that the school provides the necessary support for their children and that this helps them to make progress. Parents were particularly complimentary about the support given to the very able pupils and to those with special educational needs. Approachable, welcoming and productive relationships exist with EYFS parents, the vast majority of whom, as reflected in the questionnaires, showed genuine appreciation of the provision and the progress which their children make.
- 5.13 Whilst most parents are satisfied with the information which they receive about their child's progress, a few felt that they do not receive enough. Inspection evidence found that the school has developed good systems for communicating information on their child's progress. Pupils also feel well informed about their progress.

Regular reports and parents' evenings provide detailed information on the academic progress and personal development of each pupil. In Years 3 to 8, twice termly effort grades provide parents with a useful means of tracking progress. In discussion, parents expressed considerable satisfaction with the ready availability of the staff for conversations about minor concerns or indeed any issues relating to their child.

- 5.14 The school's aim to encourage a positive and supportive community of children, staff and parents is met very well. There are very effective procedures in place to ensure that the concerns of parents are handled with due care. The headmaster meets regularly with year representatives. This provides a good forum to discuss general matters with the school's management.
- 5.15 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children. This was reflected strongly in a very large majority of their replies to the questionnaire. The Friends of Thorngrove organise a wide range of events designed not only to raise funds for the school and for charities but to encourage the development of a welcoming parental social network.
- 5.16 There is an excellent system for providing clear and detailed information to existing and prospective parents. Much of this is available on the school's website and in the prospectus. Parents are also given clear directions for accessing further policies and information, should they wish to do so. An efficient system of communicating with parents via text messaging, emails and social media is seen as a useful way of keeping parents informed about necessary changes to routines and other useful information. Newsletters provide a further means of communication and are used to disseminate information on individual and group achievements to the wider school community. Throughout the school a system of contact books provides an effective means of communicating personalised messages between home and school.

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









## THORNGROVE SCHOOL

INSPIRATION • CONFIDENCE • ACHIEVEMENT



[admin@thorngroveschool.co.uk](mailto:admin@thorngroveschool.co.uk)



f: 01635 254135

p: 01635 253172



The Mount, Highclere  
Newbury, RG20 9PS