

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

ARNOLD LODGE SCHOOL

by the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

on

5th – 8th February, 2007

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Arnold Lodge School

Full Name of the School	Arnold Lodge School
DfES Number	937/6004
Address	Kenilworth Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5TW
Telephone Number	01926 778050
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Email Address	info@arnoldlodge.com
Principal	Mrs Elizabeth Hickling
Proprietor	Newman Schools Ltd
Age Range	2½ - 13
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	5th – 8th February 2007

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 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2005, 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.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	3
The Educational Experience Provided	3
Pupils' Learning and Achievements	4
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	6
The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)	7
3 THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	9
The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils	9
The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	10
4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	12
The Quality of Governance	12
The Quality of Leadership and Management	12
5 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	15
Overall Conclusions	15
Next Steps	15
6 INSPECTION EVIDENCE	16

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Arnold Lodge School is a non-selective day school for boys and girls aged 2+ to 13. The school was established in 1864 as a small independent boarding school for boys, and over the years became a day school only. The current owners took over the school in 1999. Since the last inspection, a new principal has been appointed and the senior management team has been restructured, a school nurse is on site every day, holiday activities have been extended to cover every holiday period and the management of after-school care has been re-organised. Buildings have been refurbished to make provision for a new library, a whole-school centralised staff room and improved accommodation for the Kindergarten (Nursery).
- 1.2 The school is located in the heart of Leamington Spa, and housed in a variety of buildings surrounding several hard-surfaced outdoor play areas. The very youngest children have their own secluded garden and play space. The majority of sporting activities take place on the extensive playing fields of the local cricket club. Within the school buildings, some classrooms, for example those for music, information and communication technology (ICT), science and art, have been designated as specialist teaching rooms. The school also has a dining room and assembly hall.
- 1.3 The number of pupils on roll has decreased since the last inspection. It now has a total of 267 pupils, of whom 56, including 27 part-time pupils, are in the Foundation Stage, 52 are in Years 1 and 2, 111 are in Years 3 to 6, and 48 are in Years 7 and 8. Eighty pupils are girls and 187 are boys. The results of standardised tests across the school indicate that pupils' average ability is above the national average, although the results between different year groups vary considerably and the overall range of ability is very wide. If pupils perform according to their abilities, their results will be above those for all maintained primary schools.
- 1.4 Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, religious and socio-economic groups. Most pupils come from professional or business families who live in the immediate locality, although a few come from the surrounding villages. Approximately one in seven pupils come from ethnic minorities, and six pupils come from families where English is not the principal language. Of these, three are at an early stage of learning English. Fifty pupils are identified as needing support with their learning, with the most usual difficulties being speech and language development or dyslexia. No pupil has a statement of special educational need.
- 1.5 Most pupils stay at Arnold Lodge until the end of Year 8, but a few leave at the end of Year 6 to move into their chosen independent or maintained senior school. The remaining pupils gain entry at age 13 to independent senior schools in the surrounding area, with a few continuing their education in independent boarding schools or the maintained sector.
- 1.6 Arnold Lodge School aims to: provide an excellent education for girls and boys, preparing them thoroughly for the next stage of their education; ensure that pupils learn as effectively as possible in a safe, secure and stimulating environment where equal consideration is given to social, physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development and where pupils are well equipped to meet the challenges of the future; deliver a broad and balanced curriculum; develop flexible and responsive teaching styles; foster a partnership involving pupils, parents and teachers; provide a strong care programme that includes spiritual and moral guidance to support pupils through their education; and develop appropriate attitudes and values.

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Kindergarten	Nursery
Reception	Reception
Year 1	Year 1
Year 2	Year 2
Year 3	Year 3
Year 4	Year 4
Year 5	Year 5
Year 6	Year 6
Year 7	Year 7
Year 8	Year 8

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided is of good quality, in line with the school's aims of providing an excellent education for boys and girls, thoroughly preparing them for the next stage of their education and providing a broad and balanced curriculum. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress by improving the quality and detail of planning in French, instituting appropriate curriculum time and balance in Years 1 and 2, and developing schemes of work in all subjects.
- 2.2 In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is based around the six areas of learning and children progress effectively through the stepping-stones working successfully towards the Early Learning Goals. The teaching of French from Reception adds to the breadth of the programme. From Years 1 to 6, pupils experience a good curriculum which is broadly based on the National Curriculum, with the addition of French and religious education (RE) throughout, and Latin from Year 5. In Years 7 and 8, the curriculum is in line with the requirements of the Common Entrance syllabus. The timetable provides most subjects with sufficient teaching time, and includes a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Although drama occurs for some pupils, it is not timetabled across all year groups. Physical education (PE) has a generous timetable, and inter-school matches, timed to coincide with games afternoons, give further opportunities for children to develop many different physical skills. However, an anomaly occurs in the timetable of three classes, as they only have sport on two days a week, rather than three, because their PE lesson and one of their games afternoons occur on the same day. This is not ideal. From Reception, pupils have specialist subject teachers in French, music and games. The amount of specialist teaching increases gradually, so that, by the time pupils are in Year 5, they have specialist subject teaching in all areas and are set by ability for English and mathematics. This has a positive effect on their learning and the standards they achieve. The curriculum is enriched at all stages by a wide variety of educational visits, including trips to Japan, Canada and South Africa, and by the many visitors, including parents, who come into school to share their experiences and expertise.
- 2.3 The provision of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and provides an extremely wide range of opportunities for all age groups. Clubs reflect the diverse interests of staff, from sewing and Lego Mindstorms to the wide variety of sports and music activities. Some clubs, such as Warhammer, have been initiated by the pupils. All of the 35 or so clubs are very well supported, and pupils say they enjoy participating in them.
- 2.4 Pupils are thoroughly prepared for each stage of their education. Induction into the Foundation Stage is effective. New pupils enjoy an afternoon in school and their parents are invited to a meeting before their children start. A 'buddy' system operates higher up the school, allowing new pupils to be fully integrated as quickly as possible. All pupils experience a morning in their next class before the start of the new academic year as they move through the school. Comprehensive information packs and social events for parents ensure that new families are warmly welcomed and involved from the outset in school life. Strong links exist between staff, particularly in Years 2 and 3, ensuring a smooth transition between 'junior' and 'senior' school. As pupils approach the end of their time at Arnold Lodge, events are arranged to assist parents on their choice of future schools, including a biennial 'future schools' evening. Parents also meet with the vice-principal to discuss their child's future education. For these pupils, a well-planned leavers' programme exists, including a week of camping at

- Poole, a drugs awareness course, a certified first aid course, debating and a pupil-led charity event to provide funds for a gift for the school.
- 2.5 Curricular planning and policy documents are suitably detailed and provide continuity and progression in learning across the school. A thematic approach to learning in Years 1 to 4 has been effective in delivering strong cross-curricular links to support pupils' learning. Curricular reviews in all subjects take place each year. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and are given equal opportunity to participate in activities.
- 2.6 Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Strong support is provided in the classroom and, where necessary, pupils are withdrawn either in small groups or individually. Detailed individual education plans have been produced for these pupils, ensuring they receive an education suited to their needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and who are at an early stage of acquiring the language are given extra teaching of English every day by an external specialist, to ensure they are able to access the curriculum as quickly as possible. A register of gifted and talented pupils is currently being drawn up, and in some subjects, such as art, music and history, these pupils are given opportunities for their gifts and talents to be nurtured, but this is not yet the case in all subjects.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 Pupils generally learn and achieve well in relation to their abilities, fulfilling the school's aim of ensuring that pupils learn as effectively as possible in a safe, secure and stimulating environment where they are well equipped to meet the challenges of the future. The school provides many different opportunities for pupils to build the solid foundations from which they can develop further their knowledge, skills and understanding in subjects and activities. The quality of learning and standards of achievement have improved since the last inspection, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2.
- 2.9 By the end of the Foundation Stage, pupils have achieved well in all areas of learning. Literacy skills are used highly effectively across Years 1 to 8 so that pupils speak, listen, write and read with confidence and enjoyment. Pupils apply their knowledge and understanding effectively in a variety of situations across the curriculum, including mathematics and science. Well-planned lessons contribute effectively to the progress which pupils make. Creativity is fostered well through different experiences, as, for example, in a Year 6 design and technology (DT) lesson, where pupils displayed good drawing, design and realisation skills when creating a car for a friend. Opportunities for critical thinking are given in subjects such as RE and English; in the latter, pupils in Year 8 analysed characters from Shakespeare's plays, for instance. Pupils' investigative work is undertaken successfully in science, geography and mathematics.
- 2.10 No significant difference was seen in the relative attainment between pupils of different gender, between those in different classes within the same year, in different subjects, or between pupils of differing abilities. Across the school, all pupils work hard at the tasks set for them; they are very well motivated and enthusiastic about their learning.
- 2.11 Overall, results in national tests at age 11 over the three years up to 2006 were well above the national average for all maintained primary schools, which represents good achievement. They were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. In

Common Entrance examinations at 13+ and other senior school entrance examinations, pupils have been very successful over recent years, with almost all being awarded places at their first choice senior school. These good levels of achievement were also reflected in lessons seen across the school during the inspection.

- 2.12 The school has an impressive list of individual and team achievements, the outcome of the support and encouragement it gives to pupils to succeed across a wide variety of activities. Over the last three years, 32 pupils, at either 11+ or 13+, have been awarded scholarships to a wide range of senior schools in areas such as sport, music and art, and for academic prowess. During the last academic year, 46 pupils were successful, many with merit or distinction, in the music examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, and the same was true for the 79 pupils who entered the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art examinations for speech and drama. Ballet and tap-dancing pupils also passed their examinations very successfully. Various music groups won three trophies in the local competitive music festival, and the chamber choir was awarded the highest mark in the festival. In the national primary mathematics challenge competition, four pupils won gold certificates, six won silver and six won bronze. In chess, the under-12 school team were the winners of the Warwickshire county championship, and the school team took fourth place in the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools' national championship. In sport, one pupil has been selected for each of the Warwickshire under-11 and under-12 cricket teams and under-11 badminton squad, and the Leicestershire under-11 cricket team.
- 2.13 Pupils have excellent attitudes towards their work and display great enthusiasm. Their basic study skills are well developed. They are extremely articulate, listen well, and both read and write intelligently and fluently. They express themselves confidently in subjects which require a specific vocabulary. They listen carefully to instructions from teachers, when swimming for example, and in many lessons show respect for each other by taking turns when speaking and listening attentively to what others have to say. Opportunities for extended writing were seen in history and RE, and strong reading skills were displayed in a PSHE lesson about high-achieving famous people who had overcome setbacks early on in their careers.
- 2.14 Pupils display good numeracy skills and can apply mathematical concepts effectively in different situations. An example was seen in a Year 2 science lesson on forces, where pupils measured how far a car would go, having applied a fair test by using ramps to ensure each car had the same force behind it. Across the school, ICT is used effectively, and even the youngest children develop good skills on the computer, as was observed in a Nursery lesson when children made Chinese New Year cards. Some examples of independent research were seen, such as music projects on Holst's *The Planets*.
- 2.15 Pupils reason and argue cogently, as, for example, in a Year 8 history lesson, when they looked at historical cartoons from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and, using previous knowledge, clearly explained their opinions and reasons about the state of public health in Britain at the time. Many opportunities are given for pupils to think for themselves in lessons, particularly through the skilful questioning of teachers. However, in a few lessons, pupils were not given the opportunity to interact with each other and the teacher, and thus did not benefit from each other's ideas and opinions. Very little evidence was seen of pupils making their own notes in lessons; notes were either dictated or copied from the board.
- 2.16 Pupils work independently quite happily, and organise themselves well. They also enjoy working together in pairs and groups, as observed in lessons in English, history, geography, games and science. Pupils arrive promptly at lessons and settle quickly and quietly. They concentrate very well and work hard to complete their work. However, their learning is less

rapid on the few occasions when the work does not sufficiently challenge them. Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding, their behaviour is excellent, they show enthusiasm for their work and activities and inspectors saw plenty of evidence to support pupils' expressed enjoyment of their learning.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.17 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. A comprehensive PSHE programme, RE lessons, assemblies and the pastoral care system all contribute to the excellent atmosphere that abounds in the school. Pupils show care and consideration for others as well as confidence in themselves. The warm and friendly relationships at Arnold Lodge allow pupils to be open and comfortable in their environment; they are evidently happy in their school. These high standards represent a significant improvement since the last inspection. The aims of the school to give equal consideration to the social, physical, spiritual and intellectual development of pupils, and to provide a strong care programme that includes spiritual and moral guidance to support them through their education, are fully met. The school is also very successful in helping pupils to develop appropriate attitudes and values. The values modelled by staff are reflected in the excellent attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.
- 2.18 Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent; they show an easy willingness to discuss life's non-material elements. Several examples of genuine concern and compassion were observed and, during discussions with pupils, empathy was often expressed. The recent introduction of a programme of social and emotional learning in assemblies, form time and PSHE is a very positive addition; pupils in a Year 7 lesson had an effective discussion, for example, about intangible concepts such as empathy, sensitivity and imagination. Representatives from faiths within the community visit the school to lead assemblies and encourage mutual understanding. Year 6 pupils wrote about their 'Dreams' for the future, and these were thought-provoking and moving; they wish to make a real difference to the world. One pupil said art gave pleasure and inspiration; others enjoyed thinking and wondering. Displays drew attention to the need for the wealthy to help the poor, the strong to help the weak, the more able to help those who struggle; these images have made their mark on pupils, who openly care. They have high self-esteem, and spirituality is an integral part of the school. On a cold and snowy morning, the wonderful atmosphere in an impromptu whole-school hymn practice visibly lifted everyone's spirits and revealed again that this is an outstandingly supportive and warm community.
- 2.19 The moral development of pupils is outstanding and they are imbued with a strong sense of right and wrong. They show effective self-control and tolerance of others. Views are expressed freely about what is fair and unfair and pupils have a respect for the opinions and feelings of others. They are given the opportunity in RE to think critically about moral issues such as cheating. Expectations are made clear and behaviour is excellent; this is rewarded along with courtesy and good manners, and such acknowledgement urges pupils to emulate best practice. Sanctions go hand in hand with discussion about minor wrong-doing and explanations as to why a particular behaviour is unacceptable; misdemeanours committed knowingly, although rare, are dealt with more punitively in order to develop more personal responsibility. Pupils' personal development progresses very well in an open and safe environment where there is a healthy respect for people and property.
- 2.20 A high awareness of the importance of taking on social responsibilities means that pupils feel comfortable in a range of contexts. Older pupils are given responsibility as prefects, have a real sense of its importance and carry out their duties conscientiously. Regular events to

support local and other charities raise considerable funds and pupils readily contribute ideas as well as effort and money for these ventures. They show care and concern for the environment and an eager interest in 'green' issues. They tend their own gardens in the grounds and put out food for the birds to show their care for living things. The co-operation of pupils in lessons is excellent; a group of boys and girls were comfortable with themselves, and each other, when discussing body changes and physical development in a sex education lesson. A real sense of teamwork is evident in the school orchestra, which is of a high standard, and in games sessions, where there is a strong sense of working as a unit in order to perform well in forthcoming matches. Pupils work to a common cause with pride, satisfaction and enthusiasm. They are sensitive to each other's needs and talents; one explained, "Everyone here is good at something."

- 2.21 Cultural development is outstanding and the range of experiences is extensive and impressive, contributing significantly to pupils' excellent understanding and awareness of their own culture and that of others. Regular music concerts of a high standard are held in and out of the school and a large proportion of pupils learn a musical instrument, with many accomplished for their age. Younger pupils who attended a lunchtime informal concert showed genuine support for, and appreciation of, the performers. Pupils expressed their love of music and its ability to change moods; a pupil in Year 6 said, "It makes me happy." Exhibitions are held at the school for local artists and there is extensive, outstanding artwork by the pupils displayed effectively around the school. They enjoy being creative and connect their experiences across subjects, as well as linking them to their knowledge and experience of other cultures. The creative gifts and talents of pupils are recognised, nurtured and celebrated. Visits to the school and an extensive range of educational trips, both home and abroad, enrich their appreciation and understanding of culture. Pupils learn about world religions in RE, and several displays around the school focus on other parts of the world, helping pupils to celebrate the differences between people, their faiths and their customs. Pupils are developing as responsible citizens and understand the diversity of cultures in modern Britain. They are proud too of their own community, and with just cause.
- 2.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.23 The quality of teaching throughout the school is good and it is sometimes outstanding. The school is making effective progress towards its aim of providing an excellent education for girls and boys by developing flexible and responsive teaching styles. The good standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and the school has made significant improvements to its systems of assessment.
- 2.24 Teaching generally enables pupils of all abilities throughout the school to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability. Their understanding is increased and their skills are developed well. Right from the beginning of their school lives, the youngest pupils extend their knowledge and understanding through well-organised and creative activities. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress; they are very well supported through activities that challenge them and which build securely on their previous learning. In a small minority of the lessons observed, more-able pupils were not sufficiently challenged because work was not well matched to their needs, and therefore they did not achieve as well as they could. The school is aware of this inconsistency in some lessons, and is currently focusing on the needs of the more-able pupils in its development plan.

- 2.25 Pupils are encouraged to be well motivated, to apply themselves to their task, to behave responsibly, and to think and learn for themselves. Teachers know their pupils very well, and offer a high level of care. Pupils are effectively managed and relationships are excellent.
- 2.26 Successful teaching is characterised by thorough lesson planning that encompasses effective teaching methods and a range of appropriate activities. In a Year 6 music lesson, for example, the variety of activities included singing, reading music notation, listening to music, discussion, and putting the music into its historical context. This range of activities kept the class engaged. In many lessons, teachers' planning takes into account pupils' prior attainment and their different learning styles, as in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, where good use was made of multi-sensory learning resources. However, in a few lessons, this was not the case. The teacher's exposition was too long and the teaching too prescriptive, which meant that pupils became a little restless on occasion.
- 2.27 Teachers' secure subject knowledge is often combined with great enthusiasm for their subject, as seen in a Year 3 and 4 games lesson. Well-organised and exciting teaching included a very clear demonstration and explanation of games' techniques. Generally, effective questioning techniques are well used, and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace in an atmosphere that encourages pupils to participate in discussion and to express their ideas confidently. A good range, both in quantity and quality, of appropriate resources is used well throughout the school to support teaching and learning.
- 2.28 The school's marking policy is not applied consistently. Much of the marking is encouraging, helpful and gives pointers for improvement. Some marking is cursory with just a tick placed at the end of the work or with few comments designed to advance learning. The school is aware that this is an area which needs further careful monitoring and improving. In Years 3 and 4, a 'traffic lights' system of day-to-day assessment has been trialled successfully, and is being extended across the school. Pupils say they find this method of assessment, in which they also participate, helpful.
- 2.29 All staff keep records of pupils' attainment in lessons and in their written work. In addition, pupils' attainment is assessed regularly through the use of a range of standardised tests and examinations. These results are analysed within departments of the school to help teachers identify general subject issues that need to be given attention so that pupils' learning can be improved. In some subjects, pupils set their own targets in discussion with teachers; these are recorded in their books and are reviewed every half-term. Pupils say these targets help them to know what they need to do to improve. Senior managers have set up an effective system for checking pupils' progress term-by-term in different subjects as they move through the school. They also use it to identify any pupils who may require support for their learning. However, this system is fairly new and is not yet having an impact on raising pupils' achievement even higher.
- 2.30 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care is outstanding and the school is highly effective in ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils. This fulfils the school's aims of ensuring that pupils learn in a safe, secure and stimulating environment, and of providing a strong care programme to support them through their education. Pastoral care has improved since the last inspection, particularly in the area of the support and guidance offered to pupils through assessment and the setting of performance targets.
- 3.2 Staff know their pupils very well and provide excellent support and guidance for them. Pupils feel happy and secure, knowing that they can approach any member of staff for advice. Staff are both purposeful and caring, and the school has what one girl described as 'a warm atmosphere'. Pupils set their own targets in some subjects under the guidance of their teachers, and in these subjects the thorough marking gives helpful support to pupils' learning.
- 3.3 Pastoral arrangements are exceptionally strong, and staff are supported in carrying out their responsibilities not only by their senior managers but also by external authorities, who advise on matters of care and protection. They also have an opportunity to discuss any concerns they have about pupils at twice-weekly staff meetings. Pupils rightly value their form tutors as their initial contact for pastoral support, and the ease with which they can approach other members of staff. An excellent after school care system, where pupils are supervised and cared for while doing their homework or other activities, and are given a cooked tea, is a real asset for both pupils and their parents.
- 3.4 The high quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is based on respect for each other. This is extended to pupil-pupil relationships. They willingly look after each other, are well supported by prefects, and use the 'buddy' system to help integrate new pupils into the school as quickly as possible. Pupils are helpful and courteous, and respond extremely well to praise and rewards for high standards of work and behaviour.
- 3.5 Self-discipline is greatly encouraged. Pupils are expected to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Discipline is normally non-punitive, with the pupil given time to reflect on the reasons behind unkind words or actions. Pupils understand the system for rewards and sanctions, and consider these to be fair. Highly effective measures concerning anti-bullying procedures ensure that pupils are free to enjoy their time at school without fear. Attendance at school is good. Pupils are encouraged to be positive about their own abilities and their contribution to the school community. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but, if it does occur, they are confident that staff will deal with it appropriately.
- 3.6 Child protection measures are suitable. The school makes use of a comprehensive policy, and all staff are appropriately trained. Crisis management policies and procedures are detailed and rigorous. A number of staff are qualified in first aid, and safety equipment, checked weekly, is kept in secure areas. Pupils who become unwell or who have an accident during the school day are well looked after by the school nurse.
- 3.7 Risk assessments are undertaken regularly, with weekly minibus checks and site surveys helping to identify any hazards. All activities, both on- and off-site, are informed by these detailed documents. Fire prevention measures are in order, and fire practices are held regularly.

- 3.8 Healthy eating is promoted positively, with a daily fruit bar open for pupils at break time, an initiative introduced by the school council. Younger pupils occasionally celebrate a ‘fruity Friday’ when they bring in unusual fruits to share with others. Nutritious meals are provided on site by a local catering company; pupils have a good choice from a range of healthy foods. The excellent health and safety arrangements provide a safe, healthy and caring environment for all pupils.
- 3.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.10 The school has an outstanding partnership with parents and worthwhile links with the wider community. Arnold Lodge successfully achieves its aim of fostering a partnership involving pupils, parents and teachers. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.
- 3.11 In their positive replies to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, the majority of parents indicated their strong support for the school. They are particularly appreciative of the way the school encourages them to be involved in its life, the quality of the curriculum and standards of teaching, the support and guidance offered by the school to their children, the fact that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and values, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided during lunch times and after school. A very small number of parents expressed concerns about the help given to those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, arrangements for homework, too low standards of behaviour, and the way in which the school handles their complaints. The inspectors do not agree with these concerns.
- 3.12 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in activities in school and in the work and progress of their children. New parents are welcomed at the beginning of September and invited to attend a drinks party in order to meet others from within the school ‘family’. All parents are welcome to attend assemblies on two days a week, and those with toddlers are welcome to attend the club held on Tuesday afternoons. Extremely good use is made of parental experience and skills; for example, some parents participate in the marketing group, others are involved in after school clubs, and others attend school sporting fixtures in order to support their children. Parents of those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are involved in termly reviews of their children’s individual education plans. Homework diaries give parents the opportunity to keep in touch with their child’s work and progress. ‘Friends of Arnold Lodge’, the parent association, works hard organising social and fund-raising events, and the finances raised are normally split between the school and a charity of the Friends’ choice. Over £3000 was raised last year.
- 3.13 Parents are provided with plenty of detailed information about the school. The prospectus, website and handbooks are very useful and comprehensive. Regular newsletters celebrating successes and achievements are sent out, and information letters give news of forthcoming events and fixtures. Curriculum information about topics to be learned in the future is sent out at the beginning of each year, and updated termly. At the end of the Reception year, Foundation Stage Profiles are given to parents. The new school annual reports are detailed and informative about what progress has been made, and some subject teachers provide targets for pupils’ further improvement. The shorter reports are also useful interim documents. In addition, two parents’ evenings are held for parents to discuss with staff their child’s progress.

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- 3.14 The school handles the concerns of parents with due care. A formal procedure is available if necessary and the school makes parents aware of this. The principal makes herself available as often as possible to meet with parents, and responds to any concerns promptly.
- 3.15 The school promotes positive links with the wider community. It organises fund-raising events for local and worldwide charities. The music department has strong links with local churches, residential homes for the elderly and other schools. Sporting links exist between Arnold Lodge and other schools, both locally and abroad. Local community leaders and headteachers of other schools are invited to lead assemblies and attend events at the school.
- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The management arrangements for the school strongly support its development. The two proprietors successfully fulfil their overall aim of promoting and facilitating effective learning within an inclusive culture where each pupil is valued and achieves his or her best.
- 4.2 Since the last inspection, the proprietors have appointed a new principal who shares their ethos and vision for the school. With their educational, financial, commercial and consultancy backgrounds, the proprietors are actively involved in managing the school, both challenging and supporting many aspects of school life. They have made well-considered provision for utilising the school's accommodation to best effect and they ensure that good resources are generally available to supply educational needs. They retain particularly good oversight of finance and premises.
- 4.3 Close contact is maintained between the proprietors and the principal for the welfare and educational development of the school. The proprietors are very well informed by the principal, bursar and buildings manager at management meetings, both formal and informal, and the proprietors visit the school regularly. For example, one of them occasionally contributes towards the monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observation, and this underpins their good working relationship with senior managers and staff. Their educational backgrounds give testimony to their expertise and experience and enable them to support the school effectively, to participate in strategic development, and to have a good awareness of their legal responsibilities. They have a clear understanding of the current stage of the school's development and its successes in academic standards and other activities.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 Leadership and management successfully support the schools' aims, particularly those designed to prepare pupils thoroughly for the next stage of their education, ensure pupils learn as effectively as possible, equip them well to meet the challenges of the future and develop appropriate attitudes and values. The school is also succeeding in its aim to provide a strong care programme. Many changes have taken place during the last six years, most notably the appointment of a new principal, the restructuring of the senior management team with new personnel and new responsibilities, and the review of management systems in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. All of these changes have brought positive benefits to the school community and represent good progress in response to the last inspection.
- 4.5 The principal provides effective leadership, and this is reflected in the high quality of education and the excellent care of the pupils. Since her appointment nearly four years ago, she has devolved various responsibilities across the staff so that all are encouraged to recognise their duty to implement major decisions which are focused very clearly on pupils' achievements. The principal is strongly supported by her senior management team, which consists of the vice-principal, second master, bursar, Foundation Stage co-ordinator and buildings manager. The unusual, but successful, constitution of this group means that not only the line managers of all sections of staff are included, but a clear signal is given that the contributions of all sections of the school are valued; the group thus embodies the school's ethos. Further enthusiastic academic support is given by subject leaders, and all staff are involved in providing the outstanding pastoral care of pupils. Very clear educational direction

- is given by the principal and senior management team, which manifests itself in a focused school development plan, which all staff were involved in writing. Although the plan is only for the current year and has no costings attached, which means that it is difficult for the school to be sure that it is making best use of financial resources in the longer term, the school is clearly aware of how it intends to develop the quality of education further.
- 4.6 Realistic policies have been drawn up covering all aspects of school life, and many of these are relatively new. However, the school is rigorous in checking and reviewing the effectiveness of its procedures. For example, the buildings manager provides weekly reports on health and safety issues concerning the premises, and re-prioritises work accordingly. Procedures for pastoral care are continually under review; outcomes for pupils are checked twice weekly through ‘pupil alert’ discussions at staff meetings. Effective academic policies have been prepared by subject leaders in all subjects and planning is generally of high quality. However, the expected role of subject leader, although relatively new, is not carried out fully and consistently by all staff; for example, some check the quality of teaching and learning by examining pupils’ books thoroughly and, where this happens, any issues identified are checked for improvement over the following weeks. This contributes positively to pupils’ learning. Several subject leaders are not yet regularly undertaking the monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observations in their own subjects across the school, and so they do not have a complete overview of areas which need to be developed. Awareness by senior managers of these inconsistencies is evident and they intend to improve monitoring procedures across the school.
- 4.7 Teaching and support staff are deployed effectively, and contribute significantly to pupils’ learning and welfare. Staffing levels enable strong support to be given to pupils, particularly those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those for whom English is an additional language. The recruitment of well-qualified staff is successfully managed, and the required staffing checks, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau, are carried out on all staff; and appropriate records are kept. Induction procedures for newly-qualified staff support them very effectively. Many opportunities for professional development through in-service training are available and a comprehensive appraisal system is linked to this.
- 4.8 Resources for learning are good, effectively stored, easily accessible and well used. The stock of books in the library has improved since the last inspection, and more opportunities are now given for the development of pupils’ research and study skills.
- 4.9 The administrative and other support staff provide high quality assistance, and the school runs efficiently. Communication within the school is effective and supports the academic and personal development of the pupils well.
- 4.10 The school is a pleasant and welcoming place, and provides a very secure environment for the pupils. Since the last inspection, accommodation, particularly for the Nursery, has greatly improved, and many areas of the school have been refurbished. The provision for the staff of a centralised staffroom has benefited the pupils as well, in that staff can now meet together and share pupil information informally much more easily. High quality classroom displays create an effective learning environment. Outdoor space provides adequately for educational and recreational play and a special feature are the pupils’ garden areas, which they maintain. The school uses other good local facilities for some games lessons, for example a local cricket ground, rugby club and swimming pool. Pupils say they are happy and they are clearly proud of their school.

- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school has many strong features and is outstanding in some important areas.
- 5.2 Arnold Lodge successfully fulfils its aims and effectively meets the needs of its pupils. Pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and personal development are all outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for, and the school has developed very strong links with parents. The range of extra-curricular activities and visits organised by the school is excellent. Provision for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language is of high quality. The leadership of the principal, ably supported by her senior management team and the proprietors, is effective. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding, and this enables pupils to learn and achieve well. Consequently, pupils enjoy their learning, are happy and are proud of their school.
- 5.3 Not all subject leaders undertake their role rigorously enough in checking the quality of teaching and learning. Marking is inconsistent, and some teaching does not take into account pupils' different learning styles or the needs of the more-able pupils. The school development plan is not sufficiently formalised over the longer term to indicate priorities for the school's improvement. The school is aware that these areas need further development.
- 5.4 Good progress has been achieved since the 2001 ISI inspection. The school has worked well to maintain the strengths, and to improve in all areas identified in the main recommendations at that time. The Ofsted Nursery inspection of 2005 indicated that the school had no significant weaknesses.
- 5.5 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.6 In order to continue the maintenance and development of areas of strength and to ensure the quality and consistency of some aspects of teaching, the school should take the following action.
1. The quality of teaching and learning should be rigorously checked by all subject leaders through regular lesson observation and book trawls, in order to ensure that good practice in marking, planning for pupils' different learning styles and matching work to the needs of more-able pupils is achieved consistently.
 2. Adapt the current school development plan to formalise intentions over the next three years, in order to make sure that best use is made of financial resources in the longer term.
- 5.7 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 5th to 8th February 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Elizabeth Coley	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Louise Compton	Head of Pre-Preparatory School, IAPS School
Mrs Marie Langford	Former Deputy Head, IAPS School
Mrs Josephine Noronha	Former Head, ISA School
Mr Richard Yeates	Head, IAPS School