

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **Ardingly College Preparatory and Pre-Preparatory Schools**

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

Full Name of the School	<b>Ardingly College Preparatory and Pre-Preparatory Schools</b>
DCSF Number	<b>938/6200</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1076456</b>
Address	<b>College Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 6SQ.</b>
Telephone Number	<b>Preparatory: 01444 893200 Pre-Preparatory: 01444 893300</b>
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Headteachers	<b>Preparatory: Mr Chris Calvey Pre-Preparatory: Mrs Jeanne Adkins</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Robert Alston</b>
Age Range	<b>Preparatory: 7 to 13 Pre-Preparatory: 2½ to 7</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008</b>

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 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 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate. The Ofsted report is available separately at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

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

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	Characteristics of the Schools .....	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
	The Quality of Boarding Education .....	12
4.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ....	13
	The Quality of Governance .....	13
	The Quality of Leadership and Management .....	13
5.	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....	16
	Overall Conclusions .....	16
	Next Steps.....	17
6.	SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE .....	18
	List of Inspectors .....	18

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the Schools

- 1.1 Ardingly College is a co-educational day and boarding school of the Woodard Corporation, for pupils between the ages of 2½ and 18. It was founded by the priest and educationalist Canon Nathaniel Woodard in 1858 in Shoreham, to teach the Christian faith. In 1870 the college moved to its present location of 260 acres in the West Sussex countryside close to the town of Haywards Heath. It is organised in three sections: the senior, preparatory and pre-preparatory schools, each with its own headteacher and senior management team. The headmaster of the senior school has overall responsibility for all three schools within the college. The college is governed by a board of governors known as the School Council, who are ultimately accountable to the Woodard Corporation. Pupils are drawn mainly from business and professional families. Most day pupils come from the local area, although some pupils use the school buses serving a wider catchment area of West Sussex and the adjoining counties.
- 1.2 Within an atmosphere of care and forgiveness, the school aims to enable all pupils to develop their love of learning, academic potential and individual talents in a community which fosters sensitivity, confidence, a sense of service and enthusiasm for life.
- 1.3 The pre-preparatory school for day pupils aged from 2½ to 7 accommodates 48 boys and 35 girls. At the time of the inspection 2 full-time and 26 part-time pupils were in the Nursery, for pupils up to the age of 4, and 56 were in Reception and Years 1 and 2. Entry to the school is based on a visit to the school for the very youngest children and from Reception it involves an assessment in English and mathematics. Almost all pupils from the pre-preparatory school, together with others from surrounding primary schools, proceed into the preparatory school at the age of 7. The preparatory school provides day and boarding education for 150 boys and 89 girls in Years 3 to 8. At the time of the inspection, there were 15 weekly boarders, of whom 10 were boys and 5 were girls; 1 girl and 1 boy were full boarders. Pupils are admitted to the preparatory school after an assessment in literacy and numeracy skills, with the addition of a verbal reasoning test from Year 3 to ensure that they can benefit from the education the school offers. The majority of pupils from the preparatory school move through to the senior school, although a few leave to attend a range of day and boarding independent schools, and maintained schools in the area.
- 1.4 Pupils take a variety of nationally standardised ability tests at several stages during their time in the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools. Standardised test information confirms that the average ability of pupils is above the national average, with some pupils well above and others below. Where they are performing in line with their ability, therefore, pupils will achieve results in the national tests at the ages of 7 and 11 that are above the average for maintained primary schools. The pre-preparatory and preparatory schools have identified 79 pupils as requiring some degree of learning support. None of these has a statement of special educational need. Most pupils are proficient in English; very few pupils come from families which do not have English as their first language, but those that do receive support with written and spoken English.

- 1.5 Since the last inspection in 2002, the Nursery has increased its accommodation and facilities. Purpose-built accommodation has provided new classrooms and ancillary space for pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 in the pre-preparatory school. In the preparatory school, a new information and communication technology (ICT) suite has been built and the library and entrance hall have been renovated. All three schools of the college have recently appointed new headteachers. A cross-college leadership group, led by the senior school headmaster, has been established.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The educational experience offered to the pupils is highly successful in reflecting the aims and philosophy of each school. The pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum, which together with the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, provides a rich variety of opportunities for the pupils' academic and personal development. The educational experience provided has maintained its strengths, highlighted in the previous inspection report.
- 2.2 The educational experience, based on the 'Birth to Three Matters' agenda for the very youngest children, is strongly nurtured through a wide range of stimulating activities. Children up to the age of five in the Foundation Stage, experience a broad range of interesting and relevant opportunities, based on the Early Learning Goals, which stimulate their interests and imagination. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 experience the full range of subjects based on the National Curriculum, with appropriate emphasis on numeracy and literacy. At this stage, subjects are integrated together as enjoyable and stimulating topics, providing a coherent range of learning experiences. The opportunities provided for pupils in Years 3 to 8 enable them to have a rich and happy experience, as well as to reach the intellectual, personal, physical and aesthetic standards required for the next stage of their education. All pupils study French, and tasters of German and Spanish are provided in Years 7 and 8. Latin is studied by pupils in Years 5 and 6; thereafter it is an option. Creative subjects are catered for well at all stages. Art is a lively and popular subject with the pupils. The expansion of provision for ICT has considerably enhanced work in all areas of the curriculum. Some good quality opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their technology skills, but such opportunities are not yet provided for consistently in every year group. The development of physical skills has a high priority at all levels. Pupils from the Nursery upwards have weekly swimming lessons and for the older pupils, physical education (PE) lessons are supplemented by the major team sports. The high standards of reading are encouraged by the provision of dedicated sessions to 'everyone reading in class', known as ERIC. Study skills sessions are offered to Years 7 and 8. Extensive and attractive grounds surround the college, but these are not used sufficiently to complement the curriculum on a day-to-day basis across the age range. Outside play provision for the preparatory school is cramped and pupils do not have the opportunity of creative and expressive play. The new facilities and surrounding play areas of the pre-preparatory school are starting to enhance an outdoor education for its pupils, although this is still under development.
- 2.3 Pupils' experience of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) fully supports the schools' aims and ethos. It is woven into the fabric of the school day. Circle time, form time, PSHCE lessons, religious education (RE) and assemblies provide valuable opportunities for pupils to discuss with each other and their teachers matters that are important to them. Pupils' experiences and personal development are further enriched by the extensive range of extra-curricular activities available to them, and the appointment of a director of this programme underlines the importance the schools attach to it. The range of activities is diverse and as well as art, drama and sport, includes additional activities for the older pupils such as water sports, shooting and the popular 'Ardingly Adventurers'. Some clubs are linked with local community groups. The pupils' council have a voice about the clubs on offer and at the end of the year the programme is evaluated in terms of content and organisation. High quality opportunities are provided for enrichment, such as out-of-school visits to Pooh Bridge in the Ashdown Forest by Year 1 pupils or to a workshop on Macbeth at the Globe Theatre by Year 8 pupils. These, together with recreational, sporting, cultural

and residential visits for older pupils, are successful in supporting the aim to provide all pupils with opportunities to take up new interests or develop those that exist.

- 2.4 Arrangements to ensure a smooth continuity of education between each transitional stage are well thought out and effective. Subject leaders meet regularly, appropriate records are passed on and discussed, and careful induction procedures ensure that pupils' moves to their next stage of education are not problematic. Pupils have access to many of the facilities of the whole college such as the chapel and swimming pool and, for older pupils, the music school. Transition to the next stage is facilitated by pen-pal arrangements between Year 2 and Year 3 pupils, and for older pupils by the increased amount of time from specialist teachers and in setting arrangements. Some teaching staff from the preparatory school teach PE, music and French in the pre-preparatory school. Senior school staff teach in the preparatory school in areas such as games, design and technology, and modern foreign languages. This effective liaison contributes well to the continuity of experience and progression in learning between all three sections of the college.
- 2.5 The curriculum is planned effectively and is set out in writing. It provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and promotes their participation in a wide range of subjects. Subject documentation is comprehensive and reflects a wide range of teaching activities, and is reviewed on an annual basis. For example, the large numbers of teachers leading the programme for PSHCE comment in writing on each unit of study. Work is monitored carefully by subject co-ordinators and heads of department. Teachers are encouraged to set appropriate targets with, and for, the pupils.
- 2.6 The extra help provided for pupils who require learning support is thorough and effective, involving excellent liaison between specialist support staff and class teachers. A recent appointment has been made to co-ordinate the provision for gifted and talented pupils and this area is highlighted in the schools' development plans. Such pupils may also be identified and encouraged in areas such music, sport, drama and art. For older pupils, provision such as the Primary Maths Challenge and 'Learning for Life', in addition to the scholarship programme, presents opportunities for pupils to tackle demanding and challenging work.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.8 Pupils learn effectively and achieve well, in line with the schools' aims to foster in pupils a love of learning and to develop their academic potential. Pupils develop the essential skills and attitudes for successful study through a broad range of varied and interesting activities appropriate to their age and ability. The whole learning experience is enhanced by a wide range of educational resources, some of which are shared with the senior school. The quality of learning and achievement mentioned in the last inspection report has been maintained.
- 2.9 Pupils read and write intelligently and fluently, at a level which is good for their age and ability. They take notes carefully and organise their exercise books and files methodically. In class discussions, pupils listen to the ideas of others and make their own contributions confidently and thoughtfully. When given the opportunity, pupils can think creatively. In the Nursery, children explored the properties of wet sand and one child exclaimed: 'look, I can stick big bits together'. Year 3 pupils responded enthusiastically to the impetus of the class teachers wearing wings, to challenge them to think about flying, and subsequently wrote imaginative and creative poems. Mathematics is taught effectively and is built upon firm foundations. As pupils progress through the schools, they successfully transfer their mathematical skills to other subjects. For instance, pupils in Year 2 used computers

confidently to draw up a tally chart for their science project. ICT is used well by the pupils to carry out research and to display and analyse their work in a wide range of different styles. Year 8 pupils used the internet and spreadsheet software to develop their geography field study projects, with excellent results. Pupils achieve good levels of knowledge and understanding. They undertake their own investigative work successfully, particularly in areas such as science, mathematics, history and geography. In other subjects, development of these skills is more varied.

- 2.10 No significant difference is apparent in the relative attainment between different groups of pupils, subjects or curricular areas. The pupils are equally willing to apply themselves to the activities and tasks set.
- 2.11 Over the three most recent years for which data are available, pupils' results in national tests at the age of seven have been high for their ability, being far above the average for all maintained primary schools. At the age of eleven results are good for their abilities, being well above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Most pupils sit the 13+ Common Entrance examinations in order to gain entry to the senior school, and over the past four years the results have steadily improved. Each year, several pupils gain academic and music scholarships.
- 2.12 Achievements of all kinds are strongly supported and celebrated. The extensive list of pupils' individual and team achievements are the result of their own positive attitude towards school life, and the encouragement and nurture of talent at all stages which their teachers provide. Younger pupils in the pre-preparatory school achieve nationally recognised certificates in music, dance and drama. Pupils in the preparatory school achieve considerable success in matches and competitions. In the 2007 Mid-Sussex Music Festival, several cups and prizes were awarded to pupils in the violin and piano sections. A small number of pupils play in the National Children's Orchestra. Many pupils represent Sussex in a variety of sports.
- 2.13 Encouraged and guided by some notable examples of challenging, open-ended questioning by teachers to stimulate independent thought and activity, pupils learn to reason, think for themselves and express their own opinions. Year 2 pupils thoughtfully planned out their own investigation when making a measuring cup. A Year 6 science group successfully carried out and analysed an investigation concerning washing detergents. Some lessons however, although effective, were over-structured and did not allow pupils to find things out for themselves or sufficiently develop their own ideas.
- 2.14 From an early age, pupils work well together in groups; they listen carefully, value each other's ideas and support one another enthusiastically. Particularly good examples were seen in the Foundation Stage, drama, games, music, Latin, mathematics and science. However, opportunities for co-operative working were restricted in some lessons.
- 2.15 Pupils are diligent and approach learning with evident enthusiasm and dynamism. They settle down quickly and quietly at the beginning of lessons and focus their attention on the tasks they have been set, helping to maintain the pace of learning. They persevere, concentrate hard and encourage each other. Pupils at all levels clearly enjoy their learning experiences and as a result, make consistently good progress.

## **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.16 Pupils demonstrate outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, supported and nurtured by the caring Christian ethos that permeates school life. Both schools have built well upon the strengths identified in the last inspection and have raised these further, thus achieving their primary aim to enable all pupils to develop within a caring community which fosters sensitivity, confidence, a sense of service and enthusiasm for life.
- 2.17 Pupils' personal development is underpinned by strong relationships, respect, and sensitive consideration for each other's needs. It is implicit throughout the school day, by the pupils' relationships with staff and the positive ethos that prevails. The striking display of an art collage, the Dove of Peace, to which many pupils contributed, is a vivid reflection of the commitment to the pupils' spiritual awareness. Pupils are helped to develop self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose through activities such as circle time, assemblies, structured programmes of RE and PSHCE. At the heart of the college, the chapel not only provides a place of worship but also acts as an inspiration for a diverse range of activities for all age groups. Pupils display considerable self-confidence and self-esteem. This is reinforced by the recognition of their achievements in special assemblies. Their increasing sensitivity to the range of human experiences is fostered appropriately. A chance encounter with a World War One veteran on a school visit led to a joint '9 to 109 years' birthday party. Older pupils debated the right to take life in the context of the terminally ill, and younger pupils sang to people with visual impairment. Pupils show understanding and respect for other faiths and customs. Art and music, together with the new and established architecture of the college and the surrounding grounds, make an important contribution to the pupils' spiritual awareness by engendering a sense of peace and harmony.
- 2.18 Pupils have an excellent sense of morality and from the earliest years have a clear understanding of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Relationships are respectful. The clear focus on observing courtesy, consideration and common sense to all members of the community underpins the strong moral ethos throughout each school. Pupils of all ages respect the school rules and appreciate the fairness of rewards and sanctions. Pupils take practical steps to help others less fortunate than themselves when they raise money for a range of charities. They show an awareness and appreciation of their wider responsibilities which they discuss in their lessons. For instance, younger pupils considered how to look after animals during a visit from the Wildlife Trust, and older pupils compared their own lives with those of the Masai population. Pupils are unfailingly well mannered; friendliness and helpfulness are the norm.
- 2.19 Pupils show a high degree of social awareness, largely as a result of the value the school places on community life. At all ages, pupils have many opportunities through which they develop, show initiative and contribute to their community. Those with special responsibilities are proud of the contribution they make. For younger pupils in the pre-preparatory school, this may include being the weekly monitor, becoming a class leader or the opportunity to be voted as a member of the pupils' council. For older pupils in the preparatory school, this may involve being a 'buddy' or guardian to another pupil or taking on the responsibility of the role of a monitor or house captain. All pupils learn teamwork and to care for each other through taking part in visits out of school, performing in concerts and productions, and participating in sports events. In the wider social context, pupils have a good knowledge of public institutions and services, appropriate to their age.
- 2.20 Pupils appreciate the wide range of cultural traditions in the world and have an awareness of life beyond their immediate environment. Significant events in the Christian calendar are celebrated, as are a range of festivals from other major world religions. Music from other

cultures is introduced. Striking art displays, such as those based on aboriginal art, reflect pupils' understanding and interest of the wider world. Pupils gain much from the discussion of different points of view, practices and beliefs, in class, assemblies and drama lessons. Year 7 pupils showed particular understanding of issues concerning the planet when they discussed the potential of a Woodard 'eco school' initiative, drawing on the work of Greenpeace, Bob Geldof and Pope Benedict. The links fostered with schools in India and in Africa help pupils to benefit from learning about the different lifestyles of other nations. Cultural values and experiences are broadened significantly through subjects such as modern foreign languages, literature, and the humanities, and through interesting and informative educational visits.

- 2.21 The schools meet the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.22 The teaching at all stages is good and has many outstanding features. The approach to teaching helps pupils achieve high standards and reflects the overarching aim of developing their academic potential and individual talents. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- 2.23 Teaching enables all pupils to acquire new knowledge, make good progress, increase their understanding and develop their skills. Most classes contain a wide range of abilities, and teachers use their good knowledge of the pupils to shape their teaching, to suit individual strengths and needs. Close attention is given to each pupil. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have been identified and the learning support teaching provides well for these pupils, ensuring that they make progress according to their ability. Pupils identified as gifted and talented are encouraged in specific areas of the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. The recent appointment of a head of the gifted and talented programme is indicative of the importance the school attaches to the development of these pupils.
- 2.24 In many lessons, the self-confidence which teachers build up in pupils enables them to answer open-ended questions and to take on challenging tasks which are matched to the pupils' previous achievements. These lessons allow pupils to reflect, think critically and analyse material. For instance, pupils in the Reception class hypothesised about what would happen if the 'gingerbread man' went swimming, and Year 6 pupils worked hard to achieve high scores based on their understanding of intervals in a challenging music lesson. In a few lessons teaching does not offer pupils enough challenge to encourage them to take intellectual risks.
- 2.25 Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Consequently, pupils have the confidence and ability to articulate their thoughts and knowledge because they feel secure with their teachers. Teaching is invariably positive and encouraging and, as a result, pupils behave responsibly and enjoy their learning.
- 2.26 Teaching at all levels is carefully planned; the coherent structure of learning activities provides teachers with a clear direction to the lesson. For the very youngest pupils in the Nursery, sessions are planned where play is integral to the children's learning experiences appropriate to their stage of development. In the Nursery and Reception classes, planning provides a good balance of activity across the six areas of learning. As pupils progress through each school much of the teaching is brisk, and activities are planned which capture their interest, promote discussion and provide a good balance between written and practical

tasks. Occasionally, where there is a lack of variety in the lessons and pupils are not required to make active contributions, the pace of the lesson slows.

- 2.27 At all stages teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior understanding of the pupils. They share this understanding with each other to ensure that all staff have details of pupils' individual needs and how they are progressing across various subjects. Teachers use this knowledge in their planning and give willingly of their time in lessons to provide extra help for those encountering difficulties.
- 2.28 Across all year groups, teachers are well qualified and know a great deal about the subjects and topics which they teach. Where used, specialist subject teaching is beneficial and enhances the learning experiences of the pupils.
- 2.29 Teachers use a wide range of resources and strategies to ensure pupils' access to learning at an appropriate level. ICT is used well throughout each school. Effective use is made of interactive whiteboards by pupils and teachers alike. Year 3 pupils enjoyed learning about recycling waste, when they enthusiastically played a game on the interactive whiteboard to decide which waste should be recycled, which re-used and which should be reduced. Libraries are maintained well and support the teaching adequately. A part-time librarian has been appointed and the need to expand the stock is currently being addressed in both schools.
- 2.30 Assessment of work is used consistently to plan improvement. Marking is regular and encouraging; the best comments on ways in which the pupils may improve. In a few instances, comments were not sufficiently rigorous or informative for the pupils. Marking, especially for the younger pupils, is often supplemented by oral comments from the teachers, but these comments are not always recorded. Many pupils undertake self-assessment and set targets for themselves under the guidance of their teachers. Using the wide range of data that it collects, each school has a clear understanding about the continuous performance of its pupils. Test results, examination results and report grades are recorded conscientiously so that the progress of individual pupils can be monitored closely. This enables pupils' progress and attainment to be tracked more effectively, and the resulting analysis is used to inform teachers' planning. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.
- 2.31 Good use is made of arrangements for pupils' performance to be evaluated against the overall aims of the college as provided to parents and, in addition, against national norms.
- 2.32 The schools meet 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 Parents and pupils value the outstanding pastoral support and guidance provided throughout both schools, which strongly supports the aim that all pupils should be known and valued as individuals. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are mostly effective and have been strengthened since the last inspection.
- 3.2 Staff provide effective support and guidance for all pupils. The very youngest children are cared for and supported exceptionally well, ensuring that they feel safe in the nurturing atmosphere of the Nursery setting. Throughout the pre-preparatory school, the class teacher takes the initial responsibility of providing close support and guidance. Pupils feel secure and know they can rely on their teacher to help them overcome any difficulties which occur. In the preparatory school, class and form tutors know the groups of pupils for whom they are responsible very well. Those pupils who board are also supported by house parents, to whom they may turn if they have a concern. Boarding staff and form tutors collaborate well in support of these pupils. Parents express their appreciation of the personal care and support offered at all levels.
- 3.3 Members of staff are efficient in exercising their pastoral responsibilities and are well supported in this work by effective pastoral arrangements. Regular staff meetings and an effective intranet communication system ensure that issues of concern are communicated efficiently, and that all staff are kept up-to-date on matters to do with individual pupils.
- 3.4 The excellent relationships that prevail between teachers and pupils facilitate the high quality support and guidance in place for all pupils. The strength of this relationship is based on friendly, mutual respect and the three Cs of courtesy, common sense and consideration. This is extended to relationships among pupils, where they willingly look after each other, and are well supported by both the 'buddy' and 'guardian' systems which support the induction of those new to the school, and younger pupils' integration into school.
- 3.5 School policies and procedures are effective in promoting good discipline and behaviour. Pupils are helpful and courteous, and respond extremely well to praise and rewards that are given for effort and high standards of work, behaviour and contribution to community life. The quality of care, together with the topics covered in PSHCE, raises pupils' awareness of their own responsibility for good behaviour. Discipline is firm and understated and pupils at all stages learn what is expected of them and behave accordingly, allowing their good manners to appear effortless. In the rare event of unacceptable behaviour, comprehensive and precise procedures are well documented and staff are fully aware of the actions to take. Pupils believe that the rules are fair and are confident that measures to protect them from harassment or bullying are effective.
- 3.6 Comprehensive procedures to ensure the protection of children are in place. All members of staff are aware of the child protection policy and have received training in its application. Designated child protection officers have been appointed and trained in both schools.
- 3.7 Health and safety policies and procedures are supported by a whole-college health and safety committee. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken, including those for off-site visits and activities. Pupils are closely supervised around the site, but on a few occasions associated with outside break times within the preparatory school, the comprehensive supervision of pupils was not fully assured.

- 3.8 Measures for reducing risk from fire are effective. Fire evacuation practices take place regularly and are properly recorded. Liaison with the local fire authority is good and officers visit the schools regularly. A few minor matters were drawn to the attention of the school and they were quickly dealt with during the course of the inspection.
- 3.9 Comprehensive arrangements for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are in place and plans to deal with accessibility meet current guidelines. Attendance and admission registers are maintained accurately and effective procedures are established to follow up any unexpected absences.
- 3.10 The medical staff play a valuable role in the well-appointed medical centre, which is staffed effectively by nurses 24 hours a day, providing medical care and encouraging a healthy lifestyle. Accidents and the health needs of the pupils are recorded carefully. Many members of staff are trained to give emergency first aid and appropriate arrangements exist for boarders to see a doctor in the medical centre should the need arise.
- 3.11 An awareness of the importance of healthy living is promoted through the schools' food committee. The catering department provide an attractive choice of food, with healthy options available. Fresh fruit is available at snack times for the younger pupils and at afternoon break time for the older pupils. Care is taken to ensure that the dining rooms are pleasant places to eat. All pupils have a comprehensive games and PE programme offering plenty of opportunities for taking regular exercise.
- 3.12 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**

- 3.13 The schools have developed a strong and worthwhile partnership with parents who are both supportive and satisfied with the education provided to their children. Productive links have been established with the wider community to the benefit of the pupils.
- 3.14 The response to the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire strongly supports the ethos of the schools. All of the parents who responded were particularly appreciative of the quality of the teaching, the range of subjects offered and the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views. The provision of extra-curricular activities is highly regarded by parents. The number of concerns was small, but a minority of parents in the preparatory school were unhappy with some aspects of the information provided by the school, and the way their concerns were handled.
- 3.15 Valuable opportunities are provided for parents to become involved in the life of the school and in the work and progress of their children. For parents of younger pupils, these may include helping children to get ready for swimming, attending a special assembly or giving an interesting talk related to the pupils' topic work. For parents of older pupils, opportunities may include giving presentations about their work, supporting the various teams playing in matches or helping to run an after-school activity. Good support is given to the weekly celebratory assembly in the college chapel. Parents of all pupils are also invited to support shows, concerts, productions, presentations and special school celebrations. Many are enthusiastically involved in the 'Friends' committees which organise social and fund-raising events.
- 3.16 In most respects, parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with suitable information about the school. New parents are given appropriate introductory information in the form of a parents' handbook outlining the day-to-day running of the school. The

prospectus, a useful booklet on boarding life, calendars, weekly newsletters, photographs, information boards, the regularly updated website and the information plasma screen ensure that all parents are kept well informed and receive an insight into the life and work of each school.

- 3.17 Parents receive clear and useful reports about their children's work and progress. Written reports are regular and full, covering most aspects of academic, extra-curricular and personal development. However, although reports outline effort, progress and attainment they do not always provide targets of what is needed to effect improvement. Regular parents' consultation evenings provide opportunities for parents to meet and talk with teachers. Helpful curriculum guides sent out to parents provide information about what their children will study throughout the year.
- 3.18 All of the teaching staff and members of staff involved in pastoral care are readily accessible. They recognise the need to deal with any concerns speedily and effectively and do this with sensitivity and care. The 'open door' policy of each school and the visible presence of both headteachers each morning when the pupils arrive at the school are appreciated by the parents. Written procedures are in place for handling complaints on both an informal and formal level and are available to all parents. However, the complaints procedure does not stipulate that parents may be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish.
- 3.19 Positive links are promoted well with the wider community. School facilities such as the swimming pool and football field are made accessible to local groups. Support has been given to a variety of charities such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind and Jeans for Genes. Further links have been established when pupils go into the community, for example to sing carols in the local elderly people's home, or when outside speakers and authors visit the school community to give lectures and talks. Through these activities and others, pupils learn to exercise responsibility and further their understanding of community issues.
- 3.20 The schools meet most of the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7]. In order to meet all the requirements, the schools must:
- (a) state in the complaints procedure that at any panel hearing parents are allowed to attend and be accompanied if they wish [Regulation 7.(h)];
  - (b) ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are aware that they may request a copy of the revised complaints procedure [Regulation 6.(2)(j)].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.21 Boarding in the preparatory school offers pupils an enjoyable and homely environment. The school has clear boarding aims and principles which ensure that the pupils are treated as individuals. Boarders are well looked after and are encouraged to develop as young people with a compassion for others. Experienced boarders willingly help look after the younger boarders. Whilst only a few pupils stay at school as full boarders, flexi-boarding, where a pupil is able to stay for one or more nights, has significantly expanded recently and is a popular option. Pupils are well supported by the caring and helpful boarding staff, including the matron and other teachers and assistants who together ensure a warm and welcoming environment. Boarding pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about their life at Ardingly. They clearly are happy, feel well cared for and appreciate the many facilities available. Relationships among the pupils are excellent.
- 3.22 A varied and interesting evening programme is provided for those pupils that board and includes activities such as horse riding and gym football, in addition to the school's wide extra-curricular programme. Occasional special boarding weekends provide opportunities for pupils to attend particular events, such as a major football or rugby match or a West End theatre production.
- 3.23 Boarders have spacious, light and airy dormitories with modern bunk beds and storage units. They are able to personalise their own space with posters and find areas for privacy and study if they wish. Adjacent common rooms are comfortably furnished; they contain plasma televisions, computers and games, and an allocated time is provided for all boarders, both boys and girls, to socialise together. Toilets and washing facilities are adequate and clean but the shower rooms have not been updated or decorated recently. The school is aware of the need for continued renovation and has a development plan in place.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 By the terms of their membership of the Woodard Corporation, Ardingly College governors, known as the School Council, are accountable to the Corporation members, who have final responsibility for the college. Governors help to set and secure appropriate aims and values and provide sound oversight and guidance.
- 4.2 The senior, preparatory and pre-preparatory schools are governed as one body. The structure and management arrangements, including the finance and strategic committees, and properly minuted meetings, provide sound oversight of the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools, including guidance on the strategies to achieve their overall aims. To further this oversight, the governing body has formally established an education committee, which is due to meet in the near future.
- 4.3 The governors' roles of maintaining the ethos, quality and development of the college, which is underpinned by the Christian objectives and values of the Woodard Corporation, are taken seriously. Their collective professional expertise assists with their monitoring of the performance of each school, which is satisfactory. The financial stability of each school is managed in conjunction with the bursar. The review of current legislation to ensure compliance with statutory and legal obligations has not been so consistently and systematically undertaken, particularly with respect to the safeguarding of pupils through appropriate staff appointment procedures, and the provision of an appropriate complaints procedure. In addition, governors have not considered sufficiently the necessary changes that were identified in the previous Independent Schools Inspectorate and Commission for Social Care Inspection reports of 2002 and 2004 respectively. In contrast, the governors have been effective in making provision for the accommodation and human and material resources in order to meet pupils' educational needs. Since the last inspection, the imaginative conversion of farm buildings has provided the pre-preparatory school with new classrooms and ancillary space, and ambitious plans are in progress to provide the preparatory school with much needed new buildings.
- 4.4 Governors are well informed by the headteachers of the preparatory and pre-preparatory schools; communication is regular and open. Staff are invited to have lunch with governors after council meetings. The chair of governors visits all common rooms on a regular basis. Some governors make regular visits to the schools, including attending concerts, plays, chapel services and special events, which enable them to gain insight into the working and life of each school.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.5 Leadership and management are of good quality and are increasingly successful, and support well the schools' declared ethos.
- 4.6 Under the leadership and direction of the headmaster of the college, the headteachers of each school work closely together to ensure that the declared ethos, underpinned by the strong Christian values of the Woodard Corporation, permeates the whole community. Despite the recent changes to the management structure in both the preparatory and prep-preparatory schools, a firm yet sensitive educational direction and a strong sense of purpose are quickly being established. This is reflected in the warm and friendly environment, the good quality of education, the care of the pupils and the excellent relationships evident.

- 4.7 Progress has been made in improving the monitoring of the life and work of both schools, in reorganising the management structure at all levels, and in strengthening the leadership role of senior staff. The preparatory school has a well-established senior management team and heads of department who have worked well together to analyse the school's needs, set priorities, and put decisions into practice. A start has been made on a similar delegation of responsibilities in the pre-preparatory school with the recent appointment of a senior team supported by subject co-ordinators. The recently established cross-college leadership group with representatives from each school is challenging everyone to build on the schools' existing strengths. Curriculum links between the staff of all three sections of the college are gradually developing. Senior managers are aware of the need to ensure that these changes are consolidated and integrated smoothly into the life and work of each school.
- 4.8 Communication and consultation are purposeful and enable all staff to contribute to the development of policy. Whole-staff consultation has resulted in a strategic intent document which identifies areas for development in all aspects of school life. Staff have invested considerable time and energy in order to create comprehensive school documentation which covers all aspects of school life and is easily accessible to colleagues. The checking and reviewing of the effectiveness of these policies are uneven as yet. Systems are not yet reviewed in a manageable way to ensure that they are consistent and useful for monitoring and developing the educational experience of pupils across the age range.
- 4.9 Teaching staff are highly committed and hard working and make a significant contribution to pupils' achievements and welfare. Appraisal procedures have been recently re-established. Staff checks are carried out centrally. In most respects, the schools' procedures ensure that suitable staff are appointed to the many and various roles within the schools, but evidence is not available that all necessary checks have been carried out for qualifications where appropriate, references, previous employment details, and medical fitness. A central register is kept and has appropriate headings but not all the required information is accurately recorded. Induction procedures for staff new to the school support them well. Although at present the schools do not have any teachers who are newly qualified, they follow the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers.
- 4.10 Financial resources are generally managed well to secure appropriate and sufficient resources for the pupils' needs. The excellent, well-designed, purpose-built accommodation for the pre-preparatory school significantly enhances the learning environment for the pupils. The preparatory school is acutely aware of the constraints of old listed buildings. Although best use is made of available space, some of the cloakroom and changing facilities are cramped. Shower arrangements for games are unsatisfactory in that storage lockers are placed in most shower cubicles making the showers unusable. Both parents and pupils expressed concern at the state of the shower rooms. The immediate outside playground of the preparatory school is small. It is unsuitable for the numbers of pupils and for providing a stimulating, creative and safe play area. The school recognises that solutions to the limitations of the playground need to be found and a playground committee has been set up to try and address the problems. Plans are presently under consideration to provide new buildings for the preparatory school. High quality displays of pupils' completed work throughout each school and the expansion of the use of ICT at all levels add considerably to the learning environment.
- 4.11 Administrative and other support staff provide high quality assistance, ensuring that the school day runs smoothly. Non-teaching and support staff make an important contribution to the well-being of the pupils and the fulfilment of the schools' aims. Communication within and beyond the schools is effective and is facilitated by their intranet system.

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- 4.12 The schools meet most of the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4]. In order to meet all the requirements, the schools must:
- (a) ensure that checks are carried out to confirm in respect of each person appointed: qualifications where appropriate, references, previous employment history, and medical fitness [Regulation 4.(2)(a)];
  - (b) for each appointment, enter on the central register the completion of all required checks [Regulations 4C.(2) and (3)].
- 4.13 The schools meet most of the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5]. In order to meet all the requirements, the schools must:
- (a) ensure that there are appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely at break times in the preparatory school [Regulation 5.(t)].
- 4.14 The schools participate in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meet its requirements.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The preparatory and pre-preparatory schools are mostly successful in achieving their aims and aspirations. The strong Christian ethos is characterised by the outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pastoral care is excellent and pupils achieve high standards. Such achievement is predominantly due to the good quality teaching and the effective support pupils receive in their learning. When given the opportunity, pupils at all levels enjoy rising to the challenge of thinking creatively and critically, and extending their independent learning. On some occasions, lessons are too teacher directed and do not provide opportunities for pupils to take intellectual risk. Pupils are successful in examinations and some are awarded scholarships to the senior school. All pupils enjoy a rich educational experience, significantly enhanced by the extra-curricular programme. Pupils make a significant contribution to the life of the school through the excellent relationships they have with each other and their teachers. Those who board thoroughly enjoy the experience. Pupils throughout are well educated, polite and are clearly proud of their schools.
- 5.2 After the recent appointment of new headteachers and the subsequent changes to the senior management structures, each school is moving ahead confidently. Leadership and management are now good and are well supported by hard working and committed staff and the satisfactory oversight of governors. Each school has responded well to the recommendations outlined in the previous inspection: assessments are analysed more rigorously; the monitoring of teaching and learning has been strengthened through a system of classroom observation; and management roles are defined clearly. They are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that existing policies and procedures are systematically monitored, that new arrangements are consolidated and integrated smoothly into the life of the schools and that teaching provides all pupils with the challenge of taking greater intellectual risk. The pre-preparatory school has recently moved into new accommodation and this enhances significantly the learning environment for the younger pupils. Some of the interior facilities of the preparatory school are cramped and the outside play area is too small for the numbers of pupils. Plans are presently being considered for the provision of new buildings and facilities for the preparatory school.
- 5.3 The schools comply with most of the regulatory requirements, but do not at present meet Standards 4 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors), 5 (premises and accommodation), 6 (provision of information) and 7 (the manner in which complaints are to be handled).

## Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to move ahead and build upon the firm foundations already established, the schools should:
1. develop teaching strategies to the quality of those of the best to ensure that all pupils are challenged to take intellectual risk;
  2. review and evaluate policies and procedures systematically to ensure that they are used effectively across each phase of the schools for monitoring and developing the educational experience of all pupils;
  3. review urgently the outside play arrangements in the preparatory school, and at the same time examine ways of maximising the use of the estate to enhance the wider curriculum throughout the year for all pupils.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the schools must:
- (1) ensure that checks are carried out to confirm in respect of each person appointed: qualifications where appropriate, references, previous employment history, and medical fitness [Regulation 4.(2)(a)];
  - (2) for each appointment, enter on the central register the completion of all required checks [Regulations 4C.(2) and (3)];
  - (3) state in the complaints procedure that at any panel hearing parents are allowed to attend and be accompanied if they wish [Regulation 7.(h)];
  - (4) ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are aware that they may request a copy of the revised complaints procedure [Regulation 6.(2)(j)];
  - (5) ensure that there are appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely at break times in the preparatory school [Regulation 5.(t)].

## **6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008. 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. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the medical centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the schools.
- 6.2 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of three Ofsted inspectors over four days.

### **List of Inspectors**

Mrs Gail Purt	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sara Wiggins	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Michael Anderson	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Susan Barnes	Former Head, ISA school
Mr Adrian Gobat	Former Head, IAPS school
Mrs Jennifer Marsh	Head, ISA school
Mr Peter Rushforth	Head, IAPS school