

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Gateway School

Full Name of the School	Gateway School
DCSF Number	825/6000
Early Years Number	EY 337179
Registered Charity Number	N/A
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Age Range (of the whole school)	2 to 12
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	26th to 29th January 2009
Head of Early Years Setting	Mrs Suzanne Kemp
Early Years Age Range	2 to 5
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	26th to 27th January 2009

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 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. The inspection was carried out by ISI, a body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting EYFS provision in schools belonging to the ISC Associations. Section 7 of this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework published by

the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the Statutory Framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Gateway School is an independent, family run co-educational day school that educates pupils from the age of two to twelve years. The school is situated in the conservation area of Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire and was founded on its present site in 1948 and taken over by the Wade family in 1982. The retired headteachers continue to govern the school as proprietors. The main school house is surrounded by purpose-built accommodation constructed between 1985 and 2007. In recent years the number of children on roll has grown significantly, with pupils showing a wider ability profile, and with boy and girl ratios becoming more balanced.
- 1.2 Since the last inspection in 2003, a new headteacher, appointed in 2005, has overseen a period of growth and change. This includes recent changes to the composition and responsibilities within the senior management team, construction and relocation of several teaching areas, and staff work areas, including a new Early Years Unit (EYU), as well as investment in information and communication technology (ICT), and in the provision of recreational spaces. Many areas of the school have undergone refurbishment and modernisation as part of a rolling maintenance programme. A longer school day and development of an Ofsted registered holiday club allows pupils to use school facilities 47 weeks per year. The range of subjects on the taught curriculum and the provision of extra-curricular activities have grown. The school continues to include all it provides within one school fee and to make use of the village hall for some lessons and activities.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection the school had 358 pupils on roll, of whom 53 were part-time and 26 are full-time in the Nursery EYU or Reception. Of the 279 pupils in the main school, 65 were in Years 1 and 2, and 214 pupils in Years 3 to 7. The school has more boys than girls. Most pupils join the EYU just before their third birthday, with a small number joining later where space is available. Pupils come from a broad range of backgrounds and the majority live within a seven mile radius of the school, although some travel considerably further. The youngest children are catered for within small pastoral groups in the EYU and transfer to two Reception classes at the beginning of the academic year in which they become five, joined by a small number of children from other Early Years providers. There is another significant entry of pupils at the beginning of Year 3, with pupils joining the school at other points depending on the availability of places. Pupils are prepared for entrance examinations to selective grammar schools and independent schools and most leave at the age of eleven, the majority moving to the selective state system. A few pupils remain at the school until the age of twelve.
- 1.4 The school is non-selective. Pupils of all ages spend time within the school before joining: for younger children this takes the form of a morning visit; older children spend a full day within the school. During their visit staff observe and assess them in a manner appropriate to their age. Standardised test information indicates that children are broadly of above average ability when compared with the national average. If pupils perform in line with their abilities, their results will be above the national average compared with all maintained primary schools.
- 1.5 The school has identified 81 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and 31 of these pupils require additional support with some aspect of their learning. Many of these are able pupils with specific learning difficulties. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN); both receive funding from the local authority for support. The twelve pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) receive additional

support and guidance during the school day. Provision for gifted and talented (G&T) pupils is also in place.

- 1.6 The school's aims are clearly laid out in its prospectus, website and staff handbook. They focus on teaching and learning, the pastoral support and personal development of pupils and working in partnership with parents. They aim to offer pupils a broad range of opportunities. Pupils are encouraged to be independent in their learning, confident in their abilities and show pleasure in collective and individual achievement. The school values tolerance and a culture of mutual support in which the whole school community treat each other considerately and responsibly. The school believes that these aims will develop and celebrate the individual abilities and talents of each child in an atmosphere of respect and affection, instilling an enduring love of learning, in an environment which nurtures the well-being children need to live life to the full.
- 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 for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage

School	Age of children
EYU	2 to 3
EYU	3 to 4
Reception	4 to 5

- 1.8 See Section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided is good. The curriculum from the EYFS to Year 7 is broad, balanced and flexible, which supports the finding of the last inspection. It is consistent with the school's declared ethos to develop and celebrate the individual abilities and talents of each child. The curriculum is based on the National Curriculum but is designed to encourage pupils to pursue their own interests.
- 2.2 Since the last inspection the number of specialist teachers has increased. ICT facilities have improved and are used to good effect in some subjects and continue to grow in other subjects. Staff have received training and overhead projectors have been installed in a number of classrooms. The scheme of work for religious education (RE) has been reviewed to improve the provision for pupils' spiritual development. Planning for subject development and the role of subject coordinators have been reviewed and developed as part of the school development plan. A longer school day allows pupils of all ages to attend an extensive number of extra-curricular activities. A greater range of trips and visits has been introduced to support the taught curriculum.
- 2.3 The balanced education pupils receive contributes fully to all aspects of their development. The curriculum policy is clear, strong and links well to the school's aims. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive about the range of subjects offered to pupils. In Years 1 and 2 all subjects in the National Curriculum, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), RE and French are taught. Pupils from Reception to Year 4 benefit from specialist teaching in art and design, design technology (DT), ICT, music, physical education and French. Themed topics throughout the school allow for cross-curricular links in most subjects, especially from the EYFS to Year 4. In Years 3 to 7 pupils enjoy an extension of the subjects taught in Years 1 and 2 with the addition of drama and more sport. In Years 5 to 7 subjects are taught by specialist teachers. Some lessons, such as DT, art, poetry and keyboard skills, are taught in half classes, which allows teachers to focus on the individual needs of the pupils more closely. In Years 5 to 7 English, mathematics and science are taught in four ability groups while pupils are divided into three teaching groups for other subjects.
- 2.4 Pupils' good speaking and listening skills are developed in many subjects as adults and pupils all value and listen to the opinion of each pupil, reflecting the school's ethos. Pupils express their ideas with growing confidence as they move up the school. A carefully planned PSHCE programme, taught throughout the school as a discrete subject and embedded in other subjects such as RE, geography and history, encourages self-confidence and self-discipline and reflects the school's aims. Curricular provision for pupils to develop skills in creative arts is a strength of the school. Pupils are encouraged to perform in drama productions, musical presentations and verse speaking. The arts often support topic themes, for example, Year 3 pupils were observed working in groups to compose musical pieces representing animal sounds and movements.
- 2.5 The range of extra-curricular activities and clubs strongly enhances the taught curriculum. Parents' and pupils' positive comments in the pre-inspection questionnaires indicate a high level of satisfaction and inspection findings support this judgement. Reception and Year 1 pupils enjoy creative activities such as construction, cookery and dance. Year 2 to Year 7 pupils enjoy a wide range of activities including judo, chess, choir and first aid. On some days up to 200 pupils benefit from an activity. Clubs, day and residential trips are complimentary, to uphold the school's ethos and to ensure that no pupil is excluded for

financial reasons. School staff lead most clubs, with a small number, such as judo and rugby, led by specialist coaches. Good standards are achieved in sport, music and drama and all pupils are encouraged to take part. The taught curriculum is further enriched in Years 5 to 7 as pupils choose from an additional range of activities such as Italian, archaeology, first aid or Japanese. Visits to the local community support the curriculum, for example, younger pupils went to see 'The Gruffalo' at Wycombe Swan and Year 2 visited Roald Dahl's Gallery. Year 3 pupils attend residential study and field trips with good topic-related themes. Pupils interviewed expressed strong appreciation and enjoyment of these opportunities.

- 2.6 The curriculum prepares pupils well for their next stage of education. Arrangements for the transition between the EYFS and Year 1 and from Year 2 into Year 3 are good. Teachers meet to discuss individual pupils' needs and their progress. Pupils visit their new classrooms and teacher. Parents are well informed and every effort is made to ensure a smooth and happy transfer for the pupils. The transfer to a subject specialist taught curriculum in Years 5 to 7 helps pupils to become familiar with the routines and organisation demanded of senior school pupils and, together with a 'Learning to Lead' programme of study, is an effective way to encourage independence, self-discipline and confidence. School responsibilities include membership of the school council and acting as road safety officers and first aid leaders in Year 6. A programme of study skills and additional lessons prepare pupils for entrance exams and local authority testing, with appropriate meetings to keep parents fully informed.
- 2.7 Curriculum planning is thorough and extensive. Since the last inspection the role of curriculum coordinators has been developed well to oversee planning and monitor pupils' progress through recording and assessment. However, this role has not developed to require coordinators to routinely observe lessons to monitor the link between lesson plans and the quality of teaching. The support given to pupils with LDD is outstanding and many initiatives have been developed to meet their needs and enhance their progress. Provision includes adult support in and out of the classroom and a programme to improve working memory. Great care is taken to identify pupils with LDD. Learning support teachers, therapists and teaching assistants, work together to support each pupil, including those with a statement of SEN. Individual education plans (IEPs) are clear, workable and of good quality. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is excellent. Provision to screen, support and challenge pupils on the gifted register is outstanding. Pupils receive additional lessons and spoke warmly of these opportunities. A register to develop provision in each subject for talented pupils is growing. Provision for pupils with EAL is good.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.9 Pupils achieve good standards in both their academic and broader education. The school fulfils its aim to encourage the pupils' natural curiosity and enthusiasm, which engenders self-confidence, independence and a life-long love of learning. The quality of pupils' learning and achievements, including those children in the EYFS, is good in relation to their age and ability. Their positive and purposeful approach to study and activities helps to make them effective and resourceful learners who are friendly and courteous to both peers and adults. The good standards of learning and achievement found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained, whilst learning and achievement in ICT has improved.

- 2.10 Good speaking and listening skills are fostered from the earliest stages of the EYFS and with increasingly secure reading skills by the time pupils reach Year 2. Pupils have many opportunities, as they progress through the school, to recite poetry, perform sketches, or deliver presentations in class or in assembly. They obtain good levels of knowledge, skill, critical and creative thinking and understanding in taught subjects and in extra-curricular activities. For example, Year 6 pupils made an effective critical analysis of 'The Eagle' by Tennyson and Year 7 pupils discussed animatedly how the city of Tokyo might change in the future. Pupils are encouraged to write down their ideas and discuss them with confidence and enthusiasm and use a wide range of literacy skills and expressive vocabulary and imagery in their writing of stories and poetry. The ethos within the school strongly supports the expression of pupils' individual ideas. Good standards of numeracy were seen throughout the school and the regular practice of basic skills enables the pupils to apply them with confidence across the curriculum. The good use of cross-curricular links, particularly from the EYFS to Year 4, enriches pupils' learning experience and enhances learning opportunities in both the creative arts and, increasingly, in the use of ICT.
- 2.11 No significant differences are apparent in the relative attainment of different groups of pupils, subject areas or between boys and girls. Pupils with LDD work hard, achieve well and make excellent progress particularly with additional support from class teachers, specialist teachers and teaching assistants. Some pupils are on a working memory programme of study. Pupils on the gifted and talented register benefit from creative extension activities and an enlightened and successful programme, which addresses their needs very well. This comprehensive provision, designed to meet the needs of the wide range of pupils' abilities within the school, is a strength. Detailed planning, wise use of time and the positive approach of most teachers who have high expectations for every pupil all engender confidence and encourage pupils to want to succeed.
- 2.12 The school prepares pupils for the 11+ and 12+ transfer exams for access to Buckinghamshire grammar schools and a range of maintained secondary schools and independent schools. Since 2006 the pass rate for grammar schools has increased steadily. In 2008 almost all pupils gained entry to the senior school of their choice and over the last three years some have achieved academic, creative or sporting scholarships. Preparation for national tests at the end of Year 6 is good and pupils' attainment in them is good in relation to their abilities. Results in national tests over the last three years have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools in English, mathematics and science, despite a broadening of the ability range.
- 2.13 The school has a significant list of team and individual achievements in a wide range of sports and creative arts. All pupils in Years 4, 5 and 7 take examinations in spoken English and Years 3 and 6 can opt to take part in the English Speaking Board examinations. These have increased in popularity and the school has enjoyed significant success in this area over the last three years. Success has also been achieved in cricket, cross-country running, tennis, football and swimming. A school judo team is the current Under-10 IAPS champions. Pupils enter the Junior Maths Challenge and the Primary Maths Challenge competitions and consistently win awards. Pupils also achieve well in first aid, chess, music and the performing arts. They understandably take pride in the breadth of their achievements.
- 2.14 Pupils work well independently. Year 2 pupils plan and draft work in English effectively and Year 3 pupils learn how to review and improve their work successfully. Older pupils approach homework, topics for research and independent study in an increasingly mature manner as they move up the school. For example, in a creative writing project in Year 6 about 'The Silver Sword' by Ian Serrailier, pupils demonstrated variety, commitment to detail and creativity. Pupils interviewed explained clearly and with confidence how they had

used books and the internet to research for information on cross-curricular topics and use jotters and planners to trial ideas.

- 2.15 Pupils' attitudes to work and enthusiasm to learn are good throughout the school and achievement is particularly strong in Years 3 to 7. In a Year 4 English lesson all pupils were engrossed and participating fully in a reading and answering activity. In the best lessons, pupils settle to work quickly, use their time well and apply themselves to the set task and demonstrate a desire for self-improvement. Occasionally, if the pace is too slow or work does not meet their needs, pupils lose focus and learning time is lost. More often they work well on their own, in pairs or in groups, often showing excellent cooperative skills. Pupils interviewed enjoyed talking about their work and showed a real sense of pride and understanding of what they do, and why they do it. Their focused approach, careful listening to the teacher and respect for each other's opinions means that they achieve well and share each other's success. Pupils are proud of their school and have a desire to take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their learning as they move through the school. This positive attitude towards learning fully reflects the school's ethos.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.16 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is a strength of the whole school from the EYFS onwards, and reflects good progress in all areas since the last inspection. The school fulfils its aims to value pupils' individuality and to develop their independence, confidence and self-discipline.
- 2.17 Pupils demonstrate a high level of spiritual awareness. The sense of awe and wonder evident in many lessons, ranging from English to RE and mathematics, strongly enhances the curriculum. For example, Year 3 pupils were observed to write sensitive poems entitled 'Listen' and joyfully discovered patterns in numbers. Many lessons, and particularly those in art and drama, provide opportunities for children to express themselves. The school shares fortnightly quotations, which provide food for thought and give rise to contemplation. The strong RE curriculum is supported by assemblies, which are often enhanced by contributions from visiting parents, pupils or representatives of different faiths. A set of class guidelines, drawn up by the school council are understood and upheld by Year 3 to Year 7 pupils who were interviewed.
- 2.18 Pupils have an outstanding sense of moral values. The PSHCE programme strongly supports their moral development and permeates the curriculum. Attendance is good and pupils behave extremely well. They exhibit a high degree of fairness and an ability to tolerate and celebrate individual personalities and achievements. No friendship problems were observed during the inspection and the quality of relationships among the pupils was outstanding. Positive encouragement between the pupils is manifest. For example, in a Year 5 art lesson one pupil encouraged another by saying 'Don't put yourself down'. A substantial amount of charity work is undertaken. For example, the school works closely with a village school in Uganda, supports Dreamflights, which organizes holidays for disadvantaged children, and uses assemblies to promote other causes and raise the awareness of the importance of positive action to help others.
- 2.19 Pupils' social development is outstanding as all pupils have an opportunity to take an active role in school life whether in the school council, houses, sports teams and clubs or by volunteering to help at lunch time. A particular example is of Year 6 pupils, qualified in St John's Ambulance first aid, who volunteer to help the school nurse at break times to assist cases of minor injury. Houses are well established as a pivotal part of sports and activities such as quizzes. Pupils value the school council, elect year representatives and use a suggestion box to contribute suggestions for school improvement. Many of these

suggestions are adopted such as the provision of boot cleaners, extra footballs at break and jungle gym apparatus for climbing. Residential visits to France for Year 6 pupils, fosters further their social awareness and leadership skills. The many after-school clubs are very well attended and provide a variety of experiences to encourage co-operative learning.

- 2.20 Cultural development is an outstanding feature of Gateway School. It supports the school's ethos that every child is an individual, as all cultures and beliefs are equally valued. Pupils learn about their own and other cultures through diverse projects such as those on St Lucia, India and the history of Gateway House. They celebrate Chinese New Year and visit temples and synagogues. Pupils learn the languages and cultures of France, Italy and Japan through the curriculum and after-school clubs. Older pupils discuss national and international current affairs at lunchtime. World events are reported on the digital board in the school entrance hall. In a Year 6 English lesson pupils studied the presidential election in the United States of America. Pupils are encouraged to develop their personal gifts and talents through sport, music, drama, clubs and the gifted and talented programme of study. Cultural appreciation is developed by contributions from parents and pupils of different cultures and talents in assemblies and in the classroom. For example, outstanding violin playing was listened to with appreciation in assembly. Such a rich experience prepares pupils well for life in the wider community.
- 2.21 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.22 The quality of teaching is good, including in the EYFS, with a small proportion of outstanding lessons by specialist teaching throughout the school. Teaching is adapting well to provide for a broader ability range of pupils. Pupils make good progress and teachers work hard to meet the school's aim to provide teaching of a high standard that encourages children to give of their best. Recent initiatives, that include the use of a wider range of teaching styles and improved planning by teachers, have helped to ensure that the good quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection.
- 2.23 In most lessons teachers provide well for pupils' differing needs. The school is working hard to develop a greater understanding of pupils' preferred learning styles and more focus is being placed on the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic needs of learners. In the best lessons all three learning styles are planned for and provided. Provision for pupils with LDD, SEN and are gifted and talented is outstanding. All children, including those with EAL, are encouraged to develop independent learning. Teachers know the pupils well and pupils say that they enjoy lessons and appreciate the efforts of their teachers to help their learning.
- 2.24 The majority of lessons are challenging and interesting. Teachers make good use of focused questioning to build pupils' confidence and give them the tools to tackle more difficult work independently. Pupils are encouraged from an early age to express ideas and opinions. They feel secure enough to take risks and are curious to pursue lines of enquiry confident that their efforts will be valued. Opportunities for good quality supportive peer work and discussion are effective and clarify pupils' own understanding.
- 2.25 Teachers are friendly and show a close interest in their pupils' academic development. Class teachers, subject teachers, specialist teachers, tutors and teaching assistants work together to provide a nurturing environment with high expectations of good behaviour and effective learning. Their own enthusiasm, sense of purpose and direction are good models for pupils who respond well and enjoy variety and being busy. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson

a mixture of good humour, inventiveness and brisk pace turned a lesson on the conditional tense into a stimulating and memorable 'grammar is great!' experience.

- 2.26 In the most effective lessons teaching shows strong planning and subject knowledge, a brisk pace, enthusiasm and challenge that invites pupils' participation and encourages good progress. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson the excellent management of time, combined with effective use of resources meant that all the children showed keen application, developed their investigative skills through excellent supportive peer work and achieved the lesson aims. In less effective lessons, which lack variety, pace and interaction, pupils lose concentration and valuable learning time is lost. ICT is increasingly used as a teaching tool and is becoming an integral part of the teachers' planning, although the breadth of opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills is still developing.
- 2.27 The systems for transition, targeting, tracking and assessing performance are well established and teachers invest much time discussing with pupils their strengths, needs, prior attainment and targets. This helps to develop teachers' knowledge of their pupils and pupils' awareness of their own learning. In a Year 7 French lesson the well planned and thoughtful teaching, which was mindful of the pupils' abilities, used a range of teaching styles which instilled confidence in the pupils to tackle the activity in the target language.
- 2.28 Throughout the age range and across the curriculum, teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of subjects taught. Where teaching is enthusiastic and confident, teaching stimulates the pupils' imagination, as in a Year 5 Art lesson on Picasso, where pupils created good examples of Picasso's Blue period. The school has become increasingly well resourced, particularly with the acquisition of ICT equipment and in response to the growing number of children and wider range of ability levels. Textbooks and other resources are refreshed and updated through a regular programme of maintenance and improvement.
- 2.29 The school has produced clear marking and assessment policies, which are effectively developed and implemented by coordinators in individual departments. In addition, it has formalised its procedures for the scrutiny of pupils' work, which are carried out by senior and middle management, although coordinators do not routinely monitor teaching. Work is marked regularly, although not always thoroughly. At its best, the marking both suggests next steps and is reinforced by oral feedback to individual pupils or whole classes as appropriate. Pupils said that they found the positive comments and target setting helpful and encouraging. In some subjects, pupils evaluate their own work or that of their peers and begin to suggest their own targets on how to improve. These are recorded in their books and are reviewed every half term. Pupils explained that these targets help them to know what they need to do to improve. Good quality continual assessment occurs in such subjects as mathematics through the use of individual, handheld whiteboards. Teaching staff use their regular assessment of both written and oral work to help the forward planning of lessons. The lesson plans and subsequent evaluations, are regularly monitored by the senior management team.
- 2.30 The school collects appropriate assessment data regularly, based on National Curriculum levels as well as the results of standardised tests. These results are analysed within departments to help teachers identify general subject issues that need to be given attention so that pupils' learning can be improved. A good start has been made in improving the recording of pupils' performance data to ensure that it is more easily accessed and more efficiently combined with teachers' comments to aid planning and support to ensure that individual needs are met, and to plan appropriate teaching strategies for specific groups. Similarly, the school considers that the new system will increase the ease with which IEPs may be shared among staff.

2.31 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 care devoted by staff to their pupils is a strong feature of the school. Indeed, the school is particularly successful in its aim to provide an environment in which children can develop their independence, confidence and self-discipline. Due attention is paid to the welfare, health and safety of pupils, including in the EYFS. However, within this good provision, the quality, quantity and variety of food at lunchtime is a weakness. This factor notwithstanding, the strengths reported in the last inspection have been maintained.
- 3.2 Staff know pupils well and offer good support and guidance in a friendly and relaxed manner. Almost all pupils feel that they can rely on teachers to help them deal with issues as they occur. The atmosphere in the school is purposeful and caring, with teachers and pupils keen to help one another. A feature much appreciated by pupils is that the school has guidelines for good living, rather than rules to be broken.
- 3.3 Pastoral arrangements are effective in supporting and guiding pupils. The pastoral system is one in which the tutor is pivotal to the well-being of the pupils, supported by the headteacher, nurse and educational therapist. The daily contact with tutors, teachers and other staff gives pupils many chances to discuss personal issues and seek help. The system has been further strengthened by the introduction of assistant tutors, thus allowing still more individual contact time between staff and pupils. The pupils also play a role, as the practice of combining Year 5 and Year 6 in tutor groups enables Year 6 pupils to mentor Year 5 pupils at their time of transition to subject-based teaching.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is good and that amongst pupils is excellent. The concern that staff show for pupils and the concomitant trust of the pupils in their staff are noticeable features of the school. This trust is developed and supported by the school council, where pupils feel that their views are listened to and where staff have an opportunity to repay that trust. The high quality of friendship and care for each other are noticeable in the way pupils treat each other around the school.
- 3.5 The quality of care throughout the school, together with topics covered in PSHCE, raises pupils' awareness of their responsibility for good behaviour and of their role in preventing bullying. Indeed, pupils consider that bullying is not a problem because they believe that any hint of such behaviour would be quickly dealt with by staff. The school's clear anti-bullying policy benefits from its ethos of seeing each child as an individual: behavioural changes are spotted quickly.
- 3.6 The school is vigilant about health and safety and takes appropriate measures to ensure that both staff and pupils are fully protected. Detailed and updated child protection procedures are in place and staff have received appropriate training either through in-service training or individual induction. Admission registers are completed quickly and prompt checks are made should a pupil be absent without a reason being provided. Protection against risk of fire is thorough: pupils know the procedures for safe and orderly evacuation, and full records and evaluations of fire drills are kept by the bursar. Appropriate risk assessments are made for educational visits. Pupils who are taken ill have appropriate facilities and are treated with care and consideration, by the school nurse, who has other trained staff to support her.

- 3.7 Emphasis is placed on healthy living: the school has recently purchased extensive play equipment to support fitness and agility, whilst the increased profile of sport has not only led to more team matches but also to an increased provision and uptake of after-school coaching. This emphasis, however, is not supported by the quality of school lunches, which drew widespread criticism from parents and pupils in both pre-inspection questionnaires and interviews. Inspection findings uphold their concerns and judged the quality, quantity and variety of lunches to be unsatisfactory. At the time of inspection a process to improve the provision of school lunches was underway.
- 3.8 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

- 3.9 The quality of links with parents and the community is strong, reflecting an improved partnership since the previous inspection. This meets the school's aim of developing each pupil's awareness of their contribution and involvement in the school, local and national communities.
- 3.10 Parents expressed satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children. In responding to a questionnaire distributed before the inspection, some parents were dissatisfied with the information provided and opportunities to discuss pupils' progress. However, inspection findings are that reports to parents are frequent and comprehensive, showing clear indications of a pupil's progress and achievement. In addition, an open door policy is applied; tutors and subject teachers are readily available to parents for informal consultation. Communication between parents and school is strong and has improved since the last inspection. Biannual school questionnaires that seek parents' views are analysed and acted upon.
- 3.11 Parents have satisfactory opportunities to become involved with the school's life and work. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a significant minority of parents expressed concern about a lack of opportunities to participate in school life. Inspection findings do not uphold this concern as sufficient examples of active participation were found. Parents provide talks about public institutions, contribute to the cultural programme and to musical events and take part in school outings and visits. Twice-yearly reports are clear and give concise information on a pupil's strengths and weaknesses. Consultation evenings follow such reports and are of a good length, allowing quality conversations on pupils' progress. Handbooks for each year are detailed and helpful. Parents are invited to school at the end of the summer term to hear about the following academic year.
- 3.12 Policies and other relevant information for parents and prospective parents are on the school website. Important notices and information on changes in staff are communicated via the newsletter which is emailed as well as going home as a hard copy. The school has an appropriate complaints procedure. A minority of parents expressed concern that complaints were not handled well. However, no formal complaints have been registered in the last two years and parents interviewed expressed the opinion that all complaints were 'dealt with instantly'. Inspection findings are that the school handles complaints from parents appropriately and with due care.
- 3.13 The school has good links with the local and international communities. It has a well-established link with a village school in Uganda which it helped set up. It is raising funds for Dreamflights, a charity offering flights to Florida to deprived or sick children. Learning to Lead, an initiative for pupils in Years 6 and 7, encourages children to support charities and green issues. Pupils decide which good cause to support and how to raise money. The

school uses Great Missenden Hall for some lessons and annual events. The Christmas Fair is a popular village affair.

- 3.14 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 quality of governance is good. The proprietors give strong strategic direction and oversight to the school. This ensures that the school continues to meet its aims, which are based on care and respect. Since the last inspection the proprietors have retired as headteachers, a new headteacher has been appointed, the number of pupils has grown and several significant building projects have been completed. All of the recommendations of the last inspection have been addressed.
- 4.2 The two proprietors bring a range of experience and expertise to the school that enables business to be conducted efficiently through regular meetings. This serves the school well, allowing issues to be discussed fully and outside expertise sought should the situation need it. The proprietors are suitably screened, clear about their roles and responsibilities and share the same vision for the school as the headteacher.
- 4.3 Proprietors are clear about the extent of their responsibilities and strive to maintain a proper relationship to the school's work. They are aware of their financial responsibilities, which they discharge carefully with the help of the bursar, monitoring both budget and expenditure. The proprietors work closely with the headteacher to review the school improvement plan, giving careful consideration to pupils' needs. They have managed the development of new facilities, making maximum use of the site to accommodate the considerable rise in the number of pupils.
- 4.4 The proprietors know the daily life of the school well. They are frequent visitors and offer strong pastoral and academic support to both staff and pupils. The close contact with the school, a knowledge of its past and frequent meetings with the headteacher provide a valuable perspective from which to take informed decisions about the school's future development. They are aware of the need to organize a regular appraisal for the headteacher. Proprietors have good arrangements for overseeing both health and safety and child protection and take responsibility for pupils' welfare seriously. Current steps include measures to improve the quality and quantity of lunches served to pupils, to meet pupils' needs more fully and to support the healthy living and eating programme of study in the curriculum.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Good leadership has overseen a period of growth and change and helps management at all levels to address key areas the school has targeted for improvement. Steered by the headteacher, members of the senior management team (SMT) have worked hard since coming together last term, to support colleagues and monitor the many new initiatives that have been introduced. This is a similar finding to the last inspection. Management is good overall although certain areas require further attention. Since the last inspection the school's ethos continues to be a notable feature in the everyday life of the school, producing a strong sense of purpose to its work and helping to fulfil the school's aims.
- 4.6 Members of the newly formed SMT set high standards in their own professional practice and are learning to work well together. The team's management skills are good but opportunities for them to demonstrate and develop leadership skills are scant as historically the headteacher takes on this role. Consequently the balance of management roles for SMT members, including the headteacher, is still developing. Job descriptions for individual members of the

- SMT have not yet been rationalized sufficiently well to allow management to share realistically the day-to-day running of the school.
- 4.7 Strong leadership is found in other areas of the school such as in the provision for pupils receiving learning support, including those on the gifted and talented and working memory programmes of study. Such leadership is based on a commitment to remaining up-to-date with new approaches and with maintaining close links with other schools and the local authority. The passion for learning and the high standards such leadership demonstrates are passed on to the pupils and contribute strongly to their capacity to learn. The role of subject coordinators has developed since the last inspection. It includes support for staff to write detailed work plans and the monitoring of pupils' progress through recording and assessment. However, coordinators do not routinely observe the quality of teaching and so do not consistently monitor the link between lesson plans and how they are taught.
- 4.8 The school files, including subject policies, are in excellent order and are kept up-to-date on a regular programme of review. This process is strongly supported by the work of administrative staff. The school shows a good awareness of areas for further development and a commitment to moving forward. Teaching and non-teaching staff support the ethos of the school. Together with the pupils they create a strong sense of community with a purposeful work ethic. Many feel valued by the school and each other and appreciate the induction, appraisal and inset they receive. Staff members spoke of the encouragement and support the school gives for professional development.
- 4.9 Staff are well qualified in what they do and are suitably screened and checked, with a single central register kept, as required. The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers. The financial resources are well managed, procedures are straightforward, tested and work efficiently. The school is increasingly well resourced, with a recent investment in overhead projectors and a regular programme to replace and increase stock.
- 4.10 The premises have been extended to accommodate increased numbers of pupils and the school is working to the full limits of its capacity. Some teaching rooms are small and managers work hard to find creative solutions to give teachers enough room for their subject. However, the number of toilet and wash hand basins is insufficient for the number of pupils now in the school. The school management is aware that it needs to improve the quality and quantity of lunches served to pupils and is working towards a solution. Additional staff in classroom support, caretaking, catering, cleaning and maintenance each play a valuable role in the Gateway School community.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4].
- 4.12 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) increase the number of washrooms for pupils, taking account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 [Regulation 5.(k)].
- 4.13 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 Gateway School is a good school that fosters pupils' self-control, self-respect and independence. It provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The school has many strong features, some of which are outstanding. It achieves its aims and meets the needs of its pupils effectively. In addition to the broad and balanced taught curriculum, the strong range of extra-curricular activities plays a part in enabling pupils to achieve well. Leadership, teaching, assessment and pupils' learning are good and all reflect the school's ethos of care and respect. Provision for pupils with LDD, SEN and G&T is outstanding. Creative arts across the curriculum and provision for Year 7 pupils are excellent and are strengths of the school. Provision for pupils' personal development is excellent and relationships between pupils are outstanding. The quality of pupils' pastoral care, welfare, health and safety is good. Within this good provision, the quality of school lunches is unsatisfactory. Links with parents and the wider community are good. Governance is good as proprietors give strong support to the school.
- 5.2 Many of the strengths found at the time of the last inspection in 2003 have been maintained or built upon. Much has happened in the last three years since the appointment of a new headteacher: increased numbers of pupils, new building programmes, improved provision for pupils with a wider range of abilities, and the development of EYFS. The many new initiatives introduced to support this period of rapid growth have not had time to be evaluated. Good progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses relating to pupils' spiritual development as provision for this is now outstanding. Subject development plans are in place and are used well. Subject coordinators monitor planning but do not routinely monitor the teaching of lessons. Provision for the use of ICT has improved and continues to be an area for development and investment. In a few year groups the use of ICT skills across the curriculum is uneven. The roles of leadership and management within the newly formed SMT are still developing, and the school is aware that job descriptions have still to be fully rationalized in order to more realistically share management of the school, which is good overall.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 5 (premises and accommodation).

Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to develop still further the education it provides, the school should take the following steps.
1. Develop the individual leadership roles of the SMT in order to:
 - share some of the responsibilities carried by the headteacher;
 - work alongside middle managers as they develop their roles to monitor teaching;
 - review the impact of the recent initiatives.
 2. Continue to improve the quality of school meals in order to provide a healthy lunch, balanced in nutrition, with sufficient variety and quantity to meet pupils' needs.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements the school must:
- (1) increase the number of washrooms for pupils, taking account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 [Regulation 5.(k)].
- 5.6 Any failures to meet EYFS requirements are detailed in Section 7

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 26th to 29th January 2009. 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.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 26th and 27th January 2009 by two inspectors. The inspectors observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff and governors. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Jill Lance	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Pauline Bennett Mills	Head IAPS Pre-Preparatory School
Mrs Caroline Birtwell	Head ISA Preparatory School
Mr Geoffrey Hammond	Deputy Head IAPS Prep School
Mrs Margaret Marsh	Deputy Head IAPS Prep School
Mrs Glenys Henry	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Bridgette Forrest	Early Years Team Inspector

7. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of the Gateway School is a registered setting and caters for 79 children. Of these, 55 children (53 part-time and 2 full-time), are in the Nursery Early Years Unit. Maximum attendance at any one time is 35, to include eight children between two and three years old. The remaining 24 children are divided equally between two Reception classes. Fifty-four children receive government funding. The Nursery moved into purpose-built accommodation in September 2007 and Reception classes were relocated to adjacent, redesigned buildings linked by an outdoor area. Care is provided before and after school. The children come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The EYFS provision aims to offer a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum where children are encouraged to be independent in their learning and develop confidence in their own abilities.
- 7.2 The flourishing setting is of good quality and is effective in meeting the needs of all its children and in recognising the uniqueness of each child. This is taken into account when observing, planning and teaching the curriculum. No group or individual is at a disadvantage and should a child be identified as requiring additional support, parents are consulted and, where appropriate, action is planned and provided with close monitoring. All staff are involved in regular planning and evaluation sessions which have full regard to the needs of the children. All children make good progress in their learning and development. Children's welfare is paramount and is promoted strongly throughout their time in EYFS. Partnership with parents and carers supports the child's education and care.
- 7.3 Independence is nurtured and individual needs are met, both academically and pastorally. Children's learning and development are good and they achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities. They learn to think critically, act independently and are active learners. Activities are well planned for both indoors and outdoors. All children make good progress across all six areas of learning and by the time they are five most children achieve the Early Learning Goals.
- 7.4 A particularly strong area of the curriculum is personal, social and emotional development. This was expressed when children experienced a sense of awe and wonder when they saw that their model dinosaur's egg had hatched to produce a baby dinosaur. They gain confidence as individuals and as members of a larger group, learning to share and take turns. New children settle well. All are encouraged to become independent and to develop respect for themselves, each other and their environment. Standards of behaviour are high, with children understanding the need for safety for everyone. Children are well motivated and eager to talk about their experiences. They show interest and curiosity in their work and are able to make choices as well as follow instructions. Good quality skills are developed in ICT such as when using programmable toys and cameras.
- 7.5 Teaching is thorough with the whole school environment supporting the children's learning and development. Strong relationships are forged between the parents and the school. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding with both Early Years specialists and Montessori trained teachers working well together. The stimulating learning environment helps each child to progress confidently towards the Early Learning Goals. Thorough short-, medium- and long-term plans enable all children to progress at a rate appropriate to their abilities. Ongoing careful observations and a variety of appropriate systems of assessment are in place to assist in planning and to monitor children's progress and development. All staff liaise with each other regularly, resulting in a strong curricular framework that underpins all areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors. Parents commented positively to a questionnaire about the high quality of education and care given to their children.

- 7.6 The welfare of children is promoted by all staff, raising the level of awareness of the importance of being safe and developing good habits and appropriate behaviour. An adequate area is designated for children when they feel unwell and a qualified nurse is readily available to give comfort and advice. All children have a key person identified in the EYFS who develops a close relationship with the child to provide security and comfort in school as needed. Within the Nursery area the provision for nappy changing or caring for those children who have accidents is limited, with no facility for washing other than hand wash bowls. Food provided at lunch is simple and restricted in variety due to a very limited preparation area. Few opportunities are provided for children to use cutlery or to make choices. Children eat in their classrooms with the Nursery staff, practising family grouping. Those children who have a specific dietary requirement are noted and those with allergies carefully monitored. The school is seeking to develop and extend the food preparation and serving area. The EYFS department is safe and attractive, thus promoting a good standard of welfare for all children.
- 7.7 The leadership and management of the EYFS are strong areas. The development of records, policies and procedures is carried out in a systematic and well-ordered manner, thus ensuring that the needs of all the children are fully met. Resources are managed and maintained well. They are versatile, appropriate to the children's development and welfare, and support the curriculum effectively. Manageable assessment procedures inform planning effectively, resulting in a clear view of each child's progress and development. Inclusive practice is promoted so that all children have their welfare needs met and achieve as well as they can, regardless of background or ability. Effective links with parents and carers promote the integration of care and education within a strong, well-led and managed team.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.8 To improve still further the good quality of its provision the setting should:
1. extend and develop the Nursery area to incorporate a more appropriate changing facility;
 2. improve the food preparation and dining areas to enable children to develop further personal, physical and social skills and to provide a wider choice of food within a balanced menu.
- 7.9 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Act 2006.

Complaints Since the Last Inspection

- 7.10 Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.
- 7.11 No recommendations were made in the last inspection report from Ofsted, dated 31 January 2005.
- 7.12 Any considerations highlighted in that last report have been fully implemented.