

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and those schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the Independent Schools Council and its constituent associations

INSPECTION REPORT

INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO SECTION 162A OF THE EDUCATION ACT 2002

Name of school:	Duncombe School
DfE number:	919/6098
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mrs Elisabeth Linley Supporting Inspectors: Mrs Jane Cooper Mr Andrew Rickett
Dates of inspection:	18 to 20 March 2014

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Duncombe School
Address of school:	4 Warren Park Road, Hertford SG14 3JA
Telephone number:	01992 414100
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Email address:	info@duncombe-school.co.uk
Proprietor:	Cognita
Headmaster:	Mr Jeremy Phelan
DfE number:	919/6098
Type of school:	Independent school
Age range of pupils and students:	2 to 11 years of age
Gender of pupils:	Male and female
Total number on roll: (Full-time)	Boys: 147 Girls: 133
(Part-time)	Boys: 31 Girls: 27
Number of children under 5:	Boys: 27 Girls: 15
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 2 Girls: 0
Annual fees:	£7,580 to £11,655
Type of inspection:	Section 162A of the Education Act 2002
Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Elisabeth Linley
Supporting Inspectors:	Mrs Jane Cooper Mr Andrew Rickett
Dates of inspection:	18 to 20 March 2014

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service in accordance with Section 162(A) (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Cognita Group and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors, who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. The professional inspectors looked at agreed aspects of the school's management and ethos and reported on these to the Cognita Group. These findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process.

Information about the school:

Duncombe School is an independent preparatory school set in four acres of grounds and is located in a residential area on the edge of Hertford. The school was founded in 1939 and remained in private ownership until it was bought by Cognita in 2005. The school's main buildings and grounds have been carefully developed to meet the needs of its pupils. Additional facilities include a purpose built music room and the separate accommodation of 'Treetops' for all the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This was opened in 1998.

The school provides education and care for children from two to eleven years of age. Currently there are 338 pupils on roll in the main school; 280 attend full-time and 58 of the youngest children attend on a part-time basis. In addition, there are thirty-three children who attend the school's registered provision for children aged two to three years of age. The school's extended day provides wrap-around care for pupils throughout school from 7.30 am to 6.00 pm. The breakfast and after-school clubs take place in school and in the separate Treetops building. There is a large number of staff who work in this provision and, as in the main school, the staff pupil ratio is very favourable. The separate inspection of the registered early years' provision in Treetops was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the school.

The school aims to develop well-rounded individuals with keen minds, personal skills, social understanding and personal confidence through a wide variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities. It aspires to deliver an enriched curriculum within a stable, caring Christian community in which pupils are enabled to reach their potential.

Summary of main findings:

Duncombe School is highly effective in achieving its aims. The quality of education that is provided to meet the pupils' individual needs, including the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is outstanding. Fundamental to this provision is the excellent curriculum, teaching and assessment that enable pupils to make exceptional progress and attain high academic standards. Of equal importance is the school's outstanding work to provide for the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pupils benefit from the high quality pastoral care they receive and so feel safe in school and very well cared for. The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection and is now outstanding in all respects. This outcome is the result of the hard work and dedication of all the staff coupled with the drive and commitment of the headmaster and the school's leaders and managers.

What the school does well:

- Procedures to assess, record and track the pupils' progress are strong and based by a relentless focus on the individual needs of the child.
- The extensive range of clubs and activities make an excellent contribution to the pupils' personal development. Pupils leave school as confident and independent learners who are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The leadership team work together very well. They are a reflective team and provide high quality leadership for the school's further development as demonstrated by the improvement made since the last inspection.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school complies with the regulations.

What the school must do to comply with the mandatory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

The school complies with the mandatory requirements.

What the school must do to comply with the Equality Act 2010:

The school complies with the Equality Act.

Next Steps:

- Ensure the early identification of pupils who are able, gifted and talented and create a cohesive programme of events that will challenge these pupils further.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum is characterised by the extent to which it caters for the learning needs of each child and the development of their individual well-being. This is achieved through the careful planning of curriculum opportunities that identify clear progression in the pupils' skills and knowledge. The provision is complemented by the excellent opportunities to enrich the children's learning experiences through the very wide range of extra-curricular activities. As a result, the whole curriculum reflects the school's aims and philosophy to educate each child as a valued individual and prepare them for the next stage in their education. The rich range of experiences provides opportunities for pupils to learn and make outstanding progress.

The curriculum offers all National Curriculum subjects with the opportunity to learn two foreign languages, French and Spanish. The breadth of the curriculum provides well for the academic, creative, emotional and social development of children. Long and medium term planning is thorough. It ensures that subject coverage is balanced and provides for the effective development of pupils' speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. Short term planning is thorough and identifies opportunities for assessment and differentiation as well as including clearly stated learning objectives. Schemes of work identify the skills and knowledge that pupils acquire and how these are to be developed as pupils move through the school.

The curriculum has a strong emphasis on English, mathematics and science. The setting of pupils' places by ability in Years 4 to 6, and setting that occurs twice weekly in Years 2 and 3, for English and mathematics, enable teachers to target their curriculum planning accurately to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils receive more specialised teaching as they get older. For example, form teachers teach the majority of lessons until Year 4, when lessons are taught by teachers specialising in subjects such as science, art, and design and technology. The school has developed the use of ICT in the curriculum. Laptops are an integral part of lessons and they are used with flexibility to respond to pupils' individual needs.

Sport has a high profile within the curriculum and is a subject that the school does very well. The all-weather outside surface means that pupils can learn games throughout the year. In addition, the curriculum is extended by the provision for swimming in Years 2 to 4. A large number of pupils take part in sporting activities offered after school and represent the school at competitions locally and further afield. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in musical activities through junior and senior orchestras and the main choir. They perform regularly at monthly concerts to which parents are invited. School musicians make a good contribution to the life of the school by taking part in whole-school celebrations, such as designated music assemblies, and representing the school in the wider community.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to learn about and appreciate the culture and beliefs of others through humanities, religious education, art and dance. There is an effective programme of personal and social education and citizenship which

includes the opportunity to explore aspects of personal development through discussion in circle time. The PSHE programme also helps to inform pupils about issues such as being safe when using ICT. Religious education gives pupils a good understanding of a range of different beliefs including Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The curriculum is enhanced through regular special curriculum days and weeks that enable specific subjects to be explored in depth. These have included a creative arts week, book week and European languages day. Pupils respond very enthusiastically to these occasions. For example, pupils were amazed and excited by the experiments carried out by a visiting scientist as part of science week. Educational visits are an important aspect of curriculum provision which support the schemes of work by adding depth to the pupils' understanding of their learning. Pupils say that these visits help to bring the subject 'alive'.

The extra-curricular activities that enrich the curriculum are exceptional. A significant majority of pupils take part in a wide range of after-school clubs that extend their learning beyond school hours. These activities cover sport and the creative arts but also include street dance and horse riding. Such activities make an important contribution to the overall development of all the pupils.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL) is outstanding. Procedures for identifying pupils with special needs are rigorous with particular care being given to the accurate identification of the specific nature of the type of action needed to support each child. The robustness of these procedures ensure that there is a very clear flow of information between the SEN teacher, the class teacher and parents who are kept informed at all times. High quality individual education plans (IEPs) identify targets that closely reflect the particular need of each pupil. The IEPs are reviewed regularly and adapted accordingly to meet the changing needs of each pupil. Support for pupils with SEN and EAL is provided effectively in the classroom and through withdrawal for specialist support. There is high quality planning for pupils with SEN in the classroom, and high quality support from the teachers and learning assistants that enables pupils to make strong progress in their learning. Pupils are identified as able, gifted or talented (AG&T) through their English and maths ability and in their art and music. Provision for these pupils is mostly planned within the classroom through the setting by ability in English and maths and specific booster events. On occasions, some withdrawal from lessons for these pupils is implemented. However, a strategy that provides a cohesive programme of challenge for these pupils is yet to be developed.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Pupils of all ages and abilities make exceptional progress from their starting points as a result of high quality teaching, the school's excellent curriculum and the rigorous assessment and setting arrangements. Since the last inspection, the school's management has focused relentlessly on raising the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils, irrespective of age or ability, receive a consistently high quality of education throughout the school, and this is key to the pupils' success.

The school has invested heavily in its staff by ensuring that teachers and other staff are well qualified and well trained for their roles. This means that confident teachers with strong subject knowledge and expertise are deployed to best advantage. This is particularly true in the upper part of the school where specialist teaching fires pupils' enthusiasm, sets high expectations and challenges them to think and learn for

themselves. In the Early Years, too, phase experts in the development of young children provide a safe and stimulating environment which ensures that the youngest pupils lay down secure foundations for their educational journey. Throughout the school the learning support assistants make an exceptional contribution to pupils' learning. They are well briefed and provide excellent support to teachers and pupils alike. There are excellent relations between staff and pupils, and lessons proceed in a purposeful atmosphere of mutual respect and good humour.

There are some common features of the teaching which make it so effective. Lesson planning is extremely detailed, coherent and linked seamlessly to previous learning. The aims and objectives are articulated clearly at the start of the lesson so that pupils understand what they are expected to learn; helpful plenary sessions at the end enable them to appreciate the progress they have made. Teachers acknowledge in their plans not just the range of ability in the group but the individual needs and learning styles of every child. As a result, different tasks, strategies or questioning techniques are used to stretch or provide additional support for each learner. Close monitoring of the teaching by senior staff, and sharing of good practice, which was a point for improvement at the last inspection, has been a decisive factor in achieving a more consistent quality.

There is outstanding teaching in many areas of the school. The best lessons run at a brisk pace and keep all the pupils on their toes. They make outstanding use of resources which are chosen thoughtfully to bring lessons to life. A history lesson, for example, challenged Year 5 pupils to compare maps through the centuries as a way of illustrating historical developments, while a science experiment had Year 3 pupils drinking upside down to help them understand weightlessness in space. Excellent use of ICT enabled Year 5 pupils to understand tessellation and to use the techniques they had learnt to create their own work. Fast-paced lessons conducted in French and Spanish encourage all pupils to listen attentively and communicate effectively and with good pronunciation. Some of the best teaching is in English where demanding teaching, outstanding assessment and feedback to pupils have resulted in the pupils making exceptional progress. Teachers know precisely what to do to move pupils to the next level. Younger pupils are encouraged to use their 'wow' words to bring excitement to their writing. Older pupils have a clear list of criteria for each piece of written work which guides them, for example, to include simile or alliteration in their creative writing or prompts them to check for persuasive adjectives when analysing the impact of an advertisement. Teachers set high expectations and insist on accurate spelling, punctuation and paragraphing.

Assessment is outstanding and a major strength of the school. Teachers set and mark work regularly and are rigorous in correcting mistakes to help pupils learn. There is some exceptional practice in English, where pupils are given clear and precise feedback on how to improve their work and this is worthy of wider dissemination in other subjects such as Religious Education and the humanities. In addition to marking, teachers also make on-going formative assessment of pupils' achievements which build into a record of progress. This is a particular highlight of the work in Early Years. There are four regular opportunities for formal assessment during the year where pupils' achievements are assessed against National Curriculum levels. The school keeps detailed records of assessment and uses them critically to track the progress of each child and to set in train intervention strategies where needed. This system ensures that each child's progress is closely monitored and anyone in danger of falling behind receives effective help. Thus, challenging targets are set and achieved.

The school's priorities for high quality teaching and tracking achievement underpin the exceptional progress made by pupils of all ages and abilities. The results of the national tests (SATs) in Year 6, already well above the national average, are improving year on year. A fifth of this year group last year achieved Level 6 in mathematics with the majority of pupils achieving Level 5 in all core subjects. This represents exceptional progress from their starting points. This year, all Year 6 leavers have obtained a place in their first choice of secondary school; some have gained scholarships. Pupils have strong literacy and numeracy skills; they are confident readers and have good knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects. They have developed wide interests and leadership qualities which will enable them to make a worthwhile contribution at their next school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

PART 2 - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Provision for the pupils' personal development and well-being is central to the schools' philosophy and reflects the school's aims to value each child as an individual. An emphasis on kindness and gentleness reflects the school's Golden Rules to treat others with respect and to appreciate the cultures, traditions and beliefs of all members of the school community. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent and is characterised by the high quality of relationships between the children themselves and through their positive interaction with adults in the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of the responsibility they hold for their own behaviour and that their actions have consequences for the lives of others. They understand the need to follow the Golden Rule to be honest and that it is the right thing to do to tell the truth.

Social development is excellent. Pupils have many opportunities to work collaboratively in lessons and in the many different groups they belong to as part of the school community. They listen to each other with respect and share their views openly in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Pupils show an understanding of how human actions have influenced the lives of others, through their study of history and as part of their personal, social and health education (PSHE). Through initiatives such as the Year 5 buddy scheme, where pupils look after the very youngest children in the school, pupils develop social skills and the confidence to work alongside children of different ages offering support and positive encouragement.

Pupils have a mature grasp of what they regard as morally right or wrong. They can articulate clearly what they think is fair and what is not just. For example, members of the Pupil Council spoke ardently about the need to ensure that all children had equal access to the playground adventure areas and worked to rearrange the timetable of this to ensure that it was done fairly in their perception. Pupils have a mature approach to how they can make realistic changes to the life of the school. They speak with commitment about their work on the Council because they feel that it makes a difference. During the inspection, pupils articulated how the opportunities for leadership, and an emphasis on developing the individual person, 'help us to be confident and independent'.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness. They have time in class to reflect on some of the big questions in life such as how

the world was created and they respond with maturity and a willingness to engage in discussions that lack clear answers. The religious education helps pupils understand the place of faith in a person's spiritual life. In addition, there are opportunities for pupils to consider their own spirituality through the school's encouragement to explore the world around them. This is promoted, for example, through the Forest School experiences that children have in the early years and with the opportunity pupils have to respond to beauty through art or dance. Within the curriculum, there are times when pupils can develop a sense of wonder, such as the awe that was seen in the pupils' reaction to some new born chicks.

Pupils experience the celebration of Christian festivals at the local church. Pupils are aware that the world contains a wide range of diverse cultures and that they should all be respected. The school ensures that there is a balanced approach to such studies through visits to a range of places of worship including a Hindu temple and Sikh Gurdwara. The curriculum includes opportunities to learn about life in other countries, and pupils experience events such as 'cooking round the world' or celebration of the Chinese New Year and Diwali. School assemblies are important times for the school to come together to share what they have been learning but also to be reminded of the school's Golden Rules. Assemblies are well planned and pose questions that challenge the pupils' sense of what is really important in their lives.

The school has increased the number of opportunities for pupils to take leadership roles. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously because adults have high expectations of them. As well as being members of the pupil council, pupils act as house captains and heads of school. They perform tasks as school prefects, such as helping run the library, and contributing to the organisation of the many different local and national charities that the school supports. Pupils gain first-hand experience of the democratic process by voting to elect members to positions of responsibility. The programme of visits to the local government offices, the court and the Houses of Parliament, together with visits from the mayor and civic organisations and the emergency services, gives pupils a strong understanding of British institutions. The school leadership ensures that the curriculum does not promote political bias and that visitors to the school do not express partisan views.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school pays close attention to all aspects of pupils' welfare, health and safety. It continues to comply with the requirements of the regulations, as it did at the time of the last inspection, and has further strengthened its provision which is now outstanding.

The safeguarding of pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school. All staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding which is reviewed and refreshed regularly to ensure that it remains up to date and effective. There is a designated safeguarding officer and a deputy, who are both trained to a higher level and have excellent knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and child protection matters. They have established effective contacts with external agencies. The school has clear policies which are well known to staff and are operated effectively to ensure vigilance in caring for children. Detailed records are kept appropriately. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. The school has conducted its own

impressive safeguarding survey of pupils which confirmed that almost all felt that there was an adult to whom they could turn if they felt sad or troubled. All concerns raised by the children were followed up carefully and sensitively by key staff.

The school is vigilant and effective in tackling and eliminating bullying. Through PSHE, assemblies and discussions, pupils have a thorough understanding of what bullying is and the different forms it can take. While they acknowledge that unpleasantness sometimes occurs, they are confident that staff deal with any incidents promptly and effectively, and they know where to go to seek help. There is a clear behaviour policy. Pupils report that the staff operate this consistently and fairly. The school keeps an appropriate record of sanctions, and any patterns are monitored and followed up closely by senior staff. Pupils are well informed about the dangers of internet use and how to stay safe online. All staff have been trained on e-safety and the school has hosted an e-safety event which was an informative and well-attended event. Through the effective use of its own computer systems, the school does all it can to keep pupils safe.

There is a comprehensive policy for ensuring pupils' health and safety in school and on off-site visits. This is implemented rigorously and all staff have received appropriate training. All maintenance of buildings and equipment is carried out promptly and recorded appropriately. Risk assessments for trips and other activities are rigorous but uncomplicated. They ensure that risks to pupils' health and safety are minimised while enabling the children to experience more adventurous activities outside the classroom and to take risks in order to learn. A good example of this was the excellent practice in Forest School which enabled four and five-year-olds to use sharp tools safely by wearing protective gloves. The school pays close attention to fire safety by ensuring that staff are well trained and that drills, checks of alarms and equipment all occur at relevant and appropriate intervals. Such activities are recorded carefully and lessons learnt are fed back into the school improvement planning process. Pupils are well supervised in class, at breaks, lunchtimes, after school clubs and in the wrap-around care to ensure that pupils can learn and play safely.

Medical facilities are good; first aid boxes are well-stocked, regularly checked and readily available in various areas of the school. All staff have received first aid training, with additional training in paediatric first aid for staff in the Early Years. Trained first-aiders accompany all off-site activities. Appropriate records are kept of any accidents, including any 'near miss' incidents all of which are regularly reviewed so that improvements can be made swiftly to reduce further risk of accidents.

Pupils learn how to stay fit and healthy through assemblies, lessons in physical education and PSHE and the wide range of sporting activities which are much enjoyed. The school serves nourishing lunches and drinking water is always available. The pupils say they enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is well above the national average with no unauthorised absence. The school is extremely proactive in monitoring absence and analysing and following up rigorously any trends which emerge. The admissions register is well kept and meets requirements. The school fulfils the requirements of equalities legislation and supports sensitively any pupils with disabilities by making sensible adjustments to help them learn and take a full part in school life.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

PART 4 - Suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school ensures that all required employment checks and procedures are carried out and applied with rigour. The checks are recorded with meticulous detail and underpinned by the effective maintenance of staff files.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The accommodation meets the requirements of the school and is conducive to effective learning. Improvements made to the school site have improved the quality of the grounds and ensured that it is safe and secure. The school has installed CCTV cameras which have been strategically placed around the school to monitor access to all the main entrances. The addition of a second set of doors at the main entrance, which requires the use of a swipe card, ensures that the school is a safe and secure environment for the children. The overall quality of decoration is to a high standard and creates a clean and bright learning environment enhanced by good quality displays in classrooms and shared areas.

The building has appropriate toilet and washroom facilities and suitable accommodation for the short term care of pupils who are sick or who require medical treatment. There is an adequate supply of drinking water from two clearly marked fountains on the outside of the building and children use these to refill their own drinking-water bottles. The school has specialist facilities for teaching music, art and science and uses the new hall for physical exercise. There is a well-stocked library and some specialist rooms for supporting pupils with special educational needs.

The school grounds are well maintained. The outside area includes an all-weather surface as well as designated areas where substantial play equipment allows children to play adventurously at playtimes. These areas have recently been improved with the addition of low fencing that clearly demarcates their perimeter. The school also benefits from a woodland area, called The Dell, which is used for Forest School activities and of which children speak with pride. A comprehensive programme of ongoing maintenance and regular checks ensures that the school is kept clean and smart.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The school has an attractive and well-organised website which is kept up to date and holds the full range of information required to be available to current and prospective parents. They are made aware that further information may be requested from the school office if desired. The school keeps parents well informed and has conducted a detailed survey of their views, using their feedback to inform further improvement. The headteacher sends out a lively and detailed newsletter each week which contains important information, chronicles the week's activities and celebrates the achievements of pupils and staff. The school also provides a number of meetings

throughout the year which provide information for all parents or for targeted year groups for example about key dates and deadlines in preparation for making choices about future schools. The 'schools fair' was an innovative idea this year which was deemed highly successful. Similarly well received was the well-attended and informative e-safety event which the school hosted for its own parents and those from other local schools.

A few parents commented, in their response to the inspection questionnaire, that they did not know how well their child was doing. However, parents receive a full report on their children's progress twice a year, and this is complemented by termly parent/teacher consultation meetings. The reports are helpful and informative as they contain detailed assessments of pupils' effort and achievement. However, they do not set pupils' attainment in a national context by making reference to the National Curriculum levels at which they are working. The school enjoys strong support from its parents, and the Parents Association has raised substantial funds for the school's improvement. Contact with parents is encouraged, and the school has received some excellent feedback from them.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school's complaints policy fully meets requirements. One complaint proceeded to the formal stage during the last twelve months. Evidence shows that the school has implemented the procedures for handling complaints appropriately.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes

SECTION C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT, AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

This section is not a requirement of the Education Act 2002.

The quality of the organisation and management of the school

The aims and values of Duncombe School inform all aspects of its provision and central to this is the happiness and well-being of the pupils. Each member of the school community, including the administrative, catering and maintenance staff, play an important and valued role in the running of the school. Fundamental to this is the highly effective work of the headmaster, senior leaders and managers. Together they have evaluated provision and drawn up well-focused plans for development to ensure improvement. Each person has their part to play and, through the school's system for performance management, staff are held to account for their work, the pupils' achievement and personal well-being.

The monitoring of teaching is managed very well. This has identified teachers' strengths and where support or additional training might be required. Opportunities are also provided for teachers to be involved in peer observations and to share time in different phases of the school. Such work has resulted in very good improvement since the last inspection in the teaching, strengthened assessment procedures and the enhanced curriculum. In addition, the meticulous detail and implementation of procedures and systems for welfare, health and safety, have contributed greatly to improvements in provision. The vast majority of parents expressed positive views of the school and are delighted with the quality of care and education their children receive.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

- Further the development and work of the staff team of 'lead learners' so that best practice, for example in teaching and marking, can continue to be celebrated and shared throughout the school.

PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall quality and standards of the early years' provision

The overall quality and standards of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. The purpose-built setting of Treetops, where the Nursery and Reception classes are located, provides an exceptional facility that is very well resourced to meet all the children's needs. Though separate to the school in location, the children are very much part of the whole school. Excellent use is made of the main school facilities, such as the school library and the school grounds, to enhance the children's learning experiences.

A wide range of stimulating activities, both indoors and outside, are planned to ensure that children are constantly engaged and challenged to do their best. All staff encourage the children's learning through purposeful and gentle questioning while at work and at play. High quality relationships between the staff and children underpin the success of the settings. Their consistent approach and high expectations of the way children behave and care for one another ensures that children feel happy and secure. As a result, the children make excellent progress in all the areas of learning and development. This is particularly evident in their exemplary behaviour, their communication skills, their confidence and notably their readiness to learn.

How well the early years' provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Outstanding teaching is a regular feature of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The high number of staff working with small groups of children ensures that the children receive the individual attention they need. This was observed in an excellent lesson in the school library when nursery children were able to jump over a paper river to avoid the toy crocodile sitting at the end. The children had such fun as they learnt their sounds and were able to recognise the word they made. Similarly, children in Reception talked about their science experiment with excitement as they described how the raisins that had been left in lemonade went up and down with the bubbles. One child said in amazement: 'they have got ginormous!' as he observed what had happened after absorbing the liquid.

The children's access to an exciting and strongly resourced outdoor play area facilitates the opportunity to, among many other things, make cakes in the mud kitchen. Other activities such as the Forest School, led by an expert, are an important part of the early years' outdoor curriculum. Children in Reception very much enjoyed their experience which was thoughtfully planned to meet the children's different learning styles. Such activities and others, including the specialist teaching of Spanish and French, contribute very well to the children's development across all the areas of learning.

Opportunities presented to assess the children's progress are used with regularity. Staff make ongoing observational assessments of the children's achievements and record the information in the children's learning journals along with examples of their work. This helps to celebrate the children's time in school and is shared with parents.

The contribution of the early years' provision to children's well-being

The provision for children's well-being is founded on the excellent procedures and systems established for the whole school for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. The Nursery and Reception staff are meticulous in their approach to this aspect of the early years' provision. This in turn impacts very positively on the children's own sense of security within the setting. Within the context of a safe and happy environment, children make choices and express interest in their surroundings and the opportunities provided for them to learn and play. Their exploration of the outdoors with the staff contribute very well to their understanding of the importance of physical activity and of keeping safe, for example, when using tools in the Forest School.

In the classroom and outdoors, the children show a very good awareness of the need to behave well. The children work together very well and are keen to take on roles of responsibility, such as a 'happy helper' when they find out what drinks their friends would like at snack time and give them out. In a similar way, the staff support the children very well in developing their understanding of the need to maintain a healthy diet through their healthy snacks and school meals.

The children's achievements are recognised through, for example, the setting's star of the week assembly. The children were very proud to receive their certificates that were taken home to share with parents. The partnerships established with parents to underpin the setting's work are excellent. Through their questionnaires, the parents shared their very positive views of the school's provision for their child's learning and well-being in the early Years Foundation Stage.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the early years' provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the early years' provision is outstanding. All requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare are fully met and staff have undertaken the required training for child protection and paediatric first aid. Self-evaluation and development are very effective, as a result of which a comprehensive system for recording and tracking the children's progress has been introduced. Regular phase meetings contribute very well to the team's reflective practice and the staff work together very well to ensure that the high quality provision, evident at the time of the last inspection, is maintained. The staff are held to account by a robust system of performance management which goes hand in hand with the identification of training needs or support. Similarly, peer observations ensure that good practice can be shared. Links with parents are strong and are enhanced, for example, with workshops held for parents when teaching in different aspects of the setting's provision is shared. This aids the very good partnership established to ensure that parents and staff work together very well in the education and care of their children.

Does the school meet the statutory requirements?

Yes

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the ISC and its constituent associations. Further copies of the report are available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk