

# Port Regis

## Inspection Report 2009

*“Pupils receive an exceptional education both inside and outside the classroom”*



Independent Schools Inspectorate



*“Pupils show enormous enjoyment for their work”*

*“Exemplary behaviour is the norm both  
in and out of the classroom”*

*“The quality of pastoral care and of the attention given to  
pupils’ welfare, health and safety is outstanding”*

*“Pupils at all stages say that bullying is not an issue”*

*“The quality of boarding is outstanding”*

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Port Regis School

Full Name of the School	<b>Port Regis School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>835/6010</b>
Early Years Number	<b>EY309486</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>306218</b>
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Headmaster	<b>Mr Peter Dix</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Mark Vaughan-Lee</b>
Age Range (of the whole school)	<b>3 to 13</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>
Head of Early Years Setting	<b>Mrs Ailsa Boardman-Hirst</b>
Early Years Age Range	<b>3 to 5</b>
Early Years Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	<b>9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> 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 inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

# CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	Characteristics of the School .....	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION .....	3
	The Educational Experience Provided .....	3
	Pupils' Learning and Achievements.....	5
	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils .....	6
	The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment).....	7
3.	THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS .....	9
	The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils.....	9
	The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community .....	10
	The Quality of Boarding Education.....	11
4.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT .....	12
	The Quality of Governance .....	12
	The Quality of Leadership and Management .....	12
5.	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS .....	14
	Overall Conclusions .....	14
	Next Steps.....	14
6.	SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE .....	15
	List of Inspectors .....	15
7.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS) .....	16
	What the Setting Should Do to Improve .....	17

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Port Regis School was founded by Dr Praetorius in Weymouth Street, London in 1881. It moved to Broadstairs in 1921, where it acquired its present name meaning *The Gate of the King*; it settled at its present site just outside Shaftesbury in 1947. It is centred on Motcombe House, a Tudor-style mansion built in 1894 in extensive grounds by Richard Grosvenor, younger brother of the first Duke of Westminster. It is a largely boarding coeducational preparatory school, offering day, weekly and full boarding with considerable flexibility at weekends. At the time of the inspection, the headmaster had been in post for sixteen years. During recent years, the school has completed a number of building projects providing further facilities.
- 1.2 The school is divided into pre-prep and prep schools, for pupils up to the age of seven and those from the age of seven to thirteen respectively, each run with considerable day-to-day autonomy though also operating as a whole under the direction of the headmaster. At the time of the inspection, the whole school had 382 pupils of whom 209 were boys and 173 were girls. Of these pupils, sixteen part-time pupils in the Nursery and fourteen full-time pupils in Reception were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), part of the pre-prep school; this is one more nursery pupil than at the time of the EYFS part of the inspection. Another 23 pupils in Years 1 and 2 make up the rest of the pre-prep school. Two-hundred and twenty pupils board with numbers increasing through the year, and with the proportion of boarders increasing as pupils get older.
- 1.3 Pupils are admitted to the pre-prep without selection and to the prep following an interview. The analysis of standardised tests shows that their average ability is, overall, above the national average. Pupils do not take externally moderated National Curriculum tests at age 7 or 11. One hundred and thirty-six pupils have been identified as having some learning difficulty or disability (LDD), of whom 98 receive support paid for by their parents. Twenty-four pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), some of whom join the school for one year only from Spain, whilst others join the school for longer periods from countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Iran and Russia; where necessary, these pupils are withdrawn from non-examinable subjects to receive additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.4 British pupils are drawn from a range of families, with professional, financial services, farming and business backgrounds well represented; few of these pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are also over sixty expatriate pupils, most of whose parents are in the army, the foreign office, international banks or law firms. Pupils leave at the age of thirteen to go to a wide variety of independent boarding schools, mainly but not exclusively in the south-west of England.
- 1.5 The school aims to 'equip each child with a growing awareness of the wisdom of the ancients and the technology of tomorrow; to provide an environment in which each child can fulfil his or her potential and communicate with confidence both socially and publicly; to inspire each child with an understanding of civilised values, respect for all creation and a love of humanity; and to be a relaxed fear-free home from home in which special relationships with parents are cultivated.'

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

***Early Years Foundation Stage***

School	Age of children
Nursery	3 to 4
Reception	4 to 5

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

***Pre-Preparatory School***

School	NC name
Year 1	Year 1
Year 2	Year 2

***Prep School***

School	NC name
F form	Year 3
E form	Year 4
D form	Year 5
C form	Year 6
B form	Year 7
A form	Year 8

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

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 Pupils receive an exceptional education both inside and outside the classroom, in line with the school's aim that they should be equipped with a growing awareness of 'both the wisdom of the ancients and the technology of tomorrow'. Since the last inspection, the outside play area and Forest School in the pre-prep have improved opportunities for co-operation, communication, adventure and fun. In the prep, developments in resources and approaches to teaching have invigorated and enriched departments.
- 2.2 Pupils' education contributes to all aspects of their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative development. The EYFS curriculum combines fun with a focus on children's needs; it is extended through a variety of sensory and investigative experiences. Older pupils' education enables them to acquire skills in speaking and listening, to discuss ideas, express their views and reason cogently. Pupils are provided with a wide range of stimulating, lively and energetic experiences delivered in excellent facilities by dedicated, knowledgeable and caring staff. The curriculum is well suited to all pupils' interests, aptitudes and needs, providing variety, challenge and fulfilment. It encourages pupils to develop talents as diverse as Mandarin, formal gymnastics or the bagpipes.
- 2.3 Careful, focused planning provides excellent equality of opportunity for all pupils, supported by improved links between departments. Recently, a new approach to the teaching of phonics, improved English planning, the use of the primary strategy and a shift in philosophy and approach towards text-centred English teaching have led to significant improvement in pupils' performance and enjoyment. However, some pupils feel restricted by the tight structure of planning and say they do not have enough time for self-initiated and independent writing tasks and more open assignments.
- 2.4 Pupils are well supported through life skills, taught by form teachers as well as invited visitors, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) sessions run by specialists; both support pupils' personal development well. The programme introduces pupils to both life opportunities and threats, to help them make informed choices about their own lives and the impact these will have on others.
- 2.5 From Nursery to Year 8, pupils are prepared carefully for the next stage of their education; they are extremely well supported both academically and pastorally by class teachers and tutors. Links between pre-prep and prep have improved with increased dialogue between pre-prep staff and prep heads of department, particularly in English, and in learning support. This has led to better continuity, understanding and provision for pupils' needs. Experience days in both pre-prep and prep prepare pupils for transition, promote confidence and allow pupils the opportunity to familiarise themselves with teachers, new routines and expectations. By Years 7 and 8, the major focus is on examination preparation for senior schools and pupils again appreciate the support they receive: "Teachers want us to do well and are always there for us," they say.
- 2.6 Pupils are aware of the links between education and the world of work. They are aware that you need to read and write to "get a job". From an early age, they understand, for example, that mathematics is a requirement in some professions, citing accountancy for example. Older pupils become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and begin to plan accordingly, whilst listening to the advice of a range of teaching staff.

- 2.7 An exciting and varied programme of educational events and excursions enhances pupils' education. It inspires them to try new experiences. The programme includes book fairs, world book day, visits by authors, visits to the theatre and a Victorian Day, a drama course and the French trip to the Normandy landing beaches.
- 2.8 An exceptional programme of activities, led by an enthusiastic and ever-willing band of teaching staff, gap year students and outside coaches, gives pupils outstanding opportunities to enjoy a vast range of sports, hobbies and other pastimes. The broad range of sports and the large number of teams enables almost every pupil to take part in competitive matches at some time during the year. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to perform formal gymnastics on equipment unavailable in most schools; pupils who have moved to nearby senior schools frequently return to take advantage of its coaching and equipment.
- 2.9 A hobbies fair at the start of each term helps pupils to choose from the huge range provided. Activities range from scrapbooking to scuba-diving, from science whizz-bang and rocket-making to the popular 'cook your supper'. In addition some hobbies extend the academic curriculum and aid those attempting senior school scholarships, such as in art and design and technology (DT). Varied weekend activities allow boarders to enjoy themed weekends, visit local attractions and learn bush-craft in the grounds.
- 2.10 Pupils with LDD or EAL receive exceptional support from a strong, well-organised and well-resourced team of highly qualified and experienced staff. Almost all parents were extremely positive about the support given to children's learning, behaviour and happiness. Pupils speak highly of this support and its impact on their learning. Provision has been improved by the appointment of a full-time assistant head of the educational support unit (ESU), a full-time learning support teacher and a child therapist/counsellor. The pre-prep co-ordinator liaises effectively with the ESU and ensures that there is good assessment and provision for younger pupils. All pupils with LDD and those with EAL are given individual educational plans (IEPs). Appropriate support is arranged and all staff are expected to make themselves aware of difficulties and ensure that teaching addresses individuals' needs.
- 2.11 Assessment on entry is thorough and progress carefully monitored, with frequent checks with teachers. Significant discrepancies are investigated. Information about pupils is raised in staff meetings, sent by e-mail or discussed with tutors or other members of staff. Test results and IEPs are issued in hard copy to staff, as well as kept centrally in the pupil profiling system.
- 2.12 EAL pupils are assessed on arrival and monitored carefully. IEPs offer guidance on previous English language experience, pupils' first language and on targets in EAL lessons. Pupils are withdrawn from some lessons and are reintegrated when their English has improved. Courses are tailor-made to meet individuals' needs. Older pupils enjoy opportunities to visit the pre-prep to read their work and share information about their own culture; this raises their self-esteem and provides excellent opportunities for them to practise their English.
- 2.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

## **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.14 Pupils achieve excellent standards by the time they leave and are first-rate students, achieving the aim that all should fulfil their potential. The school has built further on the high standards in the last inspection as well as on the outstanding standards in the EYFS.
- 2.15 From the beginning of the pre-prep, pupils are clear, confident and fluent communicators who have a good understanding of number and use that understanding to solve problems. They show a thorough understanding of the world they live in, whether explaining why clothes are important or describing the various functions of skin. In the prep, pupils extend their oral skills into French, using high quality accents and a rich and varied vocabulary. By Year 6, they understand how to create a fair test in science, use spider diagrams to express complex ideas in geography and think through issues such as the needs of settlements. They express ideas with considerable clarity and experiment with language in a range of styles; for example, they produce excellent personification in poetry. In physical education (PE), they show outstanding skill in gymnastics, moving on a balance beam or springboard with confidence.
- 2.16 The oldest pupils show exceptional insight into complex poetry, for instance quoting wide-ranging examples linking themes from war poetry. They show a thorough understanding of the structure of the French language and learn quickly in both modern and classical languages. In mathematics, they acquire a good grasp of different types of symmetry, and make excellent use of graphs when discussing rates of reaction in science. They respond well to searching questions, whether discussing factors affecting the reliability of historical sources or thinking through complex ideas in chemistry. Pupils use their ICT skills well in subjects such as modern languages and DT, but make less use of them elsewhere.
- 2.17 Throughout the school, effective provision for pupils with different needs and abilities ensures that all progress well. Those with LDD or EAL benefit particularly from the specialist support they receive.
- 2.18 Pupils leave at the age of thirteen to transfer to a wide range of schools with a competitive entry, with a significant proportion winning academic, art, music or other scholarships. Pupils succeed in mathematics or poetry competitions, music and ballet examinations. They produce high quality art and DT work and take part in national prep school ensembles and choirs. Inspectors observed high quality work in both wood and metal, as well as delicate needlecraft skills during hobbies.
- 2.19 In sport, pupils achieve exceptional standards in specialist activities such as formal gymnastics. In addition, many school teams are national or regional champions, with several being unbeaten in school fixtures over a number of years. Individual pupils represent national or county sides, or hold national, regional and world records. This success in sport ranges from rugby, football, hockey, netball, rounders, athletics and swimming to golf, target-shooting and skiing.
- 2.20 Pupils are excellent students. They show a mature approach to research, challenge assumptions and maintain their own notes with ease. They produce imaginative work in art and DT, and work well independently when asked to do so. They work well in pairs and groups, praising each other in PE, and collaborating exceptionally well in subjects such as English, geography, religious studies (RS), Latin and PSHE. They work out problems together and even the youngest pupils share their views of each other's work, for instance in their phonics programme.

- 2.21 Pupils show enormous enjoyment for their work, in part responding to the 'fun' way in which they are taught. They are quickly absorbed in the task, prepared to work really hard, and maintain their focus over a long time. Their work is generally well presented and pupils have high expectations of themselves in all they do.

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

- 2.22 Pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, a further improvement since the last inspection and meeting the aim of enabling all pupils, including those in EYFS, to be secure and happy and helping them to understand that, whilst each of them is important, so is everyone else.
- 2.23 Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. Their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-belief are strong because they are helped to realise that they are valued within the community and that their efforts and contributions are noticed and greatly appreciated. In addition, staff consistently emphasise positive aspects of performance and behaviour. Pupils participate eagerly in school assemblies and listen attentively. Sensitive and well-chosen assembly themes, RS and life skills lessons enable pupils to acquire a keen sense of personal identity, to understand both their own lives and those of others, and to reflect on non-material issues. For example, a prep assembly, acting out a modern version of *The Good Samaritan*, encouraged pupils to focus on how they might help and support each other. Pupils show a high level of understanding of both Christian and other faiths. They are encouraged to express thoughts and feelings, and groups listen politely and sensitively to one another, helping pupils' confidence to grow. From the earliest years, when the EYFS becomes involved with the forest school, pupils also develop their spiritual awareness through their enjoyment of the beautiful surroundings in which the school is set.
- 2.24 Outstanding moral awareness is supported by the strong ethos and excellent example set by staff. Exemplary behaviour is the norm both in and out of the classroom and throughout the school pupils distinguish right from wrong. In interviews, pupils understood the need for rules in any community and felt that school rules were both fair and essential. Assemblies, talks, debates and lessons are used to look at a range of moral issues, such as euthanasia and capital punishment, and help pupils to see both sides of an argument. A clear moral code is promoted consistently and succeeds in guiding pupils' behaviour and helping them to think through the consequences of their actions and those of others.
- 2.25 Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate outstanding social skills. Beginning in pre-prep, they take responsibility for the well-being and happiness of those around them; they help each other during lessons, at meal times and as class leaders. In the prep, pupils have many opportunities to show initiative and accept responsibility through, for example, serving on school committees and acting as captains of dormitory, form or sports teams. Such positions are highly valued and pupils receive a great deal of help to ensure they are effective; for example, captains of school meet regularly with the deputy head and are formally appraised. As a result, pupils learn to set the right example, accept responsibility for their own behaviour and consider the consequences of their actions on those around them. In interviews, pupils were keen to talk about their responsibilities and were proud of what they do. Good manners and helpfulness are seen in all areas and the school has a strong citizenship programme.
- 2.26 A strong tradition of fund raising exists throughout the school. An annual walk to Salisbury raises money for Save the Children and other recent initiatives have included Shoe Boxes to Romania, Water Aid Africa and the raising of funds for the Kasilisi Porridge Project to help provide maize or banana porridge for children. Pupils show initiative and commitment, and understand how they can help those less fortunate than themselves both at home and abroad.

Members of the school committee gain experience of being involved in the decision-making process by meeting with staff to discuss how best to use the money which has been raised.

- 2.27 Pupils understand the workings of public services and institutions. They have had visits from the emergency services and know about organisations such as social services and the department of transport. Pupils in Year 4 knew about the main political leaders, the frequency of elections and that the Queen is Head of State. Year 7 pupils talked enthusiastically about a trip to Westminster where they learned about elections and national government.
- 2.28 Pupils' cultural development is outstanding. The curriculum offers many excellent cultural experiences as pupils are introduced to the lifestyles and cultures of other peoples. They look, for example, at songs and music from around the world, at art from other countries and at dance from various cultures. Pupils thus acquire a respect for what is held important elsewhere. The modern languages department organises cultural trips to help pupils to experience the French way of life, as well as affording opportunities to try out their language skills in real-life situations. The Thai lunch during the inspection introduced pupils to another culture via costume, food, music, dancing and artefacts, together with the presence of Thai parents; pupils were amazed to eat a Thai lunch whilst watching dancing in native Thai costume. In this way, pupils learn the importance of tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions.
- 2.29 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.30 Teaching is excellent overall. The school achieves its aim to encourage each child to gain benefit from a first-class staff, not least through the willingness of teachers to make themselves available when help is needed. The standard of teaching has improved further since the high standard in the last inspection.
- 2.31 From the EYFS to Year 8, teachers bring to lessons their love and knowledge of both teaching and their subject, coupled with a close knowledge of and concern for their pupils, so that all pupils make excellent progress. Almost all lessons are well structured with a rich variety of well-chosen activities. They are delivered with a rapid pace and energy, capturing pupils' interest and giving them the confidence to tackle new challenges. In many lessons, this challenge is delivered through searching questions which require pupils to think a difficult issue through during debate and discussion. Some questions are carefully focused to encourage pupils to formulate opinions and then defend them; others come at a brisk pace and make pupils think quickly on their feet. In the very best lessons, teachers and pupils are working jointly, standing side by side as they examine issues together, with pupils responding maturely to the adult way in which their views are treated. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, or to work issues through with their peers.
- 2.32 Teachers are well aware of pupils' particular needs. For their part, pupils say that teachers understand them well and offer help when needed. They appreciate the additional support they receive, whether in class or in the ESU. Teachers generally match work carefully to pupils' needs, in part through the system of setting which runs across many subjects and years, or by adapting work and questioning to their needs. In the pre-prep, pupils benefit from the individual support they receive from classroom assistants, as do older pupils in some mathematics and DT sets and from the *assistante* in French.

- 2.33 In the small minority of teaching which is satisfactory rather than good or excellent, too much of the work is based on worksheets, few opportunities are given for independent work or the effective use of ICT, or pupils do not have sufficient input of their own into the independent work they carry out.
- 2.34 Lessons are enjoyable and often fun and, as a result, pupils focus fully on their work. Teaching is supported by close relationships within the classroom. Pupils appreciate the way that teachers challenge and encourage them; 'they get you to do more than you think you can do' was how one pupil described being taught.
- 2.35 Teaching is supported by a wide range of resources, often enabling pupils to produce work of particularly high quality; for example, the laser cutter supports imaginative work in DT and the kiln creative work in pottery. Interactive whiteboards are used well in some lessons. Teaching benefits greatly from the lively and pleasant environment throughout the school.
- 2.36 Pupils say how much they appreciate the quality of marking. They say they know where they stand and how to improve their work. This quality of marking is extremely consistent across the school, providing a good balance of praise and encouragement, coupled with feedback and support. It frequently offers targets, which pupils value.
- 2.37 Both formal and informal assessment of pupils' work, including standardised testing, examinations, topic tests, observations and questioning in class, is excellent throughout the school and is used extensively to inform teachers of the next steps needed in learning. In the prep school, the well-developed and comprehensive electronic recording system, which records progress in all aspects of school life, creates an extensive and detailed profile for every pupil and enables staff to identify and act upon specific needs quickly and efficiently. Whilst not having a similar electronic system, the pre-prep has an equally thorough programme of assessment, with efficient recording systems which it plans to develop further. No formal base-line assessment is carried out but, in its place, a rigorous programme of observation is recorded in detail, both for pupils joining in EYFS and for those who join later.
- 2.38 Regular review of the standardised testing programme ensures that appropriate changes are made when necessary; for example, the introduction of standardised tests in English and mathematics in the pre-prep and recent changes to single word reading and spelling tests in the prep school have enabled the further development of individualised planning.
- 2.39 The specialised assessment of pupils with EAL and LDD is thorough and enables appropriate individualised programmes to be put in place.
- 2.40 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care and of the attention given to pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and is a strength of the school, as was identified in the last inspection. Both teaching and non-teaching staff act as excellent role models and help ensure that the school's aim to create a home-from-home atmosphere is upheld.
- 3.2 From the EYFS upwards, the school cultivates strong and special relationships based upon mutual respect, between the school and parents, between the staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. A well-implemented class and tutor system and committed boarding staff lie at the heart of pastoral care. Throughout the school, high quality support and guidance are provided by pre-prep class teachers and prep tutors, who have an excellent knowledge of their pupils and respond quickly and sensitively to their individual needs. Older pupils have some influence over who their tutor is.
- 3.3 Pupils are extremely considerate and supportive both in lessons, at play and in the boarding houses. The praise and encouragement they receive is effective in motivating them to achieve and behave very well. Regular staff meetings and briefings are used to share information about pupils' welfare and appropriate help and support is planned as necessary. Good quality guidance and care at each stage of education are provided through circle and class time, tutor time and life skills lessons. Helpful information about who to go to if in need is displayed on notice boards around the school. The extensive arrangements help promote high standards in behaviour, supporting parents' beliefs that the standard of behaviour is generally high.
- 3.4 The effective anti-bullying policy outlines the wide range of carefully structured procedures and gives positive and effective guidance. Each form in the prep has one or two pupils who are trained to identify bullying. If it occurs, all pupils know that their class teacher and headmistress, or tutor and head of pastoral care, will deal with it promptly and sensitively. The pupil questionnaire showed that the majority of pupils feel confident that the school will sort out any concerns they have regarding bullying. However, pupils at all stages also say that bullying is not an issue.
- 3.5 Pupils' welfare is paramount and promoted exceedingly well. Robust policies and a comprehensive and highly effective management framework ensure that welfare, like pastoral care, is excellent. The school's approach to bullying and behaviour underpin the harmonious community life.
- 3.6 Secure and systematic arrangements safeguard and promote pupils' health and well-being. The head of pastoral care and child protection officer supports staff and manages the welfare of all pupils sensitively. The well-formulated policy and procedures for child protection are known by staff, who receive relevant training which is updated regularly as required. The 'yellow card' provides them with a useful reminder of what to do and who to contact. The school's procedures for staff recruitment take full account of national guidance. Admission and attendance registers are completed accurately. The school's internal intranet system enables staff to track pupils who are ill or off site. Attendance is high and punctuality has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school provides well for pupils with disability and has effective plans to improve access further.

- 3.7 All necessary measures have been taken to minimise the risk of fire. Risk assessments for buildings, grounds and activities are carried out with rigour. Health and safety is further supported by dedicated and hard working cleaning, grounds and maintenance teams. The school health centre provides excellent facilities and well-trained staff to support pupils who are injured or ill. In addition, all staff have received basic first aid training.
- 3.8 Pupils are encouraged to live healthily. Due attention is paid to healthy living and diet in science and life skills lessons. Food is wholesome and nutritious; a varied menu provides hot and cold options, with individuals' needs well catered for. Staff and pupils share mealtimes in the clean, bright and airy dining room and in the pre-prep hall. The youngest pupils know the importance of healthy eating, stating that 'we must eat fruit, healthy meals and not too many sweets'. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to exercise, either in lesson times or in breaks, where they make full use of the extensive grounds.
- 3.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.10 The school has excellent links with parents and cultivates positive links with the community, building on the standards achieved in the last inspection and meeting its aims of maintaining special relationships with parents.
- 3.11 Parents' response to the questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive demonstrating their satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children. There were no issues raised by a significant number of parents. During the inspection parents who talked to inspectors were positive about all aspects of the school.
- 3.12 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. They say how welcome they are made from the EYFS through to the prep. They are able to take meals with pupils in the dining room at any time, attend Saturday and other assemblies, and help with school trips and hobbies such as Scottish dancing. Many support their children from the touchline and enjoy an excellent match tea afterwards.
- 3.13 Parents are provided with useful information about the school by regular e-mails and an informative website. The pre-prep has recently developed its own website and prospectus. Parents of prospective pupils are given useful information about the school, though one said that "the school was a million times better than the publicity material suggested". Parents of prospective boarders are contacted by their child's houseparent before they join the school, and this is followed up by a telephone call after the pupil has settled. Parents of pre-prep and prep pupils receive regular feedback on their child's progress, through informal discussion in the pre-prep, and half-termly assessment sheets giving grades for attainment and effort in the prep followed by a termly written report with grades and a more detailed comment for each subject. The best reports give helpful guidance for future improvement, though this is not done consistently across the curriculum. An annual parents' meeting for each year-group completes the picture.
- 3.14 The school handles parents' concerns with due care. Teaching staff, houseparents and tutors are approachable and easy to talk with. Efficient communications mean that a twenty-four hour limit for replying to parents' emails is generally achieved.
- 3.15 The school promotes positive links with the local and wider community. The vicar of the local church takes assemblies and pupils attend the monthly family service in the village. Pupils from the village primary school use some of the school's facilities and take part in craft and technology workshops and a music day. The school's excellent sporting facilities

are used by members of the sports club, and the gym facilities by local pupils. The school regularly hosts gymnastics competitions. Local people are invited to attend the public dress rehearsal of the school plays. International links are supported well.

- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

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

- 3.17 The quality of boarding is outstanding and makes an excellent contribution to pupils' education and personal development, as the school intends.
- 3.18 Relationships between boarders and house staff, and between the boarders themselves, are excellent. The school gets the best out of pupils through positive reinforcement, praise, encouragement, enthusiasm, fun and affection. Pupils say they appreciate all that is done for them by houseparents and matrons, and they greatly value the company and support of the gap students attached to each house. Great care is taken to help new boarders settle in. The enthusiastic, highly professional and caring house teams foster an atmosphere of tolerance, mutual trust and respect in an open and relaxed, yet purposeful, context. Pupils say that boarding is great fun and that they appreciate the constant presence of their friends. They feel well cared for and say they feel extremely safe and secure.
- 3.19 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is provided, both in the evenings and at weekends. These activities cater for a wide range of interests and abilities and a successful balance is struck between activity and relaxation time. As a result, pupils fill their spare time in an enjoyable and fulfilling way and these activities, together with the very well structured routine, successfully complement the high quality of care.
- 3.20 The boarding accommodation provides a friendly and welcoming environment and enables pupils to feel settled and relaxed. Pupils are encouraged to personalise their rooms, helping them to achieve a warm, homely atmosphere. During visits to the boarding houses, pupils were extremely proud to show inspectors where they lived and to say how much fun and enjoyment they had as boarders, both with their friends and with the staff.

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 Excellent governance contributes much to the way the school fulfils its aims, providing a high quality education in a strong and supportive community. This level of support by governors builds on that seen in the last inspection.
- 4.2 Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their work, crucially in the field of education where their experience stretches from the EYFS through to secondary education. This enables them to provide oversight and challenge to this core function as much as to business and financial matters. The carefully thought-out committee structure enables governors to be well informed, to look at key areas of school life in detail and to provide strategic direction and oversight. Governors give appropriate attention to matters of welfare and health and safety, fulfilling their legal responsibilities; for example they receive annual reports on child protection arrangements. In addition to attending to matters of practice, governors give time to long-term strategic thinking each year. The governing body gives careful consideration to matters of governance, and in particular to the recruitment and training of governors.
- 4.3 In this way, governors are aware of their responsibilities and give careful attention to the school's needs. For example, the education committee studies annual reports from heads of department before meeting them for discussion over lunch and reviewing what they have learned afterwards. This enables them to identify particular areas of success or concern and to work with the headmaster and academic deputy to strengthen provision where needed. Heads of department appreciate these opportunities, though some say they would appreciate more direct feedback afterwards.
- 4.4 Over the years, governors have managed financial and other resources with care and imagination. As a result, the school enjoys high quality facilities and employs the latest in environmental design; the economies in energy in its most recent building have produced significant savings in a short period of time, thus vindicating the additional initial investment made and governors' vision that this was the right approach to take.

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

- 4.5 Excellent leadership and management have ensured that the school successfully fulfils its aim to create a happy and relaxed atmosphere in which pupils develop their academic, sporting, cultural or social skills while living in an environment which is safe and which encourages mutual respect.
- 4.6 Strong and dynamic leadership reflects a clear vision from the headmaster and places an emphasis on delegation to leaders and managers at all levels. The clear ambition that pupils should achieve more than they believe they are capable of is communicated to all, including the pupils themselves. Similarly, the family ethos of the school is supported at all levels of leadership and management. Warm and supportive relationships between pupils, teachers and support staff are given the highest priority by those in leadership positions, who themselves set an excellent example to both staff and pupils.
- 4.7 The senior management team (SMT) works closely together, manages a pastoral and academic programme that meets pupils' needs extremely well and gives a clear lead to all aspects of school life. Leadership and management of the EYFS is based on constant self-evaluation and a clear vision. Leadership of the pre-prep as a whole is delegated effectively

- to the headmistress who sets high standards there. Liaison between prep and pre-prep has improved since the last inspection.
- 4.8 All aspects of boarding and pastoral care are led extremely well, with strong class, tutorial and house teams. Liaison within the pre-prep takes place through formal and informal meetings; in the prep, weekly staff meetings provide an important opportunity for reviewing pupils' pastoral care and well-being as well as discussing other matters. The pastoral care system is thorough in its monitoring of pupils, with staff demonstrating a clear understanding of their roles.
  - 4.9 School leadership empowers middle managers, in particular heads of department, so that they can lead thriving departments. Heads of department monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment well with feedback through senior management to the governing body each term. In turn, governors provide supportive monitoring both through regular dialogue but also more formally through annual review. Whilst this monitoring of teaching and learning has a formal structure within the prep school, it is undertaken only informally within the pre-prep.
  - 4.10 Senior managers know staff well and, owing to the broad and open management style, are able to identify the needs of individual staff and their departments very effectively. The comprehensive school development plan, which is made up of individual development plans for each area of school life, shows the school's willingness to embrace change and development.
  - 4.11 In addition, the pupils' school council meets regularly under the guidance of the deputy headmaster and has been responsible for a number of changes within the school. The school also interacts openly with parents, who are generous with their praise for all aspects of the school.
  - 4.12 The school remains committed to attracting high calibre staff and does so by careful but discerning recruitment of both experienced and less experienced staff who display potential. Existing staff are supported by a robust but demanding appraisal system and by professional development. Appropriate checks are made on staff when they are appointed, and recently arrived staff say how well they were supported and made welcome.
  - 4.13 Financial control and planning are outstanding. The provision and maintenance of teaching equipment are exemplary. Pupils are provided with many high-quality learning resources, including an indoor swimming pool, fully equipped gymnastics training centre, sports hall, performance auditorium and recital hall. A very able and committed maintenance team offer excellent support to the school, not only by maintaining the fabric of the school very well but also by developing new materials and resources in response to staff requests.
  - 4.14 The school's administration is highly efficient and the work of the school is fully supported by a wide range of administrative, catering, medical, grounds, cleaning and maintenance staff.
  - 4.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

### **Overall Conclusions**

- 5.1 Port Regis School fulfils its aims by providing an exceptional environment in which pupils achieve their potential and learn to communicate with confidence both academically and socially from the EYFS through to the end of Year 8. By the time they leave, pupils show a high level of scholarship and are exemplary students. Their outstanding standards and progress are underpinned by excellent teaching which, at its best, generates lively and challenging discussion while pupils engage in a stimulating variety of activities, supported by excellent marking. Pupils appreciate the way in which they can work alongside staff in the classroom, seek their help and guidance and depend on them for support. However on occasions, teachers do not give enough opportunity for pupils to make full use of ICT. Excellent personal development enables pupils to grow into mature, thoughtful and caring individuals whose natural relationships with both teaching and non-teaching staff lie at the heart of the strength of the school community. This strength is evident through the excellent pastoral care and tutoring, outstanding relationships and care in boarding houses and in the close involvement of parents in all aspects of school life. Parents are well informed but, although many reports give clear guidance about targets for the future, this is not the case consistently. Work in class is extended through an exceptional range of hobbies and other activities, some of which are carried out to a very high level. Excellent governance has not only enabled the school to develop outstanding facilities but also enabled governors to give detailed oversight to academic and welfare issues and thus support the school very well in its day-to-day work. Excellent leadership in the school has in turn provided a clear vision and sense of purpose which runs through all that the school achieves and lays the foundation for the school's strong sense of community.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, outdoor facilities in the pre-prep have been improved as have aspects of the prep curriculum. The quality of teaching has improved further and in other areas the school has progressed beyond the standards seen in the last inspection.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses but should give attention to the following issues to develop further the excellent education it already provides:
1. extend opportunities for pupils to use ICT skills in their day-to-day work;
  2. improve the consistency with which reports give guidance for further progress in pupils' work.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.
- 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 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> November 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. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the medical centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November 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

Mr Ian Newton	Reporting Inspector
Mr Giles Delaney	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mr Shaun Greet	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mrs Margaret Marsh	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Graham Venables	Former Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mrs Gillian Venn	Head of Pre-Prep, IAPS school
Mr Tim Walton	Head of Department, IAPS school
Mrs Kathy McLauchlan	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Gill Pinchbeck	Early Years Team Inspector

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

- 7.1 The setting, currently with 29 children aged three to five located within the pre-prep department of Port Regis School, consists of elegantly converted and self-contained premises in the grounds, opening onto an imaginative courtyard and surrounded by extensive woods, Forest School, a planting garden and a rose garden. These can all be accessed for learning and play.
- 7.2 The setting is non-selective and provides a warm, friendly, caring atmosphere. It aims to provide a breadth of experience of the highest quality and succeeds as the overall effectiveness is outstanding. Responses to the parent questionnaires show just how highly the parents regard the school in every respect. They appreciate the genuine warmth, high standards of education and care and believe the school is providing the best possible start for their children. Parent partnership and communication is outstanding. Parents are fully involved in their child's learning. Learning journeys and Parent Involved in Children's Learning (PICL) activity diary sheets are sent home for parents to contribute their ideas. A lively, high quality and vibrant baby-and-toddler group ensure that the local community and families can enjoy the facilities and become part of the Port Regis family.
- 7.3 The school provides an outstanding and vibrant learning environment in which every child can thrive. The high-quality resources and creative use of space enable the staff to plan purposeful and challenging learning and play experiences effectively both inside and out. The curriculum is fun and child centred, and children's ideas, individual needs and interests are developed and extended through a variety of sensory and investigative experiences. Bricks, hard hats, clipboards, and pretend mortar were used when role-playing builders outside. Autumn treasure boxes were filled during Forest School sessions, medallions made and children taught to take safe risks when using tools. Children work autonomously indoors and outside. Secure systems are in place to ensure that children's welfare is promoted at all times when using the indoor and outdoor spaces. Whilst the provision and use of the outdoor facilities has significantly improved since the last inspection, it is not yet fully developed. Access to the curriculum is enhanced by the extensive facilities of the wider school and children benefit from specialist staff and Forest School sessions.
- 7.4 The quality of leadership and management is outstanding, and is based on constant self-evaluation and a clear vision; it provides an ambitious strategy and clear school development plans that underpin all areas of the setting. The highly motivated staff work together seamlessly to implement detailed policies effectively and securely. Staff ratios are excellent and all staff are suitably qualified, accessing continuous training which has enabled them to manage risk and build effective partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- 7.5 A mix of assessments and observations are used, and progress and attainment is discussed formally in communication meetings, and informally through daily discussion, photographs and jottings. The team have developed well-documented development profiles which reflect significant milestones and key moments and inform the end of phase profile assessments.
- 7.6 Outcomes for pupils are excellent. Achievement is closely monitored from entry into Nursery where a baseline of attainment is produced. Most children are working within the age-related expectations. At the end of the EYFS, profile scores reflect outstanding progress and are above the national average, as many children are working beyond the Early Learning Goals. Children who need support have specific IEPs in place and a dedicated special educational needs co-ordinator oversees assessments and reporting.

- 7.7 All children in the early years at Port Regis enjoy their learning, achieve high standards and feel safe. Children are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. Children discussed healthy food choices whilst eating lunch together. They discussed the need to drink water for a healthy and active brain. All make a positive contribution and thus develop their life skills for the future.

### **What the Setting Should Do to Improve**

- 7.8 To improve further the high quality of its provision the setting should:
1. continue to develop the free flow element of indoor/outdoor provision for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- 7.9 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.



*“Outstanding moral awareness”*

*“Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate outstanding social skills”*

*“Responses to the parent questionnaire show just how highly the parents regard the school in every respect”*

*“The quality of leadership and management is outstanding”*

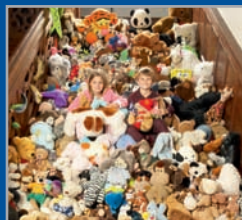
*“Pupils are extremely considerate”*



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*“Pupils take responsibility for the well-being  
and happiness of those around them”*



Independent Schools Inspectorate