

St Michael's School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI
Social care inspector	Anna Williams

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

St Michael's School is located in Burghclere near Newbury. It opened in 1991 in order to meet the needs and demands of the followers of the Society of St Pius X. The school is a registered charitable trust and its goals reflect those of the Catholic Society to which it belongs, which are the preservation and continuation of the Catholic faith and tradition. The school aims to instil in its pupils knowledge, virtue and responsibility. There are currently 71 boys and girls on roll, of whom 30 boys are boarders. There are five children in Reception in the Early Years Foundation Stage, none of whom are receiving government funding. There are no pupils with statements of special educational needs. Accommodation for boarders is in a purpose-built boarding house on the school campus. Fourteen boarders are from overseas. All the overseas pupils speak English as an additional language and with varying degrees of fluency. This was an integrated inspection of education and boarding provision. The previous integrated inspection was in May 2008.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is satisfactory but the school only partially meets its aims. The curriculum is satisfactory and teaching and assessment are good overall. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress academically and in their personal development although progress is not so strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are inadequate due to a range of weaknesses including safeguarding. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the boarding experience is inadequate for a range of reasons including safeguarding. The school does not meet a significant number of regulations and

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁴ www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

national minimum standards for boarding and has therefore not made adequate progress since its last inspection.

The number of pupils on roll exceeds the number that the school is registered for and is in breach of its agreement with the Department for Education.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. From Key Stage 1 onwards, the curriculum is mainly planned following National Curriculum and examination specifications. The exception is information and communication technology (ICT), where pupils have supervised access to computers at regular times to assist with their studies. Latin is taught across all years and French is taught in the senior school. Both subjects make a positive contribution to developing pupils' linguistic skills. In the teaching of English, there is a strong focus on grammar, comprehension, reading and poetry. Practical work is a regularly planned feature of many subjects. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects, with the exception of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Curriculum documentation describes that the school's aim is to teach PSHE in accordance with the ideals of Catholic education. This is undertaken conscientiously but there is a lack of a well-defined programme setting out which topics have been covered and when. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the curriculum satisfactorily covers literacy, numeracy, personal development and the other areas of learning.

In Key Stage 4, pupils follow the GCSE syllabus for the subjects studied. The school is flexible in meeting the needs of those pupils who stay on to study A level. Currently the offer extends to mathematics, science, biology, chemistry and modern languages. Care is taken to match academic pathways to individual pupils in these age groups and this results in some pupils returning for a third year in the sixth form. Teaching resources to meet the course requirements of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are good.

The school now provides pupils with appropriate careers advice in preparation for adult life, and a programme of work experience is planned for later this year. For all pupils, the curriculum is enhanced by an interesting range of visits to enrich learning and broaden pupils' horizons. Additional activities for boarders in the evening or at weekends are well planned, covering cadets, sporting, musical and artistic opportunities. These contribute positively to their personal development, although boarders say they would prefer more access to local facilities.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. Specialist teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and the pace of lessons is brisk and well focused. In lessons where teaching and learning are good, teachers ask searching questions and encourage pupils to participate fully through discussion and/or practical tasks which inspire and fire their imagination. Older pupils show excellent independent learning skills, but teachers in a minority of lessons do not always allow these to be fully

utilised. This is especially so when teachers over-dominate and tell pupils information rather than allowing them to explore and ask their own questions.

Because there are very small classes in the school, from Key Stage 1 onwards, staff know the pupils very well and adapt lessons to meet their individual needs effectively. As a result, pupils make good progress. During lessons, it was clear from listening to the teachers' explanations, comments and questioning that they are constantly assessing pupils and have a very good understanding of the levels at which they are working. Pupils are also assessed regularly by tests and through past examination papers; these are used effectively to plan for pupils' next steps. The school assesses all pupils from overseas on their proficiency in English and provides additional intensive English as a second language courses to ensure they access the curriculum as quickly as possible.

There is now an established system for staff to review, comprehensively, each individual's learning and physical, spiritual, social and moral development. This results in a consistent approach to setting pupils' goals for them to strive towards. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's progress is satisfactory overall but good in communication, language and literacy and in their personal development. Progress is satisfactory rather than good, because the regular assessment does not adequately inform teachers so that they can provide suitable challenge. There are also too few resources to support better progress and independent learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for all pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is no distinction between the roles of education and boarding staff and this enables seamless support for pupils' personal development. This is particularly true of overseas pupils and those new to boarding. The school's ethos underpins the good emphasis given to promoting pupils' spiritual development. Pupils' commitment to their faith is effectively developed through religious education lessons, school assemblies, prayers and Mass in the school chapel, all of which are fundamental to the everyday work of the school. Pupils are gaining an appropriate understanding of different cultural and religious traditions. They are encouraged to be mindful of others, developing tolerance and understanding that promotes good race relations. There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school and boarding house, with pupils well aware of their duties and responsibilities. They are regularly involved in helping others through gardening tasks, cooking and other duties in school and in boarding. Successful links with the local community exist. Pupils are aware of the high expectations teachers have of them and they make good use of their evening study time.

Pupils' behaviour around the campus is good. They have a good understanding of right and wrong but occasional lapses result in the need to apply sanctions to ensure conformity to school and boarding house rules. Pupils trust the adults and consequently feel at ease discussing social and moral issues with them both in

lessons and informally. Pupils share their ideas about their work and their accommodation individually and their suggestions are taken seriously by staff. Attendance is good.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is inadequate⁵.

In general, staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and all have completed appropriate child protection training. In addition, the school has a wide range of suitable policies to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

However, despite the knowledge and the policies, the quality and the extent of their implementation are too variable. For example, when welfare issues arise, they are not dealt with according to the published procedures. Pupils' concerns are not always recorded and then dealt with appropriately.

There is a high staff-to-pupil ratio and this enables effective, close supervision to take place. Staff establish positive relationships with pupils and discuss general aspects related to risk awareness, safety and health but this is often unplanned and undocumented. Staff and pupils recognise the potential hazards on the school site and these are appropriately covered during procedural update meetings at the start of term. However, despite this, pupils are not given sufficient guidance to ensure their protection, for example in the laundry, when boarders operate the machines unsupervised. Formal risk assessments are variable in quality and do not show how the risks are to be reduced. As a result, they are inadequate overall and pupils' safety is compromised by exposed machinery such as a gang mower and absence of a speed restrictor. Volunteers drive pupils to school and on trips and undertake other activities but these activities have not been formally risk-assessed, including the appropriate checking of all driving licences. There are no procedures in place to ensure that volunteers are subject to the required safeguarding checks. There are a significant number of other welfare issues in boarding, ranging from accommodation and furnishing weaknesses to inadequate fire risk assessment in the dormitory and failings in the proper administration of medicines, which mean boarders are not properly safeguarded.

Policies and procedures exist to ensure safety on educational visits but their application is inadequate. There is inadequate supervision of transport arrangements particularly in relation to the suitability of drivers. The visitor book is not maintained properly and there is no requirement for visitors to be suitably badged at all times. Smoking arrangements for adults so that smokers are not visible to pupils are inadequate. Fire practice evacuations are carried out routinely and staff are trained

⁵ Concerns raised by a pupil during the inspection are being examined by the appropriate bodies

but information and safety signage for pupils and visitors are not in place in all parts of the campus. The school has no appropriate plans to fulfil its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Admissions and attendance records are maintained to the required standard. The behaviour and anti-bullying policy is implemented consistently and is aided by close communication between all staff.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has undertaken Criminal Record Bureau checks on all staff and the results are recorded in the single central register. Details resulting from other required checks are also recorded in the register but staff files do not contain supporting information so that it is impossible to verify that the checks have been undertaken and that the register's content is correct.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is set in a spacious rural location. The buildings used by the pupils during the day are in good order. Teaching areas are suitable for the number of pupils in each class, including the science laboratory and technology room. There is a large gym, a tennis court and swimming pool that are also available to boarders at the weekends. Other specialist facilities are of good quality, for example science and design and technology areas. The building used for staff and offices is in poor decorative order. There are some inadequate security arrangements that have been reported to the headteacher.

Since the last inspection, the number of pupils who are boarding has doubled and the accommodation is no longer adequate. There is insufficient personal space for individual boarders. Provision for day pupils who are ill is adequate but for boarders, it is inadequate. Teaching accommodation in the Early Years Foundation stage is satisfactory but toilet and handwashing facilities are inadequate.

Provision of information

A wide range of information is available for parents and carers, which meets requirements. This includes an informative handbook, prospectus and regular newsletters about the work of the school. Reports about pupils' progress are sent home twice a term and there are opportunities for parents and carers to discuss their child's progress with staff.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet regulatory requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate because of deficiencies in leadership and management. As a result, although outcomes for children are satisfactory, overall provision is inadequate.

Children make satisfactory progress but their progress is good in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. The opportunities provided for their development are broad, covering literacy and numeracy and the other areas of learning. Children respond well with growing confidence and fluency to an effective approach to the teaching of reading, using all the senses as a basis for discussion and developing their understanding of letters and sounds. They understand safety and health routines and they feel safe. Behaviour is outstanding.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Staff care about children's needs, and good relationships are forged. Staff have a reasonable understanding of how young children learn. However, there are some weaknesses. At times, children are not offered enough opportunities to make independent choices about their learning. Existing resources support children's satisfactory progress but they are too limited in quality to support better progress. Teachers assess children's progress satisfactorily and the information is used to plan future learning activities. However, the use of this information is not always sharp enough so in some areas of learning, children are not sufficiently challenged and individual children do not make the progress they should. The assessment information gathered does not enable staff to produce the required Early Years Foundation Stage Profile for each child. The outdoor play area is an ideal open space and this is used well for free-flow activity, leading to satisfactory physical development, but it lacks equipment to further develop children's physical skills and imaginative play.

Leadership and management are inadequate. Self-evaluation is only just beginning and important aspects of planning are weak. Staff work well together and share ideas for activities but although outcomes for children are satisfactory, none of the staff is trained to the appropriate levels. Management has been short-sighted in not recognising this and equally short-sighted in not ensuring more rigorous assessment procedures linked to statutory requirements. Risk assessments are undertaken but they are not rigorous enough. There is no independent safe access to toilets or handwashing facilities. Management is also unaware of the whole-school need to ensure proper safeguarding checking procedures and the requirements relating to training in paediatric care.

Leadership and management of boarding

The quality of leadership and management of boarding is inadequate. New boarding staff receive appropriate induction and training linked to their supervisory roles. The boarding staff meet with the head of boarding on a weekly basis to track boarders'

progress and outcomes are fed back to education staff. This is effective in supporting aspects of boarders' needs. However, the good induction of boarding staff is not matched with effective induction procedures for boarders with English as a second language.

Parents and carers say that there is regular communication between the boarding house staff and themselves, ensuring they are kept up to date with their children's progress.

Since the last inspection, the decorative quality of senior block accommodation has improved and senior boarders say they like their accommodation. However, due to greater numbers, the size and other facilities of the dormitory accommodation do not now comply with boarding house accommodation regulations. This impacts negatively on boarders' experiences as there are inconsistencies between boarders with regard to the personal space provided, privacy and suitability and adequacy of storage. Boarders report that they sometimes feel cold. Mattresses are stained. Boarders are not given easy access to water or food in the dormitory unless they are ill. They are not allowed to personalise an area of their accommodation with suitable posters and personal items. Boarders do their own laundering unsupervised but the facilities have not been suitably risk assessed and aspects are unsafe. Fire risk assessment is inadequate, as registers of which day pupils are staying overnight are not kept.

There are appropriate levels of supervision by boarding staff after school and when on activities. However, boarders who are ill and remain in their bedroom or the dormitory during the school day are not supervised, nor regularly checked on by boarding staff. The separate sick bay arrangements are inadequate. Some boarders are self medicating and have not been appropriately risk assessed as responsible to do so safely. Management's systems to confirm safe recruitment of staff are inadequate. As a result of the deficiencies, the school fails to comply with a significant number of minimum standards and boarders' welfare is at risk.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁶

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

⁶ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

- ensure that there is a curriculum policy set out in writing which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and is implemented effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- ensure provision is made for personal, social and health education which reflects the school's aims and ethos (paragraph 2(2)(f)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective and these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7)
- ensure arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders that have regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools or the national minimum standards for residential special schools, as applicable (paragraph 8)
- ensure there are effective measures to ensure pupils' health and safety which have regard to the DfE guidance (paragraph 11)
- ensure that there are effective procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety on educational visits (paragraph 12)
- ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13).

The school should make arrangements to fulfil duties under the Equality Act 2010?⁷

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the suitability of proprietor, staff and supply staff (standards in part 4) and must:

for all appointments from 1 September 2003, ensure that have appropriate checks been carried out and completed to confirm each member of staff's:

- identity
- medical fitness
- where appropriate, qualifications, and
- for appointments made from 1 May 2007, the additional check of their right to work in the United Kingdom (paragraph 19(2)(b))
- for all appointments from **1 September 2003**, in the case of staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of children for whom accommodation is provided, in addition to the requirements of paragraphs 19(2)(a) to (d), ensure that a check been made by the proprietor that Standard 38 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools, or

⁷ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

- where applicable, Standard 27 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools, complied with (paragraph 19(2)(e))
- ensure that the checks in 19(2)(b) were completed before a person's appointment apart from where exemptions, listed in the note above, apply (paragraph 19(3))
 - ensure that for each member of staff appointed on or **after** 1 May 2007, the register shows that the following checks were made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained:
 - the person's identity
 - the person is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (ISA barred list), or there is no direction made under section 142 of the 2002 Act in respect of that person (List 99), or disqualification prohibition or restriction having the same effect
 - of relevant qualifications, if appropriate
 - whether an enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) certificate was obtained
 - in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, the further checks made which have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State
 - of their right to work in the United Kingdom
 - in the case of staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of children for whom accommodation is provided, a check was made to ensure compliance with Standard 38 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools, or where applicable, Standard 27 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraph 22(3))
 - ensure that for each member of staff in appointed at any time **before** 1 May 2007, the register shows that the following checks have been made, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained:
 - of the person's identity
 - to establish whether the person is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (ISA barred list), or there is no direction made under section 142 of the 2002 Act in respect of that person (List 99), or disqualification prohibition or restriction having the same effect
 - of relevant qualifications where appropriate
 - whether an enhanced CRB certificate was obtained
 - in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, the further checks

made which have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State

- in the case of staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of children for whom accommodation is provided, a check was made to ensure compliance with Standard 38 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools, or where applicable, Standard 27 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraph 22(4)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide adequate security arrangements in place for the grounds and buildings (paragraph 23(d))
- ensure that having regard to the number, age and needs (including any special needs and disability) of pupils, all classrooms are appropriate in size to allow effective teaching, and no areas of the school compromise health or safety (paragraph 23(i))
- ensure there is a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration (paragraph 23 (p))
- ensure that regard is given to standards 40–52 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools or, where applicable, standards 23–26 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraph 23(t)).

In order to comply with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- ensure that staff are trained to the appropriate levels for teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- provide more opportunities for children to make independent choices in their learning
- improve the use of outdoor provision to better support children's physical development
- ensure that assessment procedures are properly linked to statutory requirements.

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- take necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and including ensuring that staff are appropriately trained in paediatric care.
- ensure independent, safe access to toilets and handwashing facilities.

National minimum standards

In order to meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools and associated regulations, the school should:

- implement an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders (NMS 2.1)
- ensure accommodation for boarders who are unwell is adequately staffed by appropriately qualified personnel. It is adequately separated from other boarders (NMS 3.2)
- ensure that prescribed medicines are given only to the boarder to whom they are prescribed. Boarders allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so (NMS 3.4)
- ensure that accommodation provided for boarders complies with any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'), is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any boarders with restricted mobility. Toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy for boarders (NMS 5.1)
- ensure that accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated, with appropriate protection and separation between genders, age groups and accommodation for adults. Bedding is clean and suitable, and is sufficiently warm (NMS 5.2)
- ensure that boarders can personalise an area of their accommodation with suitable posters and personal items if they wish (NMS 5.3)
- ensure the health, safety and welfare of the occupants are reasonably assured in every part of the school's land and buildings (NMS 6.1)
- ensure that the school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') and any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises (NMS 7.1)
- ensure that boarders have access to drinking water and to food or the means of preparing food at reasonable times in addition to main meals (NMS 8.3)
- ensure that adequate laundry provision is made for boarders' clothing and bedding. Boarders' clothing is satisfactorily stored and issued to the right boarder following laundering (NMS 9.1)
- ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school, and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') (NMS 11)
- ensure that the school operates safe recruitment procedures and vets staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') issued by the Secretary of State (NMS 14.1).

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education			√	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			√	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of pupils		√		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils				√
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage			√	
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage				√
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage				√
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage				√

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience				√
Outcomes for boarders				√
Quality of boarding provision and care				√
Boarders' safety				√
Leadership and management of boarding				√

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Roman Catholic		
Date school opened	29 September 1991		
Age range of pupils	4–18 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 51	Girls: 20	Total: 71
Number of boarders	Boys: 30	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,165 - £6,780		
Annual fees (boarders)	£7,815 - £8,430		
Address of school	Harts Lane Burghclere Newbury Berkshire RG20 9JW		
Telephone number	01635 278137		
Email address	fathersummers@gmail.com		
Headteacher	Reverend Patrick Summers		
Proprietor	Society of Saint Pius X		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

20 October 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Michael's School, Newbury

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We think that the quality of education you receive is satisfactory. We appreciated that you were happy to talk with us and tell us what you thought of your school. It is clear that you enjoy your school and make good progress in your learning. The teaching is good, and the staff keep a close check on your achievements throughout the year. We saw that you have good relationships with the staff. You understand the expectations they have of you and this ensures your commitment to the values of the school. You also told us that staff are kind and always there to help you when needed. We agree that there is a strong family atmosphere and you form good spiritual, moral and social values. This said, the school must produce a personal, social and health education policy so it is clear what is taught.

However, we have noted some problems which we are asking your school to deal with. We have concerns about aspects of your welfare and safety, particularly arrangements made to safeguard you. We have concerns about the quality of your experiences in boarding, which we found to be inadequate. It is also clear to us that as the number of pupils has increased beyond that agreed with the Department for Education. The increase in number of pupils has put pressure on pupils who board, reducing the space and privacy available to them.

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress satisfactorily and it is a happy place, but some procedures do not conform to what is required by law and staff need to be better qualified if they are to provide all the children with sufficient challenge in their learning. We have asked the school to sort out these problems quickly.

I wish you success in your future.

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector