

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Mylnhurst Preparatory School and Nursery

Full Name of the School	Mylnhurst Preparatory School and Nursery
DCSF Number	373/6017
Early Years Number	N/A
Registered Charity Number	1056683
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Headmaster	Mr Christopher Emmott
Chairman of Directors	Mr John Hudson
Age Range (of the whole school)	3 to 11 years
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	8th to 11th June 2009
Head of Early Years Setting	Mrs Jennifer Pringle
Early Years Age Range	3 to 5 years
Early Years Gender	Mixed
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	29th and 30th April 2009

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005, 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 31st August following their fifth birthday. The inspection was carried out by ISI, a body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting EYFS provision in schools belonging to the ISC Associations. Section 7 of this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Mylnhurst Preparatory School and Nursery is a Roman Catholic co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of three and eleven years. It was founded in 1933 as Mylnhurst Convent School by the Sisters of Mercy. In 1996, the Sisters handed over the school to lay management and it became Mylnhurst School and Nursery. It adopted its present name in 2005. The school is set in extensive grounds and gardens in a pleasant residential area to the south of Sheffield city centre. The school enjoys spacious accommodation and extensive facilities, indoors and outdoors. The majority of classrooms are in the grand Victorian mansion house. The stable block has been converted for use as a kitchen and dining room; and it also houses the school shop and the before- and after-school care room. The Nursery and Reception classes have their own separate building, garden and outdoor play space in the grounds, and the original walled kitchen garden now gives ample space for games fields. A new sports hall, complete with a dance and drama studio and swimming pool, has just been opened. The directors of the educational charitable trust, formed in 1996, are the governors of the school.
- 1.2 The overall mission of the school is to maximize the potential of children through partnership with parents, within a challenging and supportive Christian community. The school's vision, which is central to all its work, is to be a centre of educational excellence, preparing children in a Christian environment for life's opportunities. The school is committed to constant improvement and aims to provide first-class facilities and develop skills which will enable pupils to become confident users of technology.
- 1.3 Extensive changes and refurbishment have taken place since 1996 and there has been much ongoing development since the last inspection in June 2003. The most recent inspection by Ofsted of the school's Early Years provision took place in 1999. The present headmaster took up his appointment in the autumn term of 1996.
- 1.4 The school has one form per year from the Reception year group onwards. It is a mixed school of 190 pupils, 100 boys and 90 girls. There are 59 pupils, 30 boys and 29 girls in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); 47 are part time and in the Nursery, and 12 are in Reception. There are 40 pupils in Years 1 and 2, and 91 in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are mostly taught by their class teachers up to Year 6, although they have specialist teaching in dance, drama, French, information and communication technology (ICT), music and physical education (PE).
- 1.5 The majority of pupils live within a radius of six miles from the school. They mostly come from families with business or professional backgrounds. While most pupils join the school in the Nursery or Reception year groups and continue through the school to Year 6, additional pupils may enter older classes from time to time. The school is not selective, but it is made clear to parents that it is aiming for excellence. Prospective pupils are admitted after a visit to the school and an informal discussion with the headmaster, and, when appropriate, a reference from their previous school. The majority of Year 6 pupils proceed to local independent and maintained secondary schools, some of which are selective.
- 1.6 The range of ability is relatively wide within each year group; a small proportion of pupils is below average in ability, and a much higher proportion is above or well above average. Ability on entry is slightly above the national average and standardised tests indicate that the overall ability profile of current pupils from Year 1 onwards is above the national average, and well above in some year groups. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their

results in national tests at ages seven and eleven will be above the average for all maintained primary schools.

- 1.7 The school is a Roman Catholic foundation which welcomes pupils from all faiths and other Christian denominations. While the majority of pupils are British, a significant minority of other cultures and faiths are represented, reflecting the range of ethnic backgrounds in the local population. Virtually all pupils have English as their first language; an occasional pupil requires specialist support in English as an additional language. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. The school has identified 30 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD); six of these pupils receive specialist learning support from the school; the remainder are regularly monitored and may receive in-class assistance.
- 1.8 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 years
Reception	4+ to 5 years

Preparatory School

School	NC name
Prep 1	Year 1
Prep 2	Year 2
Prep 3	Year 3
Prep 4	Year 4
Prep 5	Year 5
Prep 6	Year 6

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

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational opportunities provided by the school are wide-ranging, and extremely well suited to pupils' interests, aptitudes and needs. Several aspects of the educational experience enjoyed by the pupils are outstanding; and overall their education is entirely consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy. The school's mission statement guides the work of the whole school, from the Nursery onwards, and is amply fulfilled. Mylnhurst is a community which offers both challenge and support and the Christian faith provides the foundation for all education that takes place there. Since the previous inspection, the curriculum and provision for extra-curricular activities and learning support have developed significantly. Responses from pupils and parents in their questionnaires indicated significant satisfaction with the range of subjects and activities offered. Pupils, in particular, were overwhelmingly positive about their lessons, their sports and other extra-curricular activities, and the opportunities they are given to have fun and try new experiences.
- 2.2 The school was aware of a lack of outdoor play opportunities both for the EYFS and Years 1 to 6, particularly over recent months during building works. However, significant improvements are being made in this area now that the construction of the sports hall is complete and substantial areas of the grounds are returned for school use. Canopies have been attached to the EYFS building to give increased access to outdoor play areas for the Nursery and Reception classes, and the construction of an outdoor classroom is at an advanced stage of planning.
- 2.3 Within the broad education which pupils receive, very good provision is made for the acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy from the EYFS onwards. The informative, bright and cheerful displays in the class rooms and the corridors enhance the learning environment. They bear witness to the very effective contribution which the wide range of opportunities pupils enjoy makes to their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, technological, aesthetic and creative development. Major emphasis is given within the curriculum and the timetable to provision for linguistic, mathematical and scientific development; these subject areas have priority in timetable planning and it is recognised that less emphasis is given to formal geography and history lessons. However, religious education (RE) and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) contribute significantly to successful human and social development. Pupils also have the advantage of learning French, music, drama, ICT, PE and dance with specialist teachers from the Nursery onwards. Art, music, drama and dance give many excellent opportunities for creative and aesthetic development, while design and technology (DT) encourages both artistic and technological skills. With the recent opening of the sports hall and upgrading of ICT facilities, including a second suite of computers, opportunities abound for the development of skills in these areas. A well-planned programme of lessons also gives each class the opportunity once a term to learn basic cookery skills.
- 2.4 Pupils' experience of personal, social and health education successfully reflects the school's aims and ethos, as does the school's response to *Every Child Matters* which is woven through the curriculum. A modest number of popular extra-curricular clubs and activities which vary from term to term are run by the teaching staff, and play an important part in the educational experience. In addition to sporting and musical activities, a keen podcasting group meets weekly. The organic gardening club, where enthusiastic pupils work on even in torrential rain and are extremely proud to show off their flourishing produce, was heart-warming and joyous.

- 2.5 The new sports centre, dance studio and 25-metre pool are a magnificent addition to the school's resources and contribute also to ever-strengthening links with the local community.
- 2.6 Educational visits are encouraged, such as the Year 4 visit to Drax Power Station, and the comprehensive educational visits handbook illustrates the importance given to this area of provision. Artists, authors and musicians stage regular workshops at the school. The Year 6 residential course which is shared with a local primary school is an example of a learning environment where pupils can make new friends and meet new challenges.
- 2.7 Careful and thoughtful attention is given to preparing pupils for the next stage of education. The transition from Reception to Year 1 is smooth as a result of detailed preparation and the careful transfer of records, as is the transition from Year 2 to Year 3 and onwards. At the other end of the scale, pupils going on to their senior schools appeared quietly confident and were looking forward to their induction days and meeting some of their prospective teachers; link staff from the senior schools had already visited the school.
- 2.8 The curriculum is effectively and meticulously planned and set out in writing at every stage. The curriculum coordinator has made a significant impact on its development and implementation. Documentation and educational policy writing is exemplary, comprehensive and very well organised across all subjects and age groups. Great care is taken to ensure that the curriculum provides for equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and promotes participation in a wide range of activities, from acting out real-life situations in PSHCE to making skilful use of the school's beautiful grounds and extensive facilities on the annual French Day, and from learning more advanced uses of ICT to playing in one of the school's brass bands. Although geography and history are not widely incorporated into the formal timetable, an interesting range of projects, workshops and educational visits is offered to support the humanities.
- 2.9 The school focuses on individuals and generous provision is made for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, while the more able pupils are given challenge and encouragement to achieve a high standard across all areas of the curriculum. The curriculum is adapted as required for pupils needing learning support, particularly those for whom English is an additional language and those with a statement of special educational need. Specialist staff are well qualified and no charge is made for their support throughout the school. The special educational needs coordinator has developed and implemented a highly efficient and effective policy for learning support and careful consideration is given to individual educational plans and regular reviews. The learning support department works closely with class teachers, their classroom assistants and parents. It also has valuable links with a variety of relevant outside agencies which is helpful to both pupils and their parents.
- 2.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.11 Learning and achievement are of good quality; pupils are successfully educated, in relation to their ages, abilities and needs. They are given a thorough grounding in the knowledge, skills and understanding required for academic success. Their eagerness to learn enables them to achieve their potential in line with the aims of the school. Their skills in literacy and numeracy are very well developed from the EYFS onwards. Parents are very happy with their children's progress and pupils comment that they love school; virtually all said they found their school work interesting. Since the previous inspection, learning and achievement has benefited from broader opportunities, both curricular and extra-curricular, and an increased amount of specialist teaching and facilities, particularly for ICT and PE. Changes to the curriculum have resulted in a greater focus on science which has led to an

- improvement in the attainment of the pupils. An emphasis on attainment in English, mathematics and religious education, however, leads to less focus on formal levels of knowledge in geography and history.
- 2.12 Pupils demonstrate mature critical and creative thinking and understanding across a range of subjects. They display extensive knowledge and understanding in their learning and are able to use appropriate language in context, as seen in the scrutiny of Year 3 work in RE where pupils wrote about the call of God to belong to a Christian family. In Year 6 English and PSHCE lessons, pupils spoke with poise and a quiet confidence. Year 4 pupils listened attentively in a lesson on citizenship and communities, and subsequent role play was much enjoyed. In a mathematics investigation, Year 6 pupils used formulae competently together with their ICT skills, and interpreted results logically to discover who would raise the most sponsorship money. Year 5 English and science books showed considerable evidence of ICT skills. Pupils' ability to use their knowledge of ICT contributes to their excellent creative thinking.
- 2.13 No significant differences in relative attainment between different groups are apparent in pupils' work in the core subjects. Pupils achieve well in relation to their abilities overall; they are continually motivated and challenged. Their attainment in national tests at age seven and eleven is good in relation to their abilities. Results in national tests at age seven over the three years to 2008 have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools in reading and writing, and far above the average in mathematics. At this stage, girls achieved higher scores than boys. Results in national tests at age eleven over the three years to 2008 have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools in English, mathematics and science. At this stage, girls and boys achieved similar scores. Tracking of pupils' results in a range of nationally standardised tests confirms good levels of progress. Year 6 pupils are increasingly successful in entrance and scholarship examinations for their chosen senior schools.
- 2.14 Excellent tracking and monitoring procedures indicate that individual pupils make significant personal progress and gain recognition for their achievements in many areas of school life. The school has enjoyed significant success in music examinations and festivals, and on the sports field in rugby, swimming, athletics, netball, cricket and football. Pupils have been finalists for the last three years in the Sheffield Young Artists competition. The school has also received local recognition of its efforts by achieving the Healthy Schools award, Basic Skills award, Artsmark at silver level, the Pathway Gold award for Early Years and the Eco Schools silver award.
- 2.15 Pupils are encouraged and guided to undertake independent research using both the library and the internet. The information from Year 6 research on the Victorians was used by pupils to give a multi-media presentation using the recently installed second suite of computers. Pupils are skilled from an early age in the use of computers for independent learning. Year 3 researched information about the Vikings; Year 4 wrote Egyptian newspaper articles as part of a cross-curricular English and history project and Year 5 used ICT in their work on the repeating patterns in William Morris designs.
- 2.16 Pupils respect each other's work and opinions. They also listen to each other and work well in pairs and groups, as in a Year 2 geography lesson where holiday destinations were discussed and in a number of successful games lessons, where evaluation was an important element. Boys and girls work well together in pairs or groups to solve given problems and assess and help improve each other's work, as in a Year 6 DT lesson where each group had to design, construct and test a shelter which would be waterproof, would withstand wind and a heavy weight landing on the roof. Pupils speak most enthusiastically about being members of sports teams, and musical groups such as the string and brass bands.

- 2.17 Excellent behaviour was observed in all lessons. Pupils respond positively to the school's teaching and apply previous learning to unfamiliar situations. Pupils show a keen interest and a desire to learn and succeed; they show excellent focus and involvement. They enjoy friendly relationships both with each other and with staff and, in their eagerness to succeed, they make effective use of the support available to them.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.18 The development of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of pupils is outstanding. In fulfilment of the school's vision, pupils are given excellent preparation for life's opportunities within a challenging and supportive Christian environment. As at the time of the previous inspection, this aspect is a significant strength of the school; pupils learn the importance of family values and enjoy taking responsibility. Pupils' personal development, together with their growing appreciation of literature, music, drama and art, is an important aspect throughout the school from the Early Years Foundation Stage where kindness towards each other is continually emphasised and encouraged. Pupils' questionnaires confirmed that they grow up expecting to take responsibility for others and having the confidence to do things for themselves.
- 2.19 The ethos and atmosphere of the school allows pupils to develop an excellent spiritual awareness in a very natural way. The school is completely true to its Christian foundation and faith and it is clear that pupils are much valued as individuals and thereby acquire a genuine sense of identity and self-worth. Assemblies in the school chapel, RE and PSHCE lessons all provide them with ample opportunities to explore values and beliefs. In addition, daily prayers and collective worship give pupils quiet and reflective moments during an otherwise busy day. Each classroom has a prayer corner, there is a prayer journal club and parents have a prayer group. Landmarks in the Christian calendar such as Lent and Advent play an important part in the life of the school, as does the celebration of Mass every half term.
- 2.20 Pupils have an excellent awareness of moral issues. Their ability to distinguish between right and wrong and to respect the law is continually encouraged. This is aided by a weekly value statement which guides the life of the school, while citizenship is an important element in PSHCE lessons. Year group assemblies often contain a positive moral message. Religious education lessons use role play to help pupils consider real-life choices between right and wrong. The school's golden rules and the tradition of golden time also help to reinforce this thoughtfulness. A high percentage of parents considered that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and views.
- 2.21 Social awareness is another significant strength. Pupils readily learn from an early age to accept responsibility for their behaviour and to care for each other. They accept that the school rules are fair, and the rewards and sanctions system is clearly understood. Their social skills are extremely well developed and older pupils are excellent role models for the younger pupils. Mylnhurst is a member of the Eco Schools and Living Simply schemes, in which pupils are taught to think about the consequences of their actions and life style. A Year 3 science display included the words, "All God's plants and animals need our love and care." The school has initiated a Walking Bus plan: once a week, parents drive to a convenient car park about a mile from the school and have established a rota to walk with their children from there. This scheme has gained recognition through a school Travel Award from the city council. Pupils contribute to life within the community by enthusiastically supporting international and national charities; they contribute to the Christmas boxes scheme, CAFOD, the Catholic agency for overseas development, school links with Sri Lanka and Uganda, Red Nose Day and Children in Need and, more locally, St

Wilfred's Drop-In Centre and a nearby hospice. The school brass band plays regularly in the city centre to raise money for needy causes. Mylnhurst is a Fair Trade school and pupils learn about the reasons for and consequences of shopping in this way.

- 2.22 The head boy and head girl are very serious about their responsibilities and are pleased that the new swimming pool is being used by children other than those at Mylnhurst. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils display a broad general knowledge of public institutions and the Royal Family. They know who the Prime Minister is and have an idea of how government works, having been visited by their local member of parliament, and through reading a weekly newspaper and class discussions of current affairs.
- 2.23 Pupils develop a strong sense of cultural awareness through literature, art, drama, dance and music together with a respect for different cultural and religious traditions. Events such as the Olympics and the World Cup provide the opportunity to study different countries. Sisters of Mercy, working abroad in countries such as Peru, come to talk to the pupils. Year 2 pupils have produced some fine displays of aboriginal art. In RE, Year 5 pupils visit a mosque and Judaism is also studied; a recent staff in-service training day included a visit to the Holocaust Memorial Centre. A day when all things French were celebrated and enjoyed was held during the inspection and began with a particularly impressive assembly almost entirely in French.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.25 Pupils benefit from enthusiastic and effective teaching. The overall strength of the teaching, from the EYFS onwards, and of assessment, enables the school to work successfully towards fulfilling its aims to maximise the potential of children and to be a centre of educational excellence. The good quality of the teaching is confirmed through scrutiny of pupils' work over time and from pupils' own comments. Pupils throughout the school spoke highly of their lessons and the teaching they were receiving. Not only have the relevant recommendations from the previous inspection been successfully addressed, there is also evidence of considerable improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The school has actively sought external accreditation and validation of their work gaining, amongst other awards, QCA Basic Skills, and Sheffield Early Years Accreditation. A committed staff and some excellent new appointments including specialist teachers, together with staff development programmes and improved resources, have had a significant impact on the quality of teaching throughout the school. Effective subject monitoring has also driven improvement.
- 2.26 In all lessons observed, teachers provided well for pupils of differing abilities, and for those receiving learning support. Expert support is provided by the school, at no extra cost to parents. Tasks within lessons are clearly planned to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, and classroom computers are successfully used to set tasks at an individual or group level, as in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on the perimeter of compound shapes. In the several outstanding lessons observed, teachers provided worthwhile additional challenge and extension work for the most able. During a Year 2 science lesson on plants and animals in their local environment, the most able pupils were asked to create a table using the information they had gathered. Year 3 clearly understood the importance of a fair test as they carried out their investigations. Within discrete ICT lessons, pupils' tasks were open-ended giving them the opportunity to become independent learners as they explored the challenge and selected the appropriate skills. In the small minority of lessons where the pace

of teaching was slower, the learning experience was more passive and pupils' achievement did not match their ability.

- 2.27 Lessons are often absorbing and interesting. Overall, teaching is confident and well-planned. Teachers make effective use of focused questions to encourage interest and develop their pupils' confidence. This equips pupils to tackle more difficult work; for example, in a Year 5 DT lesson they considered the different properties of the earth and moon and used the information appropriately in their design of a moon buggy. In the best lessons, the sense of pace, energy and challenge created by staff enables much to be achieved in a short period of time.
- 2.28 Teachers create positive relationships with their pupils and a constructive, warm and focused atmosphere in their classrooms. Effective use is made of role play; the teachers may surprise their pupils by appearing at the start of a lesson with a new persona such as Pirate Polly, Mrs Tudor or Chief Secret Agent. This generates enthusiasm and encourages pupils to think creatively and react logically whilst learning new skills and producing excellent cross-curricular links. Positive teaching engages pupils' attention and excellent relationships, combined with obvious care and interest in the individual, encourage them to behave well and become active learners. During a Year 2 science lesson on the local environment, pupils were encouraged to take responsibility for their own well-being as they were reminded to wash their hands and look out for slippery surfaces. Teachers' high expectations encourage good behaviour and their enthusiasm is infectious in many lessons.
- 2.29 Clear learning objectives with a range of suitable activities, and a lively, assured, well-planned and confident teaching style throughout the school enables all pupils to become focused and interested learners and thereby achieve the lesson's objectives. The lessons observed gave many examples of this. Well-structured investigations led to a sound understanding of the concepts being taught in science lessons, and thoughtful role play in a Year 6 PSHCE lesson led to much fun and laughter, in addition to serious consideration. Lessons are carefully designed for the pupils involved; they successfully reinforce previous learning and deploy well the plentiful resources which are available. Beneficial cross-curricular links are being established and, through an accelerated period of curriculum change, the use of ICT has become fully integrated and embedded in all areas of the curriculum and teaching.
- 2.30 Most teachers show a detailed knowledge and understanding of their subjects, enabling them to give a clear and coherent account of abstract ideas and to use subject-specific vocabulary well. Thorough teaching of core subjects, ICT and RE together with a generous time allocation, leads to a wide range of work of good standard in these subjects.
- 2.31 Teaching is supported by an excellent range of high quality resources which include electronic whiteboards in every classroom. Through successful whole-school initiatives, teachers are trained and encouraged to use them effectively. Efficient storage arrangements for resources make access straightforward for staff. ICT is integrated fully into lessons and used highly effectively as a teaching tool. Following the recent EYFS inspection, significant expenditure has been made on excellent outdoor resources for play and learning in Nursery and Reception.

- 2.32 The assessment and recording of each pupil's progress is outstanding across the school and gives teachers a thorough understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of their pupils. At all stages, marking is thorough and valuable feedback and guidance are given to enable each pupil to move forward. In the best practice, constructive comments are made with targets for improvement; the highest attainers, who may have answered all the set questions correctly, are given points to consider to enable them to improve further. Pupils throughout the school also commented on how discussion with their teacher helped them to know how to improve. The use of a 'traffic light' system for an individual's personal assessment and evaluation at the end of a lesson was most effective in a number of classes. Constructive pairing of pupils to discuss, evaluate and improve each other's work was also seen working very effectively in several lessons.
- 2.33 Extremely well-organised and detailed curriculum planning includes careful assessment and recording procedures from the EYFS profile through a range of standardised tests, including national tests in Years 2 and 6, optional national tests in Years 3 to 5 and summative tests in science and writing. The results of these are recorded and analysed to check overall progress. This information is used to inform planning or to provide a programme for individual pupils as necessary. The learning support staff are aware of issues which need to be given attention and of priorities for any future learning. A comprehensive whole-school assessment and reporting calendar is adhered to and results are used to track pupils and to check for short- and long-term progression and to arrange teaching groups. Excellent tracking, forecasting and target-setting procedures enables the school to measure the extent to which pupils are exceeding their target National Curriculum levels over time. Careful analysis of data is undertaken and used to inform planning, future school initiatives and staff development.
- 2.34 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 the school's pastoral care and of arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is outstanding. This reflects the school's vision to be a centre of excellence, preparing children within a supportive Christian community for life's opportunities. Pupils from the Nursery onwards are safely and extremely well looked after, in a happy, supportive and caring atmosphere. Parents are extremely happy with the help and guidance given to their children who are totally certain that their teachers care about their happiness. The school has maintained the high quality of care of its pupils since the last inspection; it has improved arrangements for lunch-time supervision and has prepared and followed a disability access plan, as recommended. It has also provided a comprehensive programme of training for staff in the safeguarding of pupils. An excellent whole-school initiative, which included pupils' contributions, has been a detailed response to the requirements of *Every Child Matters*.
- 3.2 Staff provide exceptionally strong support and guidance for all pupils. They are excellent role models. Pupils know to whom they can turn for help and guidance. They are not afraid to ask for help both in and outside class and know they will be listened to. Worry boxes encourage pupils to write down their concerns and share them with someone they trust. Pupils are asked to complete an annual questionnaire about different aspects of the school and the older pupils help the younger ones by scribing their answers for them. The results are then analysed and contribute to the whole school development plan. Pupils can also make suggestions through the school council; two representatives, one boy and one girl from each year group from Reception to Year 6 serve on the council for one year. Staff continually praise and encourage pupils, and this creates an extremely positive atmosphere around school.
- 3.3 The staff as a whole are greatly assisted by clear and effective pastoral arrangements. The main responsibility for pastoral care is with the form teacher who is extremely well supported by teaching assistants and senior members of staff. Supervision during breaks is well managed. The excellent relationships between staff, between pupils, and between staff and pupils contribute greatly to the caring and supportive ethos.
- 3.4 The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. They work and play exceptionally happily together. Positive behaviour and work are recognised and rewarded with house points, table points, stickers and certificates. Achievements are celebrated in assemblies. Golden rules are displayed in every classroom and pupils understand and refer to these. They were involved in their composition. Sanctions are clear, appropriate and carefully considered, particularly with reference to unkindness or bullying. However, bullying is not regarded as an issue by pupils who were in total agreement, in their replies to their questionnaires, that the school would solve any such problems.
- 3.5 The welfare, health and safety of pupils are catered for extremely effectively. Comprehensive and successful child protection measures are in place. The school has a regularly and correctly trained child protection team who are all members of senior management. Close links have been established with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All members of staff are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau and references are taken up correctly. All staff have undergone safeguarding training; this is repeated every three years, as is first aid and medical training. The school has ensured that all staff have appropriate training in first aid, and are qualified at appropriate levels; for example, EYFS

staff have received paediatric first-aid training. Pupils who are unwell are cared for, until they are collected by their parents, by office staff.

- 3.6 All necessary measures to reduce risk from fires and other hazards are in place and carefully monitored. A member of the maintenance staff has been trained as school fire training officer and the County Fire Service Officer makes an annual inspection and report. Risk assessments, which identify potential hazards and how they can be avoided, are carried out prior to trips, and also for areas in school, and for subjects when appropriate. The admission register is accurately kept, as are the daily attendance registers, and associated procedures for lateness and absence are completed carefully and correctly. Pupils are carefully supervised at play-times and lunch-times, and during pre- and after-school activities.
- 3.7 The health and safety committee meets monthly and is fully involved in the development and practice of comprehensive procedures, with careful reference to regulations, to heighten awareness and minimise health and safety risks to pupils and staff.
- 3.8 The school promotes healthy eating and living most successfully. Lunch menus are carefully planned and balanced and the food is freshly prepared and attractively presented. Pupils have a choice of nutritious hot and cold meals; the catering and dining room staff are friendly, helpful and encouraging. Mealtimes are pleasant, sociable occasions with an emphasis on good table manners. As they left the dining room, pupils were heard thanking their committed and enthusiastic chef who meets regularly with them to discuss menus.
- 3.9 Pupils understand the importance of regular exercise and take advantage of the many opportunities available to them through games lessons, clubs and activities. With the sports field and the excellently equipped new sports hall and swimming pool in the grounds, and with the benefit of specialist PE staff, pupils respond with enthusiasm during lessons and activities. They all have a short and pleasant walk to the dining hall at lunch-time, and ample space and equipment to enjoy outdoor play at break-times.
- 3.10 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

- 3.11 The school has outstanding links with parents and very well-established and worthwhile links with the wider community. A high proportion of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and they were extremely positive about the educational experience provided and their children's attainments. Since the last inspection the school has improved communication with parents through their website, email, parent-mail and family events.
- 3.12 Parents are highly pleased with all aspects of the education provided by the school. Responses to their pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching, the curriculum, the help and guidance given to their children, the high standards of behaviour achieved, the worthwhile attitudes and views of their children, the extra-curricular activities which their children enjoy and the encouragement given to parents to be involved in the life and work of the school.
- 3.13 A few parents indicated in response to their questionnaire that they were not satisfied with the information they received from the school, or with opportunities for discussion with staff, or with the way in which complaints were handled. The inspection team considered that the school's use of the website and of email was continually improving the flow of information, and the school is happy to ensure that information is also available in hard copy and on

- appropriate notice boards. It is also evident that staff are readily available for discussions with parents and willing to assist with concerns and complaints.
- 3.14 Parents are extremely supportive of the school and highly appreciative of the education and support and guidance given to their children. Families are made welcome in school and have many opportunities to become involved in activities. At the beginning and end of the school day, parents are able to call in to the classrooms as they leave or collect their offspring and their belongings. The staff and the headmaster are happy to talk to parents at these times, although more formal appointments for longer discussions may also be made. Relationships are happy and friendly. Parents attend form assemblies, accompany trips, help with transport to matches, and have helped to set up the walking bus scheme. The parents' association, Friends of Mylnhurst, organise events such as the summer ball which attract substantial numbers and are well supported. The before- and after-school care provision is also greatly valued by parents.
- 3.15 The school provides parents with much helpful information through the prospectus, a comprehensive handbook and other documentation, most of which is also on the school website and is therefore available to prospective parents. Also available are regular newsletters and an annual colourful magazine "Reflections" which gives a photographic journey for each form group through the year. The website now includes a virtual classroom. Parents are invited to complete an annual questionnaire which assists the school in its development planning.
- 3.16 Parents are kept well-informed about their children's progress through annual reports, parents' evenings twice yearly in Years 1 and 2 and three times a year in Years 3 to 6, and informal or formal discussions, as and when required. The excellence of the tracking and target-setting system enables staff to give parents an up-to-date picture of their child's progress. Any parental concerns are handled as quickly and efficiently as possible. The complaints procedure is correctly in place and is properly followed in practice. No complaints have gone through the formal process to the panel stage this year.
- 3.17 The school has established highly effective and much appreciated links with the wider community. The new sports hall and swimming pool is available for outside clubs and associations to use out of school hours. The school takes part in many local musical events such as "Music for Youth". The choir sings in the local supermarket and other local venues to raise money for charity.
- 3.18 Local primary schools are invited to events such as a recent successful Health and Wellbeing week, when the local authority sports partnership team provided rowing machines for a competition in the new sports hall. Swimming, netball, football, rugby and cross-country competitions and events are also arranged for local primary schools. The school won a Silver Artsmark award for their initiative in funding and facilitating a dance and drama workshop for local primary schools. A more recent initiative in ICT has been a Year 3 secret agent scenario which involved working with pupils in another local school through email to solve a mystery linked to the history of Mylnhurst.
- 3.19 The school generously supports local charities and, in Lent, pupils raise money for the diocesan Good Shepherd appeal. Pupils, sometimes completely on their own initiative, enthusiastically raise donations for national and overseas charities.
- 3.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The school benefits from highly supportive and effective governance. The governors, or directors as they are known, are fully committed to the aims and mission statement of the school which were agreed in consultation with staff, parents and pupils about five years ago. Since the previous inspection, significant growth and development have taken place and the school has successfully risen to the challenge to become a centre of excellence. The directors have made an important contribution to its success and the fulfilment of its aims.
- 4.2 Members of the governing body are small in number and are carefully selected from appropriate business and professional backgrounds such as law, education, finance, construction and marketing. They are experienced and qualified in their respective fields which include welfare, health and safety. They take expert advice whenever necessary to ensure that statutory and legal commitments are met. Effective arrangements are made for the appointment of new directors and they receive appropriate induction together with relevant and regular training. Members of the board, most of whom are past or present parents, accept the very high level of commitment involved in their appointment. Through their close association with the school and their carefully formulated structure and management arrangements, the directors have a thorough and effective overview of the school and its needs.
- 4.3 The directors are involved in both educational development and financial planning. They are fully aware of their responsibility to ensure effective educational provision and the need to invest in both human and material resources. This has enabled the appointment and retention of staff of a high calibre, and the provision of a learning environment of equally high quality. In the recent completion of a splendid new sports hall and swimming pool, the directors have made a serious financial commitment, but one which is already proving its worth. This was the culmination of a five-year plan to provide excellent teaching and learning facilities.
- 4.4 The directors, through their monthly meetings have effective insight into the working of the school; they are kept well informed by the headmaster and by committees on which staff also serve. They take extremely seriously their duties to monitor standards of education and the implementation and effectiveness of policies, such as anti-bullying, child protection and complaints. Through their wise and far-sighted financial management, and commitment to the continued educational development of the school in whose renaissance they have been closely connected, the directors have ensured first-class facilities for teaching and learning, good staffing levels and generous resources, all of which support their desire to provide the highest quality of education.
- 4.5 The headmaster, senior management and staff consider that they are well supported by the board of directors and that they all work efficiently together for the benefit of the pupils. The directors' responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are given high priority and are especially effectively discharged; these aspects are on the agenda of every meeting.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The overall leadership and management of the school are of the highest quality. The school is led with vision, determination and faith, and total commitment to the successful fulfilment of its aims and mission. The school has developed most successfully since the previous inspection. In its unceasing quest for excellence and emphasis on targets at all levels, the school is fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses and, now that the new sports hall is complete, its plans for the future include the further enhancement of the accommodation for its youngest pupils. The school is being exceptionally effectively led by the drive towards and expectation of the highest possible standards shown by the headmaster and those in management positions. In this pursuit, they enjoy the total support of all staff, teaching and non-teaching. The evident pride in and loyalty towards the school shown by staff, parents and pupils are almost tangible.
- 4.7 The headmaster is assisted by a senior management team which consists of the head of the EYFS who is also the special educational needs coordinator, the curriculum co-ordinator who is also the Key Stage 1 coordinator, and the Key Stage 2 coordinator. The close co-operation between them makes a most significant contribution to the direction and quality of the education and care of the pupils. All sections of the school share the same determination to provide a happy, supportive and caring atmosphere in an ethos of total commitment to high standards and expectations.
- 4.8 The members of the senior management team are astute and perceptive in their analysis of the needs of the school as a whole. They are assisted in this process by valuable input from staff, parents and pupils whose views are gathered through school questionnaires. Since the formation of the current management team, much updating of policies and procedures has taken place, and also refurbishing, redecorating and reorganising accommodation. The senior management team has made excellent progress in planning, prioritising and in the implementation of decisions, particularly with reference to the new sports hall. Most recently, attractive covered play areas with safe access and appropriate play equipment have been provided for the Nursery and Reception classrooms.
- 4.9 Thorough child protection and safe recruitment policies and procedures are firmly established. Selection procedures for new staff, volunteers and governors are effective and successful. The strengths of staff at all levels, teaching and non-teaching, are recognised and encouraged. Systems for performance management, including that of the headmaster, are all correctly and effectively established, and include an exemplary programme for the provision of continual professional development, to benefit both the school and individuals. The school does not participate in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers; these arrangements are made through the local authority and are appropriate, well considered and of good quality. Arrangements for the induction of new members of staff are comprehensive and efficient.
- 4.10 The overall management structure and processes for monitoring, evaluation and improvement are extremely well organised, efficient and effective. Middle management is exceptionally successful, enthusiastic and committed and outstandingly effective planning and practice was seen in many subject areas. The role of subject coordinators is clearly defined and their responsibilities are undertaken with energy and determination. In all areas of the school, staff work with outstanding loyalty and commitment because they feel their contribution is greatly valued.

- 4.11 Administrative staff are capable and efficient and suitably experienced for their specific roles. Excellent use is made of ICT in every aspect of the administration and management of the school, including teaching and learning. Overall, finances, premises, and health and safety affairs are efficiently managed to provide plentiful resources and an educational environment of the highest quality for pupils and staff. Catering, maintenance, grounds and housekeeping staff all make an important and much appreciated contribution to the family atmosphere of this caring and friendly school. A warm welcome and kindly help is offered to parents, pupils and visitors by office and teaching and non-teaching staff.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.13 The school does not participate in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school meets its aims and aspirations entirely successfully and has kept true to the faith and vision of its original founders, the Sisters of Mercy, and of the trustees of the educational charity formed in 1996 as the school passed to lay management. The special ethos in the school reflects its determination to provide, at every stage, a happy, warm and friendly environment combined with the achievement of the highest possible academic standards for each child. The rich educational experience, the quality of the teaching and of pupils' learning and achievement are all strengths. Pupils from the Nursery onwards are receiving an education which goes well beyond the academic. Their love of learning will enrich their lives in the future as will their love of sport and music. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent, as is the quality of pastoral care and the attention given to their welfare, health and safety. The positive, caring relationships, and the importance placed on family values and the happiness of each pupil are significant strengths, as are the excellent links with parents and the community. The quality both of governance and of leadership and management is outstanding. The school is aware of areas for continued attention such as considering the balance and position of subjects within the timetable, particularly history and geography, and extending the range of extra-curricular activities.
- 5.2 The school has improved since the previous inspection in many important ways. The curriculum has been substantially developed as have resources and facilities for ICT and sport, in particular. The appointment of specialist teachers in sport and dance, drama and music has enriched the physical education and creative areas of the curriculum. Tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress have improved, as have arrangements for learning support and the encouragement of gifted and talented pupils, and increased emphasis has been placed on continued professional development. The careful attention given to *Every Child Matters* and to living healthily benefits the pupils greatly. Communication with parents and their involvement in the school has developed substantially, as have links with the local community. Since the most recent EYFS inspection, plans in the school improvement document to increase provision for outdoor play and activities in Nursery and Reception have been brought forward and successfully accomplished; a key person chart has been displayed, and training on the moderation and use of the EYFS profile is ongoing.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no serious weaknesses. In order to enhance further the good quality of education which it presently provides, the school should take the following steps.
1. Review and adjust time allocation in the school day in order to improve:
 - the balance and position of subjects within the timetable;
 - the timetabled provision for history and geography.
 2. Extend the range of its extra-curricular activities.
- 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 8th to 11th June 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 29th and 30th April 2009 by two inspectors. The inspectors observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff and governors. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Danice Iles	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Angela Culley	Headmistress, ISA school
Mrs Caroline Jordin	Head of Pre-prep and Nursery, HMC school
Mr Henry Riches	Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Early Years Lead Inspector

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

- 7.1 The EYFS at Mylnhurst is housed in a secure and spacious fenced area of the school. Children also have access to all the main school facilities and regularly use outside wooded areas, the dining room, the sports hall and dance studio. Reception children also regularly use the computer room and the swimming pool. Children are admitted to the Nursery after their third birthday on a first come, first served basis. Initially part time, they are encouraged to increase attendance in preparation for moving into Reception, which is full time. Children come from a variety of backgrounds both locally and further afield. Of the 59 children on roll, (30 boys and 29 girls), 47 are part time and in the Nursery (24 boys and 23 girls), and twelve are in Reception (six boys and six girls). None is at an early stage of learning English and none has been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The EYFS was last inspected by Ofsted in 1999 and as part of the last ISI inspection in 2003.
- 7.2 The EYFS aims are the same as those for the main school and these are amply fulfilled. Children make good progress with their learning and development. This is because they are supported in a warm environment where the school's Roman Catholic Christian ethos is central to its work. The setting recognises the uniqueness of individuals and meets their needs successfully in most areas of learning. Appropriate provision is made for their welfare. Good partnerships with parents and a developing partnership with the local authority and other agencies underpin the planning. The EYFS setting has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and has taken effective action on the recommendation of the last inspection to increase the involvement of parents in its work.
- 7.3 Most children start at Mylnhurst with skills and abilities that are above expectations for their age. They make good progress overall and achieve well with their learning in relation to these starting points. Their skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy are very well developed and provide a good foundation for work in Year 1 and onwards. Nursery children take an active part in their learning, choosing their activities and following their own interests with enthusiasm. For instance, the sand tray was soon put to imaginative use in making a 'wedding cake' during the inspection. Children enjoy being creative and work well together in groups and role play situations. Reception children receive a more structured experience. They make good progress in numeracy because tasks are particularly well matched to their individual learning needs. Tasks are often brought to life by the exciting use of resources. For instance, they donned life jackets and went aboard a life-size kayak to broaden their understanding of a story. Children enjoy the challenges that are presented to them, but have limited time to develop their imagination and learning through activities they choose themselves. The majority achieve well and are fully on course to reach the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) by the expected age of five and in some cases, before.
- 7.4 Children develop good personal skills. Children are receiving an education which goes well beyond the academic. They are well behaved because they know what is expected and work considerately together. They show a good understanding of applying safety rules when using equipment, realising that it is important to stay safe. The vegetable garden provides a lively stimulus for learning about healthy eating. The green tips of potato shoots just emerging caused great excitement in the Nursery. Children know all about the need to wash their hands before eating. They show respect for each other and are friendly, kind and courteous. Kindness towards each other is continually emphasised and encouraged. Good progress is made in developing personal qualities that enable them to take responsibility for small tasks and take turns. In the Nursery, they begin to develop the habits of competent, inquisitive learners. Their knowledge and understanding of the world are good. During the inspection they showed good levels of skills useful for their futures. For instance, Nursery children

enjoyed asking questions and learning about Hungarian culture, and Reception children demonstrated good levels of competence in using the interactive whiteboard without adult intervention.

- 7.5 Adults support learning well, by providing a well organised and stimulating indoor environment that encourages positive attitudes to learning. Children explore the immediate area on interesting nature walks in the grounds and use the extensive main school facilities to enhance their experiences and build their confidence. The school is aware of a lack of outdoor play opportunities, particularly over recent months during building works. Significant improvements are being made in this area now that the construction of the sports hall is complete. Canopies have been attached to the EYFS building to give increased access to outdoor play areas for the Nursery and Reception classes and the construction of an outdoor classroom is at an advanced stage of planning. Progress is carefully tracked and recorded in individual files. Detailed assessments and observations are used to provide challenging experiences with activities adjusted to match individual needs. When this happens, exciting adult-led activities are introduced which are excellent. The effective relationship between staff, parents and carers, together with the results of the parental questionnaires, show that they are very supportive of the EYFS.
- 7.6 The promotion of children's welfare is satisfactory overall with many good features. Reminders help children understand how to keep safe and healthy, for instance by wearing sun hats outside. Daily checks are made on equipment to ensure it is clean and safe with no sharp edges. However, the role of the key person, which is well developed in the Nursery, has not yet been fully embedded in Reception. Staff implement satisfactory strategies to promote children's health and wellbeing but their understanding of the new framework is not yet embedded. Relevant training in this area is underway.
- 7.7 Leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory and staff work together to meet children's needs. Checks on suitability to work with children have been completed for all staff. Use of the rich resources in terms of the school grounds and facilities, including the new adjoining sports hall, swimming pool and dance studio, considerably enhance the quality of education provided for EYFS children. Suitable risk assessments are carried out to ensure that welfare and safety regulations are met. Managers undertake appropriate monitoring of quality. Self-review is developing and has led to updated policies and procedures, and the identification of some accurate targets for improvement. Progress towards implementing the new EYFS Statutory Framework has been sound. Summary assessment of children's attainment in the EYFS is not yet used fully to evaluate standards or influence planning. Excellent relationships are evident among children and staff and these assist staff to provide for each child regardless of background. Improved links with parents, carers and increasing involvement with outside agencies, to utilise expertise, promotes children's care and education. The EYFS runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis for the benefit of the children who show clear enjoyment of all that is on offer.

What the Setting Should Do to Improve

- 7.8 To improve further the good quality of its provision the setting should take the following steps.
1. Improve understanding of the full requirements of the new framework for the EYFS, and as a result:
 - continue to increase the proportion of child-initiated activities and the range of activities available outside;
 - embed the key person role in Reception;
 - further develop the use of information from the EYFS profile to inform curricular review and planning.
- 7.9 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.