



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**RAVENSCOURT PARK PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

**FINAL VISIT**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Ravenscourt Park Preparatory School

Full Name of School	<b>Ravenscourt Park Preparatory School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>205/6384</b>
Address	<b>Ravenscourt Park Preparatory School 16 Ravenscourt Avenue Ravenscourt Park London W6 0SL</b>
Telephone Number	<b>020 8846 9153</b>
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Email Address	<b>r.relton@rpps.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Robert Relton</b>
Proprietor	<b>London Preparatory Schools Ltd: Maria Gardener, Ted Gardener and Theo Brehony</b>
Age Range	<b>4 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>255</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>5-11: 219</b> <b>3-5 (EYFS): 36</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>255</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Date	<b>22 Feb 2010 to 23 Feb 2010</b>
EYFS Inspection Date	<b>01 Mar 2010 to 02 Mar 2010</b>
Final (team) Visit	<b>22 Mar 2010 to 24 Mar 2010</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. It consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage 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. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Ravenscourt Park Preparatory School is a non-selective preparatory day school for boys and girls aged from four years to eleven. It is situated in West London on the border between Hammersmith and Chiswick. The school opened in 1991. It is owned and overseen by London Preparatory Schools Ltd. The Board (which is comprised of three members and a secretary) meets termly and has sole responsibility for the governance and management of the school. The school also has an advisory board of governors which meets termly. The founding Head moved to set up a new school (also part of London Preparatory Schools (LPS) Ltd). Her successor became Headmaster in 2004. The founding Head has maintained her links with the school as Principal and is a member of the governing body.
- 1.2 The school's mission is to offer children the opportunity to succeed, to be recognised and to be valued. It aims to develop the intellectual, emotional and ethical requirements to tackle the challenges that life will present. They aim to instil tolerance, respect for others and the capacity to celebrate diversity and to embrace change. They seek to nurture, guide, motivate and inspire and to be a school of smiles and laughter where there is much fun to be had.
- 1.3 The school is attended by 255 pupils. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) caters for 36 pupils. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. Pupils do not take national tests. Sixty-two identified by the school receive support for learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD). One pupil has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). The school draws pupils from a range of professional, business and media backgrounds. Almost all pupils leave to join London day schools, generally in the West London area.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The school fulfils its mission to offer children the opportunity to succeed, to be recognised and to be valued. It achieves its aim to develop the intellectual, emotional and ethical requirements to tackle the challenges that life will present. In keeping with its objectives, the school enables pupils to develop intellectually; the pupils achieve well and in some areas outstandingly. Throughout the school, they make rapid progress and achieve high standards for their abilities. The quality of teaching is good with pockets of outstanding practice. Assessment has some strong features and is developing the use of data.
- 2.2 Pupils demonstrate high levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school thus achieves its objective to instil tolerance, respect for others and the capacity to celebrate diversity and to embrace change. Pastoral care is outstanding and pupils' welfare, health and safety are assured; they nurture, guide, motivate and inspire, and it is a school of smiles and laughter where there is much fun to be had.
- 2.3 The school benefits from high quality governance and excellent leadership, but there is some inconsistency of practice between departments that overall monitoring does not explicitly identify. The school complied with all but one of the regulatory requirements on the initial visit; shortcomings were rectified before the main visit. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection; links with the community have been strengthened, and the roles of governors and proprietors have been clarified. The school has provided increased space for science and art, and additional investment in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been made. Pupils use ICT to better effect in their work.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended, and therefore it was required to:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999; [Regulation 5.(I), under premises and accommodation].

2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified the above shortcoming.

2.6 The school's provision for childcare met the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage [and the Childcare Act 2006] and no action was required.

### **(ii) Recommended action**

2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Bring teachers' practice more into line with the outstanding work evident in the school by strengthening overall monitoring.
2. Develop and resource the EYFS outdoor provision to improve children's learning opportunities across all areas of the curriculum.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills**

- 3.1 In keeping with its objectives the school enables pupils to develop intellectually; the pupils achieve well and in some areas outstandingly. Throughout the school they make rapid progress and achieve high standards for their abilities. Pupils are highly articulate and enjoy talking. They speak confidently in public and read aloud with intonation and expression. They read well from an early age. They enjoy using the school library and use it well for research. Pupils write well for a range of purposes. Imaginative writing is a particular strength, with pupils using ambitious vocabulary and inventive narratives. Grammar and spelling are good and in the senior classes handwriting is good. Lower in the school, presentation is sometimes affected by the overuse of printed worksheets. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers and each other and assimilate information well aurally. Pupils use their skills with number appropriately, for example, in science and geography. They use ICT confidently in ICT lessons and when opportunities are presented in other subjects. They perform well in sports against similar schools and achieve particular success in football, rugby, rounders and netball. A high proportion of pupils are learning to play musical instruments; they achieve well in graded musical instrument examinations. Pupils are successful in speech and drama examinations and are awarded merits and many achieve distinctions. They are successful in a debating challenge competition; several pupils have had poems published and one won a short story writing competition. They enjoy success in chess competitions, judo, ballet and art.
- 3.2 Throughout the school pupils make good progress. They are successful in eleven plus examinations, and many pupils progress to selective senior schools; many are awarded scholarships. Pupils with LDD make good progress and steadily overcome their difficulties. More able pupils progress well and achieve high standards.
- 3.3 Pupils are good learners. They enjoy learning and working together, they are co-operative and well behaved. They organise themselves well and adopt a methodical approach to their work. They settle quickly and maintain their concentration well. They persevere even when the work is difficult. Pupils show independence and initiative when asked, for example in topic work or individual study.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)**

- 3.4 The school provides a high quality education that is commensurate with its aims to develop pupils' intellectual skills and ensure they enjoy learning. The curriculum is well suited to the pupils. Sufficient emphasis is placed on the core skills of literacy and numeracy. Scientific knowledge and understanding are adequately supported. Technological understanding is developed through ICT; design and technology is provided during subject focus weeks but provision for practical development is mainly through art, which has a mainly two-dimensional focus. The humanities receive a strong emphasis. Linguistic development is provided through French with some Latin in Year 6. Physical development is supported through games and PE with the school using off-site facilities for some games activities. Personal and social education includes citizenship which provides pupils with insight into public institutions and the law. Verbal reasoning is taught from Year 4, which prepares pupils well for eleven plus examinations. Curriculum planning is thorough and consistent. Setting arrangements work well and lessons are appropriately scheduled. Increasing specialist subject teaching provided from Year 3 works well and ensures that pupils receive the benefit of specialists' expertise. Enhancements to the curriculum through visits and visitors are a particularly strong feature. During the inspection, Year 5 staged an Elizabethan day in period costume for the day; this provided an opportunity to learn about Tudor life in some detail. After eleven plus examinations Year 6 pupils study aspects of the city in several subjects, this is a stimulating programme which includes several interesting educational visits. Focus weeks such as arts week or book week are beneficial. Learning Support is strong. Regular assessments are undertaken for all pupils to determine their needs. The requirements of statements of special educational needs are met. For those with LDD, the school determines the appropriate course of action in consultation with outside professional bodies when appropriate, and with parents. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) guide provision well and careful records are maintained. Throughout the school, children whose attainment consistently surpasses that for their year group are identified and provided with appropriate extension work; this is effectively coordinated.
- 3.5 Extra-curricular provision is strong with a good range of sport, music, drama and other interests catered for. Intellectual pursuits are well provided for, for instance by the Pythagoras mathematics group and the Bloomsbury English group. All pupils are encouraged to take part in the programme of activities. A well attended chess club takes place before school, the choir is popular and art is well organised. Links with the community have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Extensive use is made of local facilities such as museums, art galleries, theatres, historical places and sites of scientific interest. Residential trips are highly beneficial providing pupils with additional skills, such as team work or organisational capabilities. Charitable fund raising activities are widespread. Visitors to the school considerably enrich the curriculum and are much appreciated by the pupils.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.6 At all stages, teaching is good with pockets of outstanding practice. In keeping with the school's aims, it enables pupils to succeed and to develop their intellectual capabilities. It facilitates progress, fosters application and uses resources well. Lesson planning is strong, and as a matter of policy all lessons commence with explicit definition to the pupils of We Are Learning To (WALT) and What I (the teacher) am Looking For (WILF). This makes learning objectives clear to pupils.
- 3.7 Relationships between teachers and pupils are good with a positive rapport evident. Teachers know the individual learning needs of their pupils, and plan and provide work at suitable levels. Appropriate support is provided for the less able and adequate challenge is provided for the more able. Varied and interesting lessons maintain pupils' engagement. Teachers' knowledge and familiarity with the subject matter gives pupils confidence in the teaching. High expectations are evident and this results in pupils making progress in their skills, knowledge or understanding. Learning resources are generally used well but an overdependence on the use of printed worksheets is evident in some of the younger pupils' workbooks. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards, which are now located in all classrooms, and invite pupils to use them as appropriate.
- 3.8 Teachers provide good oral feedback which pupils find helpful. A simple traffic light system is in use in some classes, whereby pupils can indicate to teachers whether they have fully understood or require assistance. Teachers' marking varies in quality; the best is encouraging, poses questions and provides targets and requires pupils to complete corrections, but some of the younger pupils find it difficult to read teachers' handwriting. Regular tests are applied; the results help to identify pupils who are underachieving and additional support is provided. Target setting has been introduced and is proving to be beneficial. The school uses standardised data and school data to track pupils' progress.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 Throughout the school pupils demonstrate high levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school achieves its mission to develop the emotional and ethical requirements to tackle the challenges that life will present. The pupils are tolerant and show respect for others and demonstrate the capacity to celebrate diversity.
- 4.2 Pupils are aware of the non-material aspects of life. They have a well developed understanding of world faiths. Merits, honours and commendations contribute much to their self esteem and confidence. Assemblies led by pupils are of outstandingly high quality; several were observed during the inspection. Year 4 presented an ambitious play about the Passover to parents and pupils. They knew their lines perfectly, and spoke clearly and with confidence.
- 4.3 Pupils exhibit a keen moral awareness; environmental issues are important to them, and the green group is actively engaged in conservation and associated ethical issues. They abide by the school code of conduct and some classes have written their own class codes of conduct. They show considerable empathy for others, particularly the underprivileged; they raise substantial funds for charities, and at Harvest Festival donate produce to less fortunate people in the local community.
- 4.4 Social development is strong with pupils showing a strong sense of community; they uphold school values and undertake posts of responsibility, such as prefects or monitors, reliably and efficiently. Nominated pupils represent their peers well on the school council and food committee. Older pupils act as reading buddies for younger ones. Playground monitors perform a useful function and the friendship bench ensures pupils have someone with whom to play.
- 4.5 Cultural development is strong; many pupils are involved in the arts, play musical instruments and participate in the choir. Art and drama are strong with high standards achieved in public performances. Pupils are aware of world cultures, and school visits give them direct experience of these. They demonstrate understanding of other cultures in contemporary society in school focus weeks, such as 'black history week', or 'beyond our gates' which focuses on diversity in society. Themed school meals enable pupils to sample the cuisine of other countries and learn about other cultures. During the inspection, one school lunch was a Passover meal with printed information provided for the pupils explaining the religious significance of each part of the meal.

**4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.6 Pastoral care is outstanding and pupils' welfare, health and safety are assured. In keeping with its aims, the school offers children the opportunity to succeed, to be recognised and to be valued. The school instils tolerance and respect for others. The school has rectified the shortcomings identified at the time of the initial visit, in the provision for pupils who are ill.
- 4.7 Teachers know the pupils well, relationships are positive and mutual respect is widely evident. Class teachers are the initial point of contact. Pupils say they trust the teachers and are willing to discuss their concerns with them. The pupils say they feel cared for and that the teachers are supportive. Arrangements to ensure good behaviour are straightforward and effective. A clear code of conduct and, in some classes, behaviour contracts prepared by the pupils are known and adhered to. The main emphasis is on rewards, with pupils keen to receive merits or commendations for their efforts or contributions to the school community. Sanctions are carefully graduated and appropriate discussion helps pupils recognise the errors of their ways. Anti-bullying arrangements are effective; pupils do not perceive bullying to be a problem and are confident that should any occur it will be quickly and efficiently dealt with. Pupils show care for each other and are keen to help one another wherever possible.
- 4.8 Pupils' welfare is well supported by a thorough safeguarding policy and procedures. No fire or health or safety hazards were apparent during the inspection and the school takes necessary steps to prevent risks. The school has a suitable policy and plan to improve access for pupils with disabilities. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily; school meals are of an exceptionally high quality and fruit is available at breaks as a snack. Sport and PE provide well for physical exercise. Attendance and admissions registers are suitably maintained.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The school benefits from high quality governance that ensures that the school achieves its objectives. The role of governance in monitoring compliance with the Independent School Standards Regulations is now clearer than at the time of the previous inspection. The board of directors oversees the educational and business aspects of the school and ensures compliance. The advisory board of governors also oversees the educational work of the school, which it does effectively. The advisory governing body consists of former parents, current parents and several people with relevant and helpful expertise. Governors' induction arrangements are informal but effective. Governors and proprietors have attended safeguarding training and ensured that the policy is of a suitable standard.
- 5.2 Communication between the board and the board of governors and the school is good. Sufficient businesslike meetings take place to ensure debate, consultation and decisions are made promptly. Minutes indicate well-informed debate and show that robust decisions are made. The advisory governing body receives a headmaster's report, which provides useful information. Teachers give presentations on aspects of their work. Sufficient, suitable human and material resources are provided.
- 5.3 Relationships between proprietors, governors and school are positive with challenge, as well as support provided. They work together well in the interests of the pupils. Strategic planning is robust; it has enabled substantial investments to be made in ICT since the previous inspection and has ensured that the school has been able to address some of the concerns about accommodation. The governors and proprietors are aware of parents' views through parent representatives on the advisory governing body. Pupils' views from the pupils' council are taken into account. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities for safeguarding and health and safety effectively. One of the proprietors sits on the health and safety committee which enables concerns to be resolved quickly.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 Excellent leadership and management ensure that the whole school achieves its objectives to offer children the opportunity to succeed and to be recognised and valued. An open approach enables staff to participate in decision making and as a result morale is high and a positive ethos is evident. A clear sense of direction is apparent; the school development planning process involves a thorough annual review of progress and the drafting of clear objectives for the future. This process has contributed strongly to continuous school improvement. Departmental development plans reflect whole-school and subject priorities well; they are effective in implementing improvement. Planning has ensured appropriate, high quality resources are provided. Each member of the senior management team is responsible for a section or key aspect of the school. They work together well as a team and lead well on their areas of responsibility. Policies are concise and associated procedures guide practice well. They are regularly reviewed.

- 5.5 Induction arrangements for new staff to the school are thorough and effective. Central to the empowering approach of leadership and management is the approach to continuing professional development. In the context of staff appraisal, staff nominate a coach and identify objectives and aspects of their work they wish to improve. Subsequent review and discussion are supportive, and staff choose appropriate in-service training. Whole-school training days have focused on safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety. Sufficient suitably qualified staff have been recruited using rigorous recruitment procedures; the backgrounds of all adults working with pupils have been properly checked.
- 5.6 Teachers' planning and pupils' work is monitored by heads of department. There is some inconsistency of practice between departments that overall monitoring does not explicitly identify.

### **5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.7 Links with parents are strong and this partnership enables the school to achieve its objectives: to offer children the opportunity to succeed, to be recognised and to be valued and to develop the intellectual, emotional and ethical requirements to tackle the challenges that life will present. The responses to the inspection questionnaire were positive. Parents are particularly pleased with the attitudes and values promoted by the school and the communication with the school. Inspection findings concur; pupils do exhibit positive attitudes and values and the school works hard to make communication as good as possible. No significant concerns were raised.
- 5.8 School publications are of a high quality and include useful information. The school website is informative and useful; increasingly, the school is making use of electronic mail and text messaging to keep in touch with parents. These work well and are widely used by parents. Reports are informative; most describe what has been done and describe pupils' performance, those that provide targets are particularly useful. There are sufficient parents' evenings and the school has an 'open door' policy if parents have concerns. The active parents' association raises considerable additional funds for the school through social and fundraising activities. Class representatives for each class keep parent governors informed of parents' interests. The school deals with parents' concerns sensitively. There have been no complaints using the formal procedure, and all concerns are logged and dealt with. School-initiated parent and pupil questionnaires are used to gauge opinion. A homework diary provides a useful channel of communication. The half-termly school magazine is informative and useful to parents.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## **6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **6.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS setting is good, with outstanding features. This is reflected in the children's enjoyment and achievement, and the exemplary care provided. The needs of every child are well met and they receive a strong start in their early education. Children develop excellent relationships with adults, which, together with the strong family ethos, make a considerable contribution to promoting community cohesion within the setting and beyond. Parents agree that the setting meets their children's needs and that their children thoroughly enjoy school. Since the previous inspection, the school has sustained and built further on the good quality of education it provides and has exhibited a strong capacity for further improvement.

### **6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.2 Leadership and management are strong. They provide clear direction and are committed to enhancing provision for the EYFS. The school is highly reflective about its practice, constantly striving for improvement but always ensuring that change is in the best interests of the children. Key persons work conscientiously to support every child. Staff work together effectively to ensure equality of access and opportunity for the children. They are supported in this by the consistent implementation of policies and procedures and by working in close partnership with parents, carers and others. Rigorous attention is given to safeguarding procedures. Resources are used effectively to ensure a stimulating learning environment and that children are given appropriate support.

### **6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.3 High quality provision contributes well to children's progress. All areas of learning are skilfully incorporated into appealing topics. Specialist subject teaching in areas such as art, music, French and physical education further enrich children's experiences. Children's curiosity and interest are stimulated by activities which encourage investigation and exploration. However, staff acknowledge that these opportunities are more limited in the outdoor provision. Thorough assessments of children's learning are used effectively to plan the next stage and individual 'profiles' provide a clear idea of how well they are doing. Children's welfare is strongly promoted, so that their individual needs are properly met.

### **6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are consistently good and often excellent. Children make significant gains in their learning with many achieving or exceeding above the expected goals by the time they leave Reception. Children show a love of learning because staff are highly effective at creating a caring but stimulating environment where children are expected to do their best. Adults are especially practised at extending thinking through well-timed intervention and skilful questions. Early reading, writing, mathematical and technology skills are promoted particularly well and successfully integrated into a range of activities. Children learn to celebrate the values and traditions of others. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding because they are so well looked after. They are mindful of what they have learned about keeping themselves and others safe, and understand the need to lead healthy lifestyles. In this happy and supportive setting, children are outgoing, form excellent relationships, learn to think for themselves and take care of their own possessions. The skills children gain prepare them well for their future lives.

**What the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietors; 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 regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr John King

Mrs Judith Gregory

Mr Dougal Philps

Mrs Gail Purt

Reporting Inspector

Junior Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS)

Junior Team Inspector (Head, IAPS)

Early Years Lead Inspector