

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Laleham Lea School

Full Name of the School	Laleham Lea School
DCSF Number	306/6008
Registered Charity Number	1118598
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Age Range	3 to 11
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	5th to 8th November 2007

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 and May 2007.

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 Laleham Lea School is a Catholic independent primary school for boys and girls aged 3 to 11. It has been in existence for over 100 years and now operates as an independent charitable trust. From 1963 to 1977, it served as the preparatory school for a nearby senior school, with whom the school still maintains close links, using its chapel, fields and halls. It became a mixed school in 1994, and the Nursery class was introduced in 1995. Whilst the majority of pupils are Catholic, the school welcomes pupils of other faiths who are sympathetic to its ethos. The current headteacher has been in post for one year. This is the first inspection of the school to be undertaken by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.
- 1.2 The school is situated within a residential area in Purley, Surrey. The traditional building, which houses classrooms, an assembly room, a dining room, a library and school offices, has been extended and improved over the years. Over recent years, building work has been completed which incorporates a computer suite, a new staff room, new toilet facilities and an extra classroom. In the half-term before the inspection, further building work commenced to extend the Nursery classroom internally and give further toilet facilities, whilst also providing a covered outside play area to which access is also planned for the Reception class.
- 1.3 The number of pupils on roll has increased over recent years. The school now has a total of 139 pupils, of whom 30 are in the Foundation Stage, including 13 pupils who attend part-time. In Years 1 and 2 there are 31 pupils, and 78 are in Years 3 to 6. Approximately two-thirds of pupils are boys. The results of Foundation Stage Profiles and standardised tests across the school indicate that pupils' average ability is above that of the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results will be above the average for all maintained primary schools.
- 1.4 The majority of pupils come from professional and business backgrounds, and most live within a six-mile radius of the school. Approximately three out of ten pupils come from ethnic minorities, and two pupils come from families where English is not the principal language; neither of these is at an early stage of learning English. Thirteen pupils have been identified as needing learning support, with the most usual difficulties being dyslexia and the development of literacy skills. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.5 Having completed their education at Laleham Lea, about two-thirds of pupils leave at the end of Year 6 to transfer to local Catholic maintained schools. The remainder either gain places at selective grammar schools or continue their education within local independent schools.
- 1.6 The school aims to create an environment: which is loving and welcoming, where Christian values are central to the life of the school, and in which pupils may grow intellectually, socially and emotionally; in which pupils' talents are recognised and fostered and their weaknesses treated with compassion; which provides quality teaching and learning within a balanced curriculum framework and which helps every pupil to reach their true potential; and in which, together with parents who are the first educators, pupils are led towards tolerance, understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others, so that they may grow up as well-balanced individuals with a strong sense of personal identity and an awareness of God's love.

- 1.7 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 table.

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception
Lower Transition	Year 1
Upper Transition	Year 2
Pre-prep	Year 3
Lower	Year 4
Middle	Year 5
Upper	Year 6

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The quality of the educational experience provided is satisfactory. Laleham Lea provides a broad education which is in line with its aims. In particular, the school provides an environment which is welcoming and caring, where Christian values are central to the life of the school and in which pupils may grow intellectually, socially and emotionally. The school has created an environment in which pupils' strengths and weaknesses are recognised and all children encouraged to reach their potential. Although the curriculum is broad, it is slightly imbalanced because of the current structure of the timetable, where lessons are unevenly distributed across the day. Over recent years, the school has maintained the quality of educational experience provided to its pupils and improved access to a design and technology (DT) programme of study.
- 2.2 All subjects taught are suited to the needs, interests and aptitudes of the pupils. They receive an outstanding start to their educational experience in the Foundation Stage, where the curriculum is based on the six areas of learning for children of this age. Throughout the rest of the school, the curriculum is based upon the National Curriculum with the addition of French, religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE), but the timetable is not structured to allow for specific allocated times in some of the creative subjects, and this is affecting pupils' access to regular opportunities for creativity. For example, art and DT are currently woven into the curriculum through other subject areas or through particular blocks of time. In addition, teaching time in some subject areas is relatively low compared to that typically found for pupils in Years 1 to 6 - for example science and the humanities in some year groups - and other subjects receive more time than is typically found, which results in some very long lessons, especially for younger pupils. The school already recognises that the timetable would benefit from re-structuring to allow for greater flexibility and has begun planning for this. Pupils gain much from the specific expertise of specialist teachers for French, music and games.
- 2.3 The curriculum is enriched effectively throughout the school by the provision of a wide variety of educational visits, including residential trips for each of Years 5 and 6, as well as by visitors and parents who come into school to share their expertise and resources. Citizenship is positively reinforced through the PSHE programme, which, together with the range of other experiences the pupils receive, enables both boys and girls to feel valued and confident, and to enjoy their learning in secure surroundings. Overall, the educational experience makes a sound contribution to pupils' progress in all areas of learning, and to the acquisition of the skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that the parents are happy with the range of subjects and activities provided.
- 2.4 The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and the school has plans to extend and improve the range next term. All full-time members of staff organise at least one extra-curricular activity. Whilst several clubs are within the areas of sport and music, a few others, such as drama, reflect the wider interests of the pupils, and the choice changes each term to give all pupils the opportunity to participate in clubs they enjoy. Some external instructors visit the school, for example in football and chess. Pupils say that they really enjoy these activities and the number of participants is good; for example, the choir rehearsal was attended by 34 pupils.
- 2.5 The school prepares pupils well for each stage of their education. Induction into the Foundation Stage is highly effective. Parents are invited to a meeting where all practical

aspects of entry are covered. The programme of visits to the school for the children is individualised to ensure that every child's particular needs are met. New pupils in the rest of the school enjoy visit sessions to help them settle into school life. At each stage of transfer, pupils experience 'moving-up days' and members of staff liaise closely with each other prior to the start of the new academic year, passing on and explaining pupils' records. New parents feel involved with the school from the start and are welcomed by an active social committee of current parents. For those parents of pupils who are approaching the end of their time at Laleham Lea, guidance about their child's future schooling is provided through individual interviews with the headteacher and senior staff if required. They are well prepared academically for their national tests at the end of Year 6, and by the extra provision of verbal reasoning in Years 5 and 6 for those who need it for their senior school entrance examinations.

- 2.6 Curriculum planning in the Foundation Stage is excellent. Across the rest of the school, planning is based on the national strategies and nationally recognised schemes of work. The best planning is good, but planning is variable because some plans do not include how members of staff intend to provide for all levels of ability or the opportunities they will take for assessment of pupils' learning. All pupils have equal access to, and opportunities within, the curriculum.
- 2.7 Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), and those for whom English is an additional language (EAL), is good. The school identifies these pupils at an early stage and monitors their progress well. Effective support is provided in the classroom by the teaching staff and classroom assistants and, in addition, some pupils are withdrawn individually or in small groups to receive extra help from the learning support co-ordinator. Detailed individual education plans have been produced for these pupils jointly by the co-ordinator and teaching staff, and parents are kept fully informed. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is at a very early stage and no formal arrangements are yet organised to identify and monitor the progress of these pupils.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.9 Pupils learn effectively and achieve well in relation to their abilities. This is in line with the aim of the school to create an environment in which pupils may grow intellectually, in which their talents are recognised and fostered, and in which it provides quality learning, helping every pupil to reach their true potential. Standards of learning and achievement have developed well over recent years.
- 2.10 Pupils make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding across all subjects and activities. In the Foundation Stage, pupils progress well across the Stepping Stones towards the nationally expected Early Learning Goals, and, by the time they enter Year 1, their achievement is good. Across the rest of the school, pupils use their literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills well across the curriculum and apply their knowledge and understanding successfully in a variety of situations. They make good use of opportunities for developing creativity in different subjects and activities; for example, in a story-telling drama activity club, younger pupils expressed themselves successfully in mime. However, whilst pupils say they enjoy opportunities for creative expression, these opportunities are not as frequent as they could be in different areas of the curriculum. Pupils develop critical thinking skills, and an effective example was seen in science, where pupils considered what the outcome would be for mankind if the earth was not tilted.

- 2.11 No significant difference was seen in the relative attainment of pupils of different gender or in different subjects. However, on occasion, more able pupils did not achieve as well as they could because the task they were given was not challenging enough. Those pupils with LDD and EAL achieved as well as their peers because of the helpful support they received from their teachers and teaching assistants. All pupils were equally willing to tackle the tasks set and generally applied themselves with enthusiasm.
- 2.12 Results in national tests at age eleven over the three years up to 2006 in English, mathematics and science were good for pupils' abilities; they were well above the average for all maintained primary schools in all three subjects. The results in 2007 were not as strong overall. However, these results are indicative of the good quality of the education being offered, and similar standards of achievement were also reflected in lessons seen during the inspection.
- 2.13 The school has a growing list of individual and team achievements. Participation in these activities develops pupils personally in their understanding of leadership skills, teamwork and respect for each other's talents and abilities. Over the last three years, the majority of pupils gained places at their first choice senior school, with two on average each year winning scholarships. The school is successful in a range of local sporting activities for Catholic schools: the mixed tag-rugby team has won the cup in five out of the last six years; in the last three years the under-11 cricket team has either won or finished second in the indoor cricket competition; in the last two years the table tennis team has finished second or third in the league. Pupils who entered the Croydon athletics competition last year won many awards, including winning the under-10 high jump final. In netball, the school finished top of its league for the last three years, also winning the Catholic league twice in the last four years. Pupils recently achieved well in a local chess tournament. In 2005, the school quiz team won the Croydon 'Top of the Form' competition. Approximately eight pupils each year pass instrumental music examinations.
- 2.14 Pupils develop competent skills and positive attitudes for work and study. Their literacy skills are well developed; they are articulate, listen effectively, and both write and read intelligently and fluently by the time they reach Year 6. Pupils are confident when expressing themselves and use subject-specific language well. They listen carefully to each other's comments during frequent questioning and discussions, and to teachers' instructions. However, very little extended writing was seen in subjects other than English. Numeracy skills are well taught and pupils can apply mathematical concepts effectively, for example, when creating a time-line for a Victorian royal family tree in Year 6 history work. Pupils develop good ICT skills and use them to support their learning in a range of subjects.
- 2.15 Little evidence was seen of pupils exercising and developing their reasoning skills and abilities; however, good reasoning skills were seen in a Year 5 RE lesson, when pupils gave consideration to reviewing and analysing the Ten Commandments and relating their significance to other world religions. The potential for independent learning opportunities is restricted when teaching relies too heavily on workbooks from commercial schemes and school texts, and younger pupils in particular have less opportunity to record their work for themselves. In addition, the examination of older pupils' work revealed that they had been given few opportunities to use their initiative and make their own notes. The result of these difficulties is that more able pupils are not always challenged at their own level of ability.
- 2.16 Pupils work happily and effectively on their own, and also enjoy the experience of paired and group work. An example of pupils working co-operatively with others successfully was seen in a Year 3 mathematics lesson when pupils were selecting the correct items from various resources to make specific 3-D shapes.

- 2.17 During the inspection, lessons occasionally began late because pupils were not brought in promptly from the playground or activities overran, but, once in the classroom, pupils generally settled quickly and quietly to their work. They concentrate well and persevere in the tasks set, showing enthusiasm. Pupils have positive attitudes and are well motivated; their behaviour is good and they enjoy their learning.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.18 Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. This fulfils the aim of the school to create an environment which is loving and welcoming, where Christian values are central to the life of the school, and in which pupils may grow intellectually, socially and emotionally. It also meets the aim that pupils are led towards tolerance, understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others, so that they may grow up as well-balanced individuals with a strong sense of personal identity. Over recent years, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness has developed well.
- 2.19 Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate self-confidence and a sense of self-worth which reflects a high level of personal development, fostered by the school from the earliest years. Through assemblies, through liturgical services including the weekly celebration of Mass, in lessons and in their interactions with teachers and each other, pupils are encouraged to be reflective and to be aware of the needs of others. Pupils showed this in an outstanding assembly about Divali in which, through the excellent questioning of the headteacher, they related aspects of the Hindu faith to Christian beliefs and values. During the inspection week, the younger pupils had an opportunity to observe animals including scorpions, toads and quail brought into school by a zoologist, which generated their interest in, and appreciation of, the living world.
- 2.20 The moral development of pupils is effective and they are imbued with a strong sense of right and wrong. They demonstrate positive behaviour in class and around the school, and recognise the value of rewards and sanctions which exist to promote good conduct. This area is also supported by the house system which provides opportunities for pupils to develop a competitive spirit underpinned by a sense of fair play. A comprehensive programme of study for PSHE successfully reinforces the moral values which the school seeks to inculcate in the pupils through learning about friendships and taking personal responsibility.
- 2.21 Pupils' social development is strong. They enjoy and participate well in extra-curricular activities, both in and out of school. Many pupils are members of local sports clubs which develops their confidence, teamwork and social skills. Pupils perform in school concerts and drama productions which provide opportunities for them to develop their leadership skills through taking roles with clear responsibilities. Pupils have a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England through the PSHE programme. They understand the principles of democracy which they successfully applied themselves through voting in an election for house captains. Pupils have developed an acute awareness of environmental issues including the benefits of recycling materials. The school has a firmly established process for supporting a variety of charities, including the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development.
- 2.22 Pupils' cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have developed a profound understanding of celebrations in other cultures, particularly religious festivals which are included in the RE programme and school assemblies. Their awareness of their own culture is strong through work done in the curriculum and through appropriate educational visits including farm outings, trips to museums and theatres, and residential experiences. Pupils gain an excellent insight into aspects of other cultures through a programme of multi-cultural activities including African drumming, Chinese music, Irish dancing and visits by parents

who read stories in languages such as Polish, Ghanaian and Irish. A strong element of respect, tolerance and harmony exists between these pupils whose backgrounds are culturally diverse.

- 2.23 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.24 The quality of teaching, including assessment, is good, and has developed well over recent years. The school's aim of creating an environment which provides quality teaching and learning and which helps every pupil to reach their true potential is largely met. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire believe that teaching helps their child to make progress, and almost all pupils who took part in the pupil pre-inspection questionnaire were extremely positive about the fact that teachers help them to learn.
- 2.25 In all subjects, teaching generally enables pupils of all abilities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. In most lessons, teaching is adapted effectively to the needs of all pupils in the class, because teachers know them well and have a good understanding of what they have previously achieved. Pupils with LDD are given appropriate work which is well matched to their needs, or they receive good support in the classroom from teachers and classroom assistants. They also receive helpful extra support by being withdrawn for additional lessons with the learning support co-ordinator. They achieve as well as their peers because of this targeted support. Those pupils with EAL are also given individual support as necessary. However, in some lessons, more able pupils were not given appropriately challenging tasks and so did not achieve as well as they could have done.
- 2.26 On occasion, teaching encourages pupils to be creative, and some evidence of this was seen in displays around the school. However, the high volume of worksheets employed and the indiscriminate use of commercial workbooks in some subjects means that pupils are restricted in thinking for themselves. Teaching encourages pupils to try hard, to persevere and to apply maximum effort to every task; for example, the very wide range of strategies employed in a Year 6 French lesson, all of which used the target language, involved every pupil in responding with great enjoyment.
- 2.27 Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach and a few are very enthusiastic about their subject, but some teaching lacks liveliness. Pupils are generally well managed, often with good humour. Good behaviour is the norm, and relationships, both in the classroom and around the school, are strong. In the most successful lessons, thorough planning for a wide variety of activities and different learning styles promote good progress, and lessons are well paced, thus keeping interest and learning flowing. However, a few lessons lacked this stimulus and pupils could be seen flagging in enthusiasm and concentration.
- 2.28 Resources to support pupils' learning are adequate both in quantity and quality in all subjects and are used effectively. For example, in a Nursery lesson, programmable toys were used competently when children were preparing to go on a journey. Interactive whiteboards are used particularly well by both staff and pupils. However, the fact that there are not enough computers for every pupil in the computer room means that difficulties do sometimes arise when pupils are engaged in individual work and have too little time to complete their task. The school is aware of this difficulty and has plans to resolve the problem in the near future.

- 2.29 The recording of pupils' attainment in lessons and in their written work is variable across the school. In Nursery and Reception, assessment is excellent and is undertaken regularly as children move across the Stepping Stones towards the nationally expected Early Learning Goals. In best practice in the rest of the school, some staff record their evaluation of pupils' effort and attainment on their planning which subsequently informs them of what pupils need to learn next. In addition, pupils are sometimes given the opportunity to assess their work themselves, and some identify targets in conjunction with their teacher from key learning objectives. Marking is undertaken regularly, but is not always in line with the school's policy. As well as giving encouragement, the best marking gives pointers to pupils on ways in which they could improve. Pupils say they find this extremely helpful. However, the approach to marking and target-setting is inconsistent.
- 2.30 Pupils' attainment is formally assessed regularly, by using nationally standardised tests, including spelling and reading tests. Informal tests are also regularly undertaken, for example at the end of a topic or unit of work, and this gives the staff the information they need to plan the next stage of learning. All results are carefully recorded and analysed. Under the headteacher's and assessment co-ordinator's guidance, a new assessment policy and procedure have recently been introduced to make it easier to monitor the progress each pupil is making as they move through the school. It is too early to assess the impact this is having on achievement.
- 2.31 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care and the arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good. The level of pastoral care has developed well over recent years, and the school now has a robust written child protection policy. The school meets its aim of creating an environment which is loving and welcoming, in which pupils' talents are recognised and fostered and their weaknesses treated with compassion. All staff are concerned for pupils' well-being and development, and are supported in this by an effective pastoral structure.
- 3.2 The staff provide strong support and guidance through the roles of the class and subject teachers, as well as through the house system which succeeds in enhancing the quality of pastoral care by developing a team spirit. The senior management team offers further support as and when needed. The daily contact with teachers and support staff gives pupils many opportunities to seek help or advice on personal issues. In interviews, pupils said that they would readily seek the help of a member of staff if it were felt to be necessary: "I could go to any member of staff and know that they would help me." Those pupils who have LDD or EAL are given effective support according to their needs. The regular informal, as well as formal, contacts among staff provide many opportunities for staff to raise issues about pupils and to develop their understanding and practice of pastoral care.
- 3.3 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and among pupils, is good. Staff know pupils very well and show both care and concern. Praise and encouragement are offered frequently to boost self-confidence. A few pupils raised concerns on the pre-inspection questionnaire: rewards and sanctions were not always fair; the school did not deal effectively with bullying; they felt unable to share a personal problem with an adult. However, interviews held with several groups of pupils during the inspection week indicate that pupils are, in fact, very happy, although some pupils expressed the desire to have greater opportunities to hold positions of responsibility. The school successfully operates a 'buddy' system which provides support for new pupils by their peers. In addition, Year 6 pupils arranged an 'It's a Knockout' competition in which they took a leading role in organising and supervising younger pupils. During recreation periods, pupils play happily together, with a sense of care and empathy, which shows their understanding of the needs of others. In class also, pupils support one another in their work. Friday assembly provides an opportunity for pupils to receive public recognition in the form of a certificate for being helpful or for attainment during the course of the week.
- 3.4 Effective measures concerning behaviour and anti-bullying procedures ensure that pupils can enjoy their time at school without anxiety. They are well behaved; they move around the school sensibly and are considerate to staff and visitors. They understand and respect the school's rewards and sanctions for encouraging good behaviour. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but they are confident that it would be dealt with constructively should it occur. Additional policies cover a wide range of topics including internet safety, playtime guidelines, racial equality and educational visits.
- 3.5 Welfare, health and safety issues are given a high priority at all levels within the school. A detailed file of risk assessments is maintained and updated at regular intervals. PSHE lessons promote individual safety through a range of topics. Child protection measures are effective and all members of staff have received the relevant training. There are nine first-aiders on the staff and a register is kept of pupils who have particular medical needs. Hot soup is

provided for lunch, which supplements the packed lunches brought in by the pupils, and they are reminded of the importance of a healthy diet through assemblies and science lessons.

- 3.6 All necessary measures have been taken to minimise the risk from fire and other hazards. A fire risk assessment has been undertaken and equipment is frequently tested with relevant records being maintained. An established cycle of testing portable electrical appliances ensures they comply with safety standards. Admission and attendance registers are maintained correctly. The school has an appropriate policy and plan for improving its accessibility for pupils with disabilities, and conforms with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.
- 3.7 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

- 3.8 The school has strong links with parents and the local community. It successfully meets its aim, that by working together with parents who are the first educators, pupils are led towards tolerance, understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others, so that they may grow up as balanced individuals with a strong sense of personal identity and an awareness of God's love. Good progress has been made in this area recently.
- 3.9 Although only a small percentage of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, those who did so were very pleased with the teaching which enables their children to make progress, and the range of subjects taught. They also felt that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and values and provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. However, a few parents did raise concerns about the help given to pupils with LDD, homework, the help and guidance given to their children, standards of behaviour and how much they are encouraged to be involved in the work of the school. Through careful investigation of these issues and further discussion with parents during the inspection, the inspectors are confident that these concerns are unjustified. A few parents voiced their concerns about the number of times the younger pupils were heard reading at school each week, which they felt were not enough. The inspectors agree with their views.
- 3.10 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in various activities and in the work and progress of their children. Parents are welcomed into the school to help with activities such as reading, trips, craft activities and sporting events and they share their expertise and enthusiasm with the pupils across the age range. A very successful social committee organises events for all parents including termly coffee mornings. The new focus group introduced by the headteacher has been particularly successful in allowing parents to air their views in an open forum. Several initiatives, such as the suggestion box and the bicycle racks, have grown out of discussions within this group. The school was felt by parents to be welcoming and friendly, and members of staff supportive and flexible in their approach to parents and pupils.
- 3.11 Information for parents is good. The prospectus is attractive and contains a large amount of information about the school and this is supplemented by a welcome pack as parents join. The weekly newsletter, sent electronically to most parents, provides helpful reminders of the termly calendar of events, and the homework and reading diaries provide a useful daily contact between home and school. The school website provides much helpful information for prospective and current parents. Twice-yearly parents' evenings provide opportunities for sharing information on pupils' progress in all areas. The structure of parents' evenings has recently changed to include the pupils; parents, staff and pupils now agree targets for the coming period to ensure that everyone is fully informed. The individual education plans

provided for children with LDD are developed jointly by the learning support co-ordinator and class teachers and then shared with parents. However, parents expressed concern over the information they receive about their children's progress, and inspectors share their views. Reports are overall satisfactory, but variable in the amount of information they give about progress and targets. The best examples give clear information about progress in key skills in subjects and progress made in personal development, and contain focused targets for improvement in the future. Parents now have an opportunity to respond to written reports through the parental feedback forms included with them.

- 3.12 Several parents raised their dissatisfaction with the way in which concerns are handled. Inspectors agree that there have been problems in the past, but evidence indicates that the policy and procedure for dealing with complaints is now robust. Parents spoken to during the inspection feel confident that there is an open-door policy within the school which allows them to speak to the staff regularly if they have concerns, and that appropriate action will be taken to deal with any issue raised.
- 3.13 The school has positive links with the wider community. It has strong links with the nearby senior school and uses its sports facilities and chapel. Pupils visit local places of interest on a regular basis and invite a wide range of community visitors into school to share their expertise to enrich the curriculum, such as the police and road safety officer. The school choir regularly sings in nearby venues and the school community supports a number of charities in the area. In the recent past, the school has been chosen to sing at the turning on of the Purley Christmas lights. Strong links have been forged with primary schools, with whom teams participate in a number of matches and tournaments.
- 3.14 The school does not have links with the global community, but pupils have a very strong awareness of other cultures and communities.
- 3.15 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 quality of governance is good; the governors take care of the school and its development, and contribute effectively to fulfilling the school's aims. A new headteacher has been appointed relatively recently, building improvements have been completed, and a new building project, due to be finished immediately after the inspection, has been undertaken, so that good progress has been made over recent years, especially in relation to the provision of premises and accommodation.
- 4.2 The governors have a very wide range of experience and expertise and support the school in different ways. They each have an area of responsibility, covering child protection, health and safety, finance, ICT and RE, and three governors each take an interest in one section of the school. This structure, whilst relatively new, is effective in keeping oversight of the school, and, in addition, governors operate a committee for finance and general purposes. The governors are diligent in making well-considered and effective financial provision for the school, and they ensure that adequate resources are available to supply educational needs.
- 4.3 The governors are aware of their responsibilities and meet most of their statutory obligations. They are kept well informed about educational provision at their termly meetings through reports from the headteacher and bursar, and also through the attendance of the deputy head. They do not just rely on these reports, however, but take an interest in the school community and know the staff relatively well; two governors visit each term to see the school in action. They also meet staff and parents on social occasions, when informal discussion can take place, and they attend school events as often as possible.
- 4.4 Whilst the governors are aware of the school's improvement plan, they are not involved in its construction or prioritising. Close contact is maintained between the chairman and headteacher, and, in that way, the governors are strongly supportive but also challenging. The governors effectively understand the strengths and challenges facing the school, and its successes in academic standards and other activities.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Good leadership and sound management successfully support the schools' aims, particularly those of creating an environment which is loving and welcoming, where Christian values are central to the life of the school, and which generally helps every pupil to reach their true potential. Overall, the quality of leadership and management has developed well recently, with written job descriptions now in place for all staff.
- 4.6 The leadership of the headteacher and his senior management team, recently re-organised and consisting now of the deputy head and Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 co-ordinator, is effective, and this is reflected in the good quality of education and care of the pupils. Members of the team have complementary skills which support the day-to-day running of the school and ensure the school's aims are largely met. Further academic support is given by the subject co-ordinators who recognise that, whilst they have made good progress in undertaking their role in recent months, they could further develop their responsibilities in the future. Staff display loyalty and a strong commitment to the school community, and are fully involved in the pastoral care of pupils.

- 4.7 Clear educational direction is given by the senior management team. From their improvement plan, it is clear that the school is aware of the next steps which are needed to develop the quality of education still further and thus enable pupils to achieve even higher standards. The plan is focused well on these issues, but the financial implications have not been fully explored, nor does it contain enough information about how the school will achieve its objectives; it is thus difficult for staff to see how they can support the fulfilment of the plan through their own subject or year-group responsibilities. Recent initiatives from the headteacher have included a sharper focus on management procedures, for example developing staff through in-service training and performance management, including regular monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observation and the examination of pupils' books. However, subject co-ordinators are not yet involved in monitoring teaching and learning in their own subjects.
- 4.8 Appropriate policies have been drawn up covering all aspects of school life, and the school regularly checks and reviews their effectiveness. For example, any pupils causing concern are discussed at weekly staff briefings, and any issues which arise may result in the school looking at relevant policies to either check they are being carried out consistently or to make amendments. Staff have recently been focusing on subject planning, and, whilst planning is variable, good academic policies have been prepared by subject co-ordinators in all subjects.
- 4.9 Resources for learning, including provision for ICT, are adequate and meet pupils' needs. Whilst the library is satisfactorily stocked, it is not accessed by pupils enough to make a good contribution to their learning by encouraging reading, an area for development of which the school is aware. The furniture and décor are not sufficiently appealing to pupils. Procedures for budgeting in the school operate efficiently.
- 4.10 Teaching and classroom support staff are deployed well and contribute significantly to pupils' learning and welfare, particularly for those pupils who have LDD or EAL. Staffing levels enable strong support to be given to pupils. The recruitment of well-qualified staff is currently effectively managed, although some recruitment checks have not been carried out on a very small number of staff appointed before 1st May 2007. The required Criminal Records Bureau staffing checks are carried out, and appropriate information is recorded on a centralised register. Induction procedures for staff new to the school are helpful in practice but there is no written policy. The school does not participate in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers.
- 4.11 Arrangements for the day-to-day running of the school work well. The administrative and other support staff provide good quality assistance, upon which the efficiency of the school depends. Communications both internally and externally are strong.
- 4.12 The school is a welcoming place, and it provides a very secure environment for the pupils in line with the school's aims. The accommodation is used to best advantage, with the more recent buildings providing specialist areas such as art, music, a library and an ICT classroom. The new Nursery extension and Foundation Stage play area, which are due to be finished immediately after the inspection, are intended to provide very effectively for these pupils' learning. The school's outdoor space provides adequately for educational and recreational play, and the school makes good use of a local school's facilities for games. The wall displays are of variable quality in different areas of the school, but the best include good examples of pupils' work, creating an exciting learning environment.

- 4.13 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) ensure that all appropriate recruitment checks are carried out on all staff before their appointment [Regulation 4C.(3)].
- 4.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Laleham Lea School is largely successful in meeting its aims, particularly that of creating an environment where Christian values are central to the life of the school. Pupils are well cared for and, within their good personal development, cultural and spiritual awareness are outstanding. The provision for the Foundation Stage, including planning for and assessment of these children, is excellent. Teaching across the school is generally effective and enables pupils to learn and achieve well. Behaviour, attitudes towards learning and relationships both among pupils and between pupils and staff, are strong. A wide range of visits, trips and visitors supports the curriculum well. Positive links have been forged with parents and the community. The leadership of the headteacher and senior management team, ably supported by the governors, is effective. However, the current structure of the timetable results in an imbalance between subjects and in long lessons, particularly for younger pupils. The role of subject co-ordinators is not yet fully developed and not all pupils are challenged in their learning.
- 5.2 The school is aware of all the aforementioned issues and also understands that the library is not sufficiently appealing to develop a love of reading in pupils. In all these areas the school has already begun to discuss the way forward. The Ofsted Nursery inspection of 2005 reported no significant weaknesses.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 4 (suitability of proprietors and staff).

Next Steps

- 5.4 To improve the quality of its educational provision, the school should take the following steps.
1. Restructure the timetable, so that:
 - lessons are more appropriate in length to the needs and abilities of the pupils;
 - all subjects have a suitable allocation of time.
 2. Extend the role of subject co-ordinators to include regular monitoring of teaching and learning in their own subjects, so that they have a clearer overview of the areas for development and can contribute to the fulfilment of the school's improvement plan.
 3. Ensure that the best practice in teaching is shared through peer observation, so that all pupils are consistently challenged at their own level of ability.
 4. Improve the library environment, so that pupils are encouraged to develop their love of reading.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) ensure that all appropriate recruitment checks are carried out on all staff before their appointment [Regulation 4C.(3)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 5th to 8th November 2007. 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.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Elizabeth Coley	Reporting Inspector
Mr Michael Connolly	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mrs Diane Gardiner	Headmistress, IAPS school