



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

TRURO SCHOOL PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	Truro School Preparatory School
DfE Number	908/6086
Registered Charity Number	306576
Address	Truro School Preparatory School Hightown Truro Cornwall TR1 3QN
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Email Address	enquiries@truroprep.com
Headmaster	Mr Matthew Lovett
Chair of Governors	Mr Geoff Rumbles
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	267
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (156 boys, 111 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 202 3-5 (EYFS): 65
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	24-May 2011 to 25 May 2011

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in May 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, 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 31st 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 of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Truro School Preparatory School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged three to eleven. It is the preparatory school of Truro School, which is a co-educational senior school three miles away, and to which most of the pupils progress on the recommendation of the preparatory school headmaster. Housed in a range of Victorian to modern buildings on a wooded site on the edge of Truro, the school is a Methodist foundation with Christian values at the heart of its ethos. It aims to challenge, inspire and support its pupils to become individuals who aspire to excellence in the development of their academic and other abilities. It seeks to teach pupils to become creative, thoughtful and responsible, to seek the truth through reason and discussion, and to be aware of their obligations to others and to wider society.
- 1.2 The Pre-prep, for Years 1 and 2, and the Prep department, for Years 3 to 6, share many facilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is an integral part of the Pre-prep and has its own extensive outside area. The headmaster reports to the headmaster of Truro School but has considerable autonomy. The school is owned by the Board of Management of Methodist Independent Schools and governed by a local board of governors, which also oversees the senior school. Since the previous inspection, the Pre-prep building has been considerably extended and a two-form entry established at this level. A new music classroom has been created, the curriculum has been extended and extra-curricular provision has increased.
- 1.3 Currently, there are 267 pupils enrolled, of whom 65 are in the EYFS. Most are from white British professional families living within a ten-mile radius of the school, although some travel considerably further. The ability profile of the school overall is above the national average, although pupils demonstrate a fairly wide range of abilities. The school has identified 45 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and provides specialist support for 17 of these. There are no pupils with English as an additional language or with a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievements is good. Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims of helping them to achieve their potential and teaching them to be creative, thoughtful and responsible. Their knowledge, understanding and skills in curricular activities are good. They manipulate numbers confidently and speak, read and write fluently, and most can sustain concentration and listen well. Where observed, pupils' skills with information and communication technology (ICT) were satisfactory, and in some cases good. Art work and design technology projects show pupils' creativity in action. They enjoy school life and were proud to display their work during the inspection. They work well together and enjoy being challenged to become independent, active learners. Most pupils go on to the senior school, with a few each year achieving scholarships. Many do well in graded music or speech and drama examinations. Teams achieve high levels of sporting success, for example in hockey, athletics and sailing, and in individual sports including swimming and fencing.
- 2.2 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests taken by pupils at the ages of 7 and 11 show that they achieve results above or far above the national average for maintained primary schools. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make excellent progress in relation to their ability. The provision for the most able pupils enables them to achieve extremely well. The attainment of pupils in Years 1 and 2 cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average, but inspection evidence indicates that their progress and attainment level is high. Pupils with LDD make significant progress and achieve well.
- 2.3 The pupils' achievements are strongly supported by the imaginative and stimulating curriculum. By the end of Year 6, all pupils have had a thorough grounding in core subjects and also experience of three modern foreign languages, Latin, and a "Food and Plants" course, which begins with planting seeds and culminates in preparing meals.
- 2.4 All pupils have the opportunity to take part in enrichment activities. The innovative "Truro Prep Diploma" for Year 6 encourages achievement in a range of areas, including life skills and outdoor education; the pupils thoroughly enjoy its exciting challenges. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, gardening and chess, further enhances pupils' education, as do the many trips to local and overseas destinations.
- 2.5 Teaching is good overall. Most teachers combine an imaginative approach -- for example using juggling balls, interactive computer programs or puppets -- with calm and firm control using the school's attention strategy. On occasion, teaching less effectively maintains the pupils' focus and their progress is restricted. Lessons are well planned, showing a good understanding of pupils' abilities and needs, and assessment is thorough. Marking is regular, and often, but not always, gives the pupils praise and advice for further improvement. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and use encouragement well to build their confidence

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.6 The personal development of the pupils is excellent and a great strength of the school. Pupils' self-esteem and willingness to take responsibility are encouraged throughout the school. By the time they reach Year 6, the pupils are mature, articulate and confident. The school achieves considerable success in teaching pupils to seek the truth through discussion and to be aware of their obligations to the wider world.
- 2.7 The pupils have a good appreciation of a spiritual dimension of life. In high quality assemblies they join in hymns and prayers reverently and respond well to moments of silent reflection. They share a lively view of God in nature and of their responsibilities to creation. They have a good understanding of Christianity and of other major world faiths.
- 2.8 Pupils have a strong sense of morality, understanding right from wrong, reflected in the code of conduct that each class creates for itself; their behaviour is almost always exemplary. They respect the school rules and consider them sensible, and usually respond swiftly to their teachers' expectations. Pupils are very aware of their responsibility for making school life happy for everyone. They step in swiftly if they feel that someone needs help. For example, a Prep department pupil said that he saw someone looking sad so "played with him to make him happy again." Pupils take their roles of Year 2 playground 'buddies,' school council representatives and Year 6 monitors very seriously. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were seen enthusiastically working on the charity day they are responsible for organising. Pupils' cultural development is excellent. Music is at the core of the school and of a very high standard, with pupils earning a gold award in the "Sing Up" initiative. Their appreciation of creative endeavour, their own imaginations and their understanding of diverse cultures are excellent, enhanced by displays of the work of professional artists around the school.
- 2.9 The school gives high priority to the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils like and trust their teachers, who are superb role models. Strong policies and procedures are in place to promote the pupils' well-being, including those for child protection and encouraging good behaviour. There are excellent procedures for keeping a careful oversight of potential as well as actual concerns and all staff have appropriate child protection training. Pupils feel safe, confident that the school will take firm action to deal with the rare incidents of bullying. An excellent balance exists between encouraging them to play energetically and face physical challenges, for example by building dens in a wood or orienteering, and ensuring that firm guidelines are in place for their protection. Consequently, pupils grow in self-confidence and in their understanding of personal safety. Risk assessments for trips are good and all necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are taken. Admission and attendance registers are efficiently maintained and organised. Arrangements for the care of sick or injured pupils work well. The catering staff take pride in providing appetising meals that take account of pupils' individual preferences, while encouraging healthy choices. The pupils develop healthy lifestyles as they enthusiastically seize the many opportunities they have to enjoy physical exercise in lessons and clubs.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.10 The governance of the school is excellent, successfully ensuring that its aims are met. Governors provide wise financial oversight and strong, principled strategic leadership. They are very conscious of their legal responsibilities for health and safety and for child protection, and scrupulous in discharging these. All governors have received suitable training. A recent review of governance structures has reduced the number of meetings, eliminating unnecessary duplication or delay. The governors' prep committee is highly effective in ensuring that the school has what it needs to provide an excellent learning environment. The good strategic plan is driven by a commitment to sustain this, and to promote the pupils' well-being. Presentations from staff, visits to classrooms and thorough reports from the headmaster ensure that governors are well informed about the school's daily life.
- 2.11 Leadership and management are excellent. Under the energetic, humorous and sensitive leadership of the senior team, the staff work very well together, committed to ensuring that the pupils' school life is happy and fulfilling. Good structures to monitor teaching and learning are in place, although some inconsistencies in marking persist. Useful meetings between subject-coordinators and the senior team help to drive future curriculum development. The appraisal system supports staff, and plans are in place to ensure that training needs identified are better linked with the strategic plan. Some staff teach in both the Pre-prep and Prep departments, but they do not represent all curriculum areas. No comprehensive procedure is in place to evaluate the effectiveness of subject links between Year 2 and Year 3 or to assess the continuity of pupils' learning.
- 2.12 Legally required checks on staff are correctly completed and recorded. The grounds and buildings are very well maintained and resources are plentiful. A mentoring scheme in which volunteer teachers provide individual guidance to some pupils facing particular difficulties is an example of the school's exemplary commitment to the pupils.
- 2.13 The school has excellent links with parents. All required information is provided on the school's useful website, supplemented by parental handbooks and frequent newsletters. The detailed reports, regular parents' evenings and accessible staff ensure that parents have plenty of information about their children's progress. An active parents' association raises funds as well as organising regular social events. Parents are welcomed to sports fixtures, concerts and plays. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were unanimous in their support of the school's curriculum, activities, standards of behaviour and management. The school deals with any concerns sensitively and the complaints policy is good.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that there are procedures in place to facilitate smooth academic transition between Years 2 and 3 in all subject areas.
 2. In the EYFS, ensure that there are more opportunities in the outdoor environment for child-initiated activities to encourage physical development.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

4.1 This outstanding setting fulfils its aim of providing a stimulating environment that supports and extends children's learning and development. It is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children, and support for individuals and groups is provided as necessary. Excellent teaching by EYFS teachers and specialists in French, music, swimming and physical education ensures that all children achieve very high standards in their learning and development. Children's welfare is promoted effectively and thorough safeguarding procedures are in place. There is clear capacity for sustained improvement.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. The recent self-evaluation undertaken by EYFS staff reveals a clear vision for future developments. Teachers successfully implement policies that provide guidance, promote equality and eliminate discrimination. Children's well-being is given paramount importance and thorough risk assessments are in place, ensuring a safe, secure environment. Safety issues are regularly discussed with children, and outside agencies are invited to speak at assembly. How to keep safe on a trip to the beach was reinforced effectively by a teacher using a puppet. Teachers use staff meetings and informal discussions to consider children's progress and adapt planning to meet individual needs. Staff carry out thorough observations and assessments that are used to create detailed and informative learning journals shared with parents. Warm, positive relationships exist with parents and their strong support was evident in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Children have direct access from classrooms to the excellent covered outside learning environment. High quality resources are effectively used by teachers and easily accessed by children.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. Children respond positively to the warm and nurturing environment which ensures they feel happy and secure. Relationships between children and adults are very strong. The children benefit enormously from the excellent purpose-built facilities, in addition to those shared with the main school. Children learn and develop well through the good coverage of the Early Learning Goals, although their opportunities for self-initiated physical development are limited outdoors, as they cannot access large apparatus easily. Teachers are all appropriately trained in child protection. They manage children's behaviour sensitively, rewarding good work and behaviour with positive verbal comments, stickers and achievement certificates.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 The children's achievement and progress are outstanding in relation to their starting points. By the end of Reception, many are working at levels consistently above national expectation. Children listen to adults with sustained concentration and they are highly articulate. A phonic reading programme is used daily and Nursery children are beginning to write simple words. In Reception, children attempt more complex words and many are reading above their chronological age. Children in the Nursery enjoy counting and writing the numbers one to five. Reception children participated enthusiastically in practical activities exploring addition and subtraction of numbers from one to twelve. Children use ICT confidently across areas of learning. Children have highly developed social skills, demonstrated as they work and play happily together. They are able to make decisions for themselves, for example when choosing what to eat for lunch. Children have good personal hygiene habits and they understand the importance of keeping themselves and others safe when using equipment.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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