

enthusiasm creative knowledge
outstanding
opportunities
learning encouraged
happy
imagination
commitment community
development
communication welcoming quality
understanding
child-initiated





INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ABERCORN SCHOOL

**EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Abercorn School

Full Name of School	Abercorn School
DfE Number	213/6364
EYFS Number	EY389621
Address	Abercorn School 248 Marylebone Road London NW1 6JF
Telephone Number	020 7723 8700
Fax Number	020 7723 0608
Email Address	togs@abercornschool.com
Head	Mr David Morse
Chair of Directors	Mr Anthony Millard
Age Range	2 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	395
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (263 boys; 132 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 11 5-11: 226 3-5 (EYFS): 142 11-13: 16
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Rebecca Stewart
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	10 Feb 2015 to 11 Feb 2015

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspection occurs over a period of two continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2012.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State 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 2010. 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 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 Education (DfE) 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, although inspectors 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.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted informal discussions with children and examined samples of work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of directors and two other directors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Elizabeth Coley	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Janet Preece	Team Inspector for Early Years (Former Headmistress of Pre-Preparatory School, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Abercorn School is a co-educational day school for pupils from the ages of 2 to 13. It is accommodated on three sites near the centre of London. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for children up to the age of five, is based at Abercorn Place in a Victorian listed mansion with its own private garden; the pre-preparatory department, for pupils up to the age of eight, is based in premises on Marylebone Road; and the preparatory department is based at Portland Place. The school was established in 1987. It is owned by Abercorn Education Limited, a member of International British Schools Limited, and the five directors, one of whom was the founder, administer the school as a governing body. Since the previous inspection, the current head of the EYFS has been appointed. The EYFS has developed its outdoor space and adapted its use in order to build on children's learning opportunities.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection there were 395 pupils on the roll, 263 boys and 132 girls, of whom 105 boys and 48 girls were in the EYFS. Of the 27 children who attended part-time in the Nursery, 11 were under the age of 3. A total of 226 pupils were in Years 1 to 6, and 16 were in Years 7 and 8. The EYFS has identified eight pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. At present, 34 nationalities are represented by the children in the EYFS and 25 languages are spoken. Of the 84 children who are learning English as an additional language (EAL), 26 receive specialist support, and 5 of these are at an early stage of acquiring the language. Most pupils come from professional, diplomatic or business families living within a three-mile radius of the school. The mobility of pupils is such that approximately one-third join the school at the age of two or three and continue to the age of eleven or beyond.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide an inclusive and happy learning environment that enables pupils to develop into confident, life-long learners who have the skills and attitudes needed to contribute to both local and global citizenship. It seeks to develop pupils personally, socially and intellectually through their learning experiences, and to promote independence and a sense of responsibility, preparing them for life in a changing world. It strives to provide clear moral guidelines that pupils respect and value. In addition, the EYFS aims to make all children feel welcome, and to encourage them to achieve their potential and become well-rounded individuals.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery (ages 2 to 3)
Pre-Reception	Nursery (ages 3 to 4)
Reception	Reception

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with statutory requirements

- 2.1 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
1. Ensure that directors monitor, on a regular basis, changes in requirements and act upon them in a timely manner, particularly in respect of recruitment checks.
 2. Provide further opportunities for parents to attend workshops of interest in order to support their children's learning and development.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

3.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 3.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. At least one out of every five children who joins the school at the beginning of or during the Reception year has been identified as having EAL and often starts at the early stages of English language acquisition; not all of these children are able to reach expected levels in the short time that they are in the EYFS. However, by the end of the Reception year, a very large majority of children reach the level of development typical for their age, and a small minority exceed this. The educational programmes provide many opportunities for the younger children in the Nursery to practise their language and communication, to develop their physical skills and to support their personal, social and emotional development. They are encouraged to express themselves clearly and with increasing confidence. Older children have a strong understanding of the world around them, seen in their writing about their visits to places of interest in London. Staff enable children to think and reason for themselves by using high quality questioning and creative stimuli. The 'footprints' across the classroom and 'bones' inspired the older Nursery children to explore and deepen their knowledge of dinosaurs. The enthusiasm and motivation of children of all ages are encouraged by the high expectations of staff, who carefully interact to widen the children's vocabulary. Staff discuss the visual timetable with the children, who constantly refer to it throughout the day. The many interesting activities provided, both indoors and outside, mean that children concentrate and persevere for long periods of time, fully engaged in their task. Learning outside for children in Reception has included investigating and recording how many jumps could be achieved in a set time. An effective balance of adult-led and child-initiated tasks enables most children to make rapid progress according to their abilities.
- 3.2 The staff ensure that the needs of those children with SEND or EAL are fully met by providing carefully planned intervention strategies to support their learning, either through group or individual help given by specialist teachers, or in the resources used or tasks set. Staff help children at an early stage of learning English by communicating and modelling language; sufficient challenge is also provided for the more able. Regular assessments of children's progress are recorded electronically, and parents are encouraged to provide information for inclusion. This continuous monitoring of progress ensures that children are ready for the next class.
- 3.3 Parents or carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicated that they are positive about almost all aspects of the education and care provided. In particular, all appreciate the curriculum and the progress their children make, and feel that their children are well looked after at school. Staff give parents termly details of the proposed topics so they can support their children's learning at home, and they are invited to a reading workshop. However, senior staff have identified that the school gives insufficient opportunity for parents to attend workshops in other areas of learning. A very small minority of parents indicated that they do not receive sufficient information about their children's progress. Inspection evidence did not support this view. Inspectors found that parents have many opportunities to speak with staff, both formally each term, when targets are set in the older year groups, and informally at almost any time, and that the reports they receive twice a year are

detailed and helpful regarding the progress their children have made. In the Nursery, these reports also include targets for improvement.

3.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

3.4 The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being is outstanding. Key persons promote the standards of behaviour and kindness expected, and a high priority is given to the children's well-being and care on a day-to-day basis. Children enjoy what they are doing. Detailed records of the few incidents of misbehaviour show that children respond very well to the consistency of the school's approach to promoting good behaviour, which takes into account any particular needs. The younger children, in particular, are helped to form strong relationships with one another and with adults, and develop their independence. Children of all ages enjoy the responsibility of being 'star of the week'. Staff encourage older children to manage risk for themselves, promoting an understanding that it is acceptable to make mistakes. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken and reviewed, both for buildings and activities on and off site. Fire procedures are practised termly and children know what to do in an emergency. Children learn the importance of healthy eating and exercise, and they enjoy bringing their healthy snacks of fruit and vegetables for break time. Classes make excellent use of the outdoor area twice every day on a rota basis, and visits to the park, as well as swimming, physical education, gymnastics and yoga classes, support children's physical development very well. As they grow older they are sensitively helped to develop personal hygiene routines, and at all ages the staff foster confidence and respect, so that children co-operate effectively with each other and are well prepared for their next class. Children take pride in sharing their class toy animal and caring for it at the weekends and during holidays. This fosters a sense of belonging and a family atmosphere, so that children are learning to care for each other.

3.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

3.5 The leadership and management of the early years provision are good. The directors take a strong interest in the EYFS and have a detailed knowledge of its challenges and successes. The EYFS leadership carefully oversees the educational programmes. On a day-to-day basis, children are well cared for in a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment. In the recent past there were isolated cases of staff starting work a short time before all required checks had been completed; risk assessments show that there was close supervision of these staff at all times. Under the current management of the setting all but one of the issues had been rectified shortly after staff started work. The remaining one was identified by management and completed so that the school met all requirements at the time of the inspection. This meant that children were not at risk. All staff have been subject to a criminal record check and have made a declaration concerning disqualification by association. All staff have received full training in child protection and health and safety procedures, and understand their importance. Good relations are maintained with local children's services.

3.6 Policies are regularly updated and staff are supervised well, with termly individual meetings which are carefully recorded. In-service training is given a high priority and all staff attend courses on the development of young children. Performance management is carried out and targets are set which have a positive impact on the quality of children's learning and development. Self-evaluation is of high quality and leaders use this information to set challenging targets for improvement. Staff

evaluate the impact of their planning daily, and ensure that this is used to guide the next steps in learning for the children. Staff meet regularly to evaluate how well individual children are performing, to monitor their welfare and progress, and to plan ambitious improvements for development across the setting as a whole.

- 3.7 Staff and parents work closely together to ensure that relevant support is provided for children needing particular help with their learning and development, involving external agencies such as speech and language therapists where necessary.

3.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 3.8 The overall quality and standards are good. As a result of the education and care provided, most children, including those with SEND or EAL, make rapid progress relative to their ability and needs from their various starting points. Children of all ages demonstrate high levels of curiosity. The Nursery children express themselves with enjoyment in their imaginative role-play activities, such as pretending to be the giant from *Jack and the Beanstalk*. A cross-curricular theme led these children to explore what is required to encourage sunflower seeds and beans to grow. Most children in Reception can use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make effectively to support their reading and the writing of simple sentences. They successfully count in tens up to one hundred and carry out operations on numbers within ten. They competently use programmable toys and a range of computing devices such as tablet computers and interactive whiteboards, which are easily accessible.
- 3.9 The children's personal, social and emotional development is excellent; they feel secure and happy. From the youngest age, children happily share resources, take turns and organise themselves, and by the end of Reception they are highly independent. The variety of backgrounds and cultures within their inclusive international community encourages children to understand and learn about their individual differences and to respect one another, for example when a parent explained about the significance of the Chinese New Year.
- 3.10 There is a clear and shared understanding by all staff of the safeguarding and welfare of children. Their welfare is safeguarded well on a day-to-day basis; isolated past cases in the timely checking of new staff did not pose a risk to children and, at the time of the inspection, the school complied with the Childcare Act. Effective processes have been established to reflect on the setting's work and outcomes in order to secure its development. Since the previous inspection, considerable improvements have been made in the designation and use of the outside area, in the further development of creative and critical thinking skills through exploration and investigation, and in the development of children's information and communication technology resources and skills, which, for their age and ability, are now excellent. Consequently, there is clear evidence of a strong commitment to continuous improvement.

“The children’s personal, social and emotional development is excellent; they feel secure and happy”

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