



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**DAME BRADBURY'S SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Dame Bradbury's School

Full Name of School	<b>Dame Bradbury's School</b>
DfE Number	<b>881/6011</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY239731</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>3595013</b>
Address	<b>Dame Bradbury's School Ashdon Road Saffron Walden Essex CB10 2AL</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01799 522348</b>
Fax Number	<b>01799 516762</b>
Email Address	<b>info@damebradburys.com</b>
Head	<b>Mrs Jane Crouch</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Dr Joanna Burch</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>259</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (129 boys; 130 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>0</b> 5-11: <b>217</b> 3-5 (EYFS): <b>42</b> 11-18: <b>0</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>259</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Lorna Stranger</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>28 June 2011 to 29 June 2011</b>

## 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 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 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 Dame Bradbury's School is located near Saffron Walden in Essex and provides for pupils aged three to eleven. Its aims are for its pupils to flourish and fulfil their potential, for them to become self-confident, imaginative and cultured and to want to learn for the sheer joy of it. The school believes that Christian principles underpin all that it does and these guide pupils' moral and spiritual development, building pupils' confidence and developing their sound judgement.
- 1.2 The school was founded by Dame Johane Bradbury, the wife of a Lord Mayor of London in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, as a Christian school for children. It stands in about five acres of land and occupies a range of buildings, some of which date from 1870, while others are of recent addition. Since 1998, the school has operated as a company limited by guarantee. The governors, as directors of the company, administer the school.
- 1.3 The school is non-selective, although pupils are assessed on entry in the core skills of English and mathematics, mainly to determine whether any learning support will be needed. Most are of white European origin and come from local families representing the professions and business interests. Pupils' ability profile is above that of the national average. All pupils speak English as their first language. There are 259 pupils on roll, of whom 42 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There are an almost equal number of boys and girls. Sixty pupils receive additional learning support, with one of these having a statement of special educational needs. The school operates with two parallel groups in each curriculum year.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection the structure of the core senior leadership team has been strengthened with staff in newly created positions. The extended senior leadership team has also changed: a member of staff has been brought on to the team who coordinates the EYFS. Other changes include further improvement to the building and facilities and the introduction of environmental learning in local woodland.
- 1.5 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 Throughout the school, from the EYFS upwards, pupils' achievement is excellent. This represents fulfilment of the school's aim to encourage pupils to enjoy their learning and to educate the whole child. Pupils are highly successful in developing their understanding, knowledge and skills in all areas of learning and their extra-curricular activities. They develop excellent skills in literacy and numeracy and use these effectively in all areas of learning. Pupils are also very articulate and speak with confidence in private and public settings. They write well and for a range of purposes, though in a few instances the presentation of this work needs improvement. Pupils read fluently; their knowledge and understanding in mathematics and science is also of a high standard. Pupils' skills and achievements in the performing and visual arts are outstanding. The current drama production of 'Robin Hood', seen by the inspection team, was excellent. Pupils are also successful in a wide range of physical activities. A significant proportion of pupils take national music examinations and many gain high standards. A few pupils have achieved representative sporting honours, such as representing the East Area in squash competitions or going on to playing for professional football academies. The majority of pupils who leave the school are successful in gaining admission to their first choice of school.
- 2.2 Attainment is judged to be high in relation to age-related expectations and pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability; outcomes within the EYFS are particularly strong. Results in national tests at age seven and eleven have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) also make good progress and the support they receive, particularly for literacy, is focused well on their needs. Pupils who are the most able and talented also make good progress.
- 2.3 The curriculum sets high demands on pupils, though it is designed and presented with a flexibility to match pupils' needs. Outstanding provision is made for the personal development of pupils, in line with the school's ethos. Provision for extra-curricular opportunities is outstanding, with pupils taking part in a wide and diverse range of activities. The school recognises there is scope to further develop its sporting provision.
- 2.4 The pupils' success is attributable to the quality of teaching they receive. This is good with many outstanding features. At its best, teaching provides demanding challenges for pupils of all abilities. Most teachers are adept at subtly raising the bar in their efforts to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well-planned and proceed at a brisk pace. A few lessons ended without a clear opportunity for pupils to demonstrate what they had learned. The broader arrangements for assessment are outstanding and data collected provides an accurate picture of each pupil's progress; this is tracked in great detail. Marking is generally good, and helpful comments are offered that guide further improvement. Pupils become avid learners; their cooperation and capability to work independently is outstanding.

## **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.5 The school provides an outstanding education that challenges and motivates pupils in equal measure and is successful in achieving its aim to provide a secure and happy environment. This underpins the pupils' outstanding personal development. Aspects are presented through the well-planned personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) curriculum, but much is based on the school's ethos from which pupils develop secure moral and ethical values. The excellent pastoral care results in a safe and encouraging school environment. Throughout the school pupils demonstrate their confidence and show considerable self-esteem. This results from the extremely good relationships that exist between pupils and their teachers, as well as amongst pupils themselves. Pupils of all ages show levels of maturity and confidence that are, in many instances, beyond expectations for their age.
- 2.6 The pupils' social development is excellent. The school ethos encourages them to work together, and they feel part of a community that values the individual, fosters achievement and demonstrates kindness. The pupils' exemplary behaviour is testament to the highly effective systems in place to develop responsible and considerate individuals. Pupils use many opportunities to take personal responsibility by acting as monitors, or becoming members of the school council. Many purposeful school visits and visiting speakers enhance the pupils' social development.
- 2.7 The Christian ethos makes a significant contribution to the pupils' moral and spiritual development, while the PSHCE programme, the religious education lessons, the visits to different places of worship and the assemblies all contribute to the joyful, constructive atmosphere which abounds. Pupils have a secure understanding of world faiths. Pupils reflect on spiritual issues and have a well-developed sense of empathy and respect for others, which is reflected in their relationships and in their desire to help others through charitable enterprises. Pupils have a sensitive appreciation of the world around them which is demonstrated, for example, by the outstanding photographs on the topics of 'new life' and 'change', taken as part of the school photographic competition. Pupils have a keen awareness of both their own and other cultures. The school's active links with a school in Ghana enhance this awareness.
- 2.8 The pupils' success is enhanced by the excellent pastoral care. The anti-bullying policy works well. Pupils feel very safe, and bullying is not something they recognise. They have a strong emotional vocabulary and express their feelings perceptively. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are secure. Staff have undertaken the appropriate training. The school ensures that the necessary checks on the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors are made. All other measures to ensure pupils' health and safety are in place and rigorously implemented. There is a good medical room and the school has an appropriate plan in place to enable it to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Pupils are made very aware of the importance of leading healthy lifestyles through the many physical activities and the information they learn from subjects such as science and PSHCE. Policies that under-pin the practice are reviewed regularly. Attendance and admission registers are completed appropriately and a single central register of appointments is maintained.

## **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.9 Governance is excellent and provides the school with a firm base for its development and ability to sustain high standards. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school, through their talks with pupils and staff and through the considerable expertise they bring to the execution of their roles within the various governor committees. Monitoring and evaluation of key areas enable governors to provide clear strategic planning for the school. This has ensured that financial management is prudent and governors have been able to provide high quality specialist facilities, such as the performing arts theatre and sports facilities. The premises are maintained to a high standard. Governors have a secure understanding and oversight of safeguarding arrangements along with health and safety provision. They have reviewed the policy and procedures for safeguarding pupils. Rigorous checks are made on those appointed to work in the school and the central register is completed correctly. Parents are appreciative of the work undertaken by the governors.
- 2.10 The excellent leadership and management have enabled the school to develop and sustain high standards. Organisation is meticulous and nothing is left to chance. The teamwork shown by the senior leadership team, complemented by that of the extended senior leadership team is exemplary. The leadership empowers the senior leadership team and extended senior leadership team to undertake their roles with great efficiency. Monitoring and evaluation of all school practice is undertaken and the leadership teams have an intimate knowledge of all areas of school activity. Every outcome to this process has an implied statement of 'How can we do this better?' This means that the school is active in self-evaluation.
- 2.11 Links with parents are excellent and these benefit the wide provision offered to the pupils. Comments in the response to the parents' questionnaire reveal overwhelming support for almost all aspects of the education provided. A few parents felt that they were insufficiently informed about the progress of their children, but the inspection team could not support this view. Parents have many different avenues which they can use to receive information about the progress of their children. Reports provide clear and well-evidenced information about this progress. A small minority of parents felt that this information is too limited, but the inspection team could not substantiate this view. Parents were particularly praising of the pastoral care their children receive. The school's complaints procedure is appropriate, though there have been no formal complaints within the last academic year.

### **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. Improve the quality of the presentation of pupils' work, especially in the upper school.
  2. Ensure greater consistency in the way in which teaching ensures that assessment demonstrates what pupils learn in each lesson.
  3. In the EYFS, continue to develop the outdoor classroom and the Nursery outside space to allow children greater independent access in all weathers.

#### **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 is an outstanding setting, meeting the needs of all children whilst fully appreciating their individual differences. An excellent system of review and self-evaluation ensures the realisation of the school's aims for children to flourish and fulfil their potential, to be self-confident, imaginative and cultured, and want to learn for the sheer joy of it. A positive and confident attitude to learning is encouraged and children progress through structured, purposeful play, which helps them to become independent within a safe environment.

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

4.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Excellent and carefully monitored policies and practice ensure that children are well safeguarded. All adults have been suitably checked, are well-qualified and appropriately trained. Records, policies and procedures are in place, ensuring that children have equal opportunities. Detailed self-evaluation, identifying priorities and areas to develop, result in an excellent capacity for improvement. An exemplary framework for risk assessments has been implemented. Parents are appreciative of their children's progress and the standard of their care. Every opportunity is taken to inform them of their children's progress, with workshops, twice-yearly reports, parents' evenings, newsletters, use of e-mail and a designated area on the school website. The effective use and good management of resources, including those outdoors, lead to successful outcomes for all children.

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

4.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. Children learn and develop extremely well through stimulating play opportunities. A well-judged balance is maintained between adult and child-led activities. Outdoor and indoor provision is used very effectively, though the adjacent outdoor area does not completely allow free-flow access or provide effective shelter from the elements. Staff ask challenging questions to develop children's thinking skills. Children's work and interests are valued and reflected in the many colourful and stimulating displays. Key people promote welfare, health and safety extremely well, ensuring that children are taught how to keep themselves safe and encouraging them to eat healthy food. The behaviour policy is well implemented, leading to a happy and busy atmosphere where children benefit fully from all the opportunities provided.

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

- 4.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. They make rapid progress and are on course to meet all of the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. They count reliably up to ten and many can read simple sentences. They are competent users of technology; when visiting the school library they use the scanner to issue their own books. Nursery children enjoyed using the interactive white board in an exercise involving careful counting. However, younger children found difficulty in reaching the top of this board as it is set too high. Reception children enjoyed an excellent morning in the local woodland, exploring, and identifying a variety of mini-beasts. They worked well together, for example when making a rope swing. Children are inquisitive, enthusiastic and self-motivated, relating well to adults and to one another. They co-operate well in their learning and begin to make choices and decisions. They trust and respect their teachers. They enjoy their healthy lunches and snacks and understand about keeping safe. Children have a secure awareness of hygiene, being keen to wash their hands before eating and when they returned from the woodland. They respond to school life with great enthusiasm and enjoyment. They are provided with secure foundations for their future well-being in all aspects of their learning.

**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 the chair of 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**

Mr Tom Fisher-Smith

Mrs Catherine Lane

Mrs Lynda Boden

Reporting Inspector

Former Headteacher, IAPS school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector