



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

AVALON SCHOOL

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Avalon School

Full Name of School	Avalon School
DfE Number	344/6016
EYFS Number	EY298338
Registered Charity Number	1088050
Address	Avalon School Caldy Road West Kirby Wirral Merseyside CH48 2HE
Telephone Number	0151 6256993
Fax Number	01516 250332
Email Address	schooloffice@avalon-school.co.uk
Acting Headteacher	Mr Martin Ashton
Chair of Governors	Dr Katy Kidd
Age Range	2 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	174
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (90 boys; 84 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 20 5-11: 120 3-5 (EYFS): 34
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 174
Head of Nursery	Mrs Alison Prandle
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	12 May 2015 to 15 May 2015

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous Early Years Foundation Stage Intermediate 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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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 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.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the 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

Mrs Sue Bennett

Mrs Mary Bradfield

Mrs Ann Richards

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Avalon School is an independent day school for boys and girls between the ages of two and eleven years. Founded in 1907, it moved to its current premises in West Kirby, Wirral in 1932. The school became fully co-educational in 1991. The main school still operates from the original Victorian house; recent expansions include additional teaching accommodation, a hall and administration centre. In 2001, the school became a charitable trust under the direction of a board of governors, which undertakes responsibility for the school's financial and administrative operations. The current acting headteacher has responsibility for welfare, overseen by the governors, and also takes full responsibility for all the educational aspects of the school, including for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- 1.2 The school aims to provide the best opportunity for every child to learn, grow and develop in a stimulating and supportive learning environment. Additionally, it hopes to encourage all pupils to achieve the highest possible academic, personal and social standards and help them become the proud, confident and articulate young citizens of tomorrow. These aims are underpinned by four core values for the whole school community to embrace; commitment, opportunity, respect and excellence. Since the previous inspection, the school has built a new EYFS block, which opened in 2013, has refurbished teaching accommodation and made significant investment in resources for learning.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, 174 pupils, 90 boys and 84 girls were on the school roll. Of these 54 children were in the EYFS, with 35 attending on a part-time basis. There are 17 pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional support for their learning. No pupils attend with statements of educational needs or education and health care plans. One pupil speaks English as an additional language (EAL) and receives additional support from the school.
- 1.4 The ability profile for the school is above the national average, with a spread of ability represented across all year groups. Pupils come mainly from business or professional family backgrounds, based locally. Although most pupils are of British ethnicity, the cultural diversity of the surrounding area is represented within the school.
- 1.5 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 in the Early Years and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

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

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent. The school successfully meets its aim and core value of excellence, to provide the best opportunity for every child to learn, grow and develop in a stimulating and supportive learning environment. Pupils make excellent progress in relation to their abilities, including those with SEND or EAL. More able pupils make good progress, occasionally hindered when teaching offers inconsistent levels of challenge. The excellent curriculum is broad, balanced, and suitable for all ages and abilities. The extra-curricular provision offers an exciting breadth of experiences. Resources are plentiful and extremely well deployed. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers are experienced and knowledgeable. Lessons are extremely well structured, conducted at a brisk pace and teaching provides excellent support for pupils' individual needs. Assessment processes, including marking, are excellent. Both the curriculum and teaching provision are politically impartial and strongly promote equality of opportunity, tolerance and respect. In the EYFS, the provision for children's learning and development is outstanding.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent, successfully fulfilling the school's aim to help pupils become the proud, confident and articulate young citizens of tomorrow. Pupils are self-confident, polite and emotionally mature for their ages. They demonstrate great empathy towards others, cultural tolerance and respect. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pastoral care systems are excellent; the pupils' well-being is given the highest priority. In the EYFS, the contribution to children's well-being is outstanding. Welfare, health and safety arrangements are sound. Staff have a strong understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities in practice. Adequate progress has been made on addressing the compliance issues from the previous EYFS inspection and all staff who work with children under three have appropriate suitability checks. However, safer recruitment procedures for other staff and governors do not have full regard to regulatory requirements. The school promptly addressed the discrepancies identified, as far as was possible by the close of the inspection. Health and safety arrangements are highly effective and all necessary safety measures are taken. Excellent provision is made for sick or injured pupils and regulatory registers are correctly maintained.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are sound. Governors provide prudent financial management, and have a good insight into the school's working. However, they have not fulfilled their statutory responsibilities relating to the staff recruitment. The annual review for safeguarding arrangements has been correctly undertaken. Leadership and management demonstrate a strong commitment to the school's success in line with published aims and values. There is a strong educational direction. Teaching is regularly monitored and the previous inspection recommendation has been successfully addressed. Currently there is a lack of delegated management responsibility. Development planning provides clear vision for future improvement. Links with parents are excellent; parents comment that they are extremely happy with all that the school provides. They receive regular information, including reports on pupils' progress, but these lack a clear indication of pupils' future learning targets. The EYFS leadership, management and overall effectiveness require improvement, because of the lapses of rigour in staff recruitment. The EYFS recommendations from the previous inspection relating to

activity provision and learning opportunities for children have been successfully addressed.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and therefore it is required to:

- implement all recruitment checks on staff before they begin work [Part 3, paragraph 7.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety], [Part 4, paragraphs 18.2(a) and (d) and 20.6 (b)(i), and 21.3(a)(ii)(v) and (vi), and 21.6 under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors] and [Part 8, paragraph 34.1(a) and (b) under the Quality of leadership in and management of schools]

2.5 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve the delegation of responsibility roles for senior leaders to enable more effective management to support pupils.
2. Strengthen the quality of reports to parents to include clear targets for pupils' future learning.
3. Formalise and minute meetings between the EYFS staff and senior leaders to enhance links with the whole school development.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, pupils are extremely well educated, in accordance with the school's aims.
- 3.3 Pupils strongly embrace their learning experiences. All pupils, including those with SEND or EAL achieve highly, with more able pupils achieving at least good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills, both through the curriculum and their participation in extra-curricular activities. Pupils listen attentively during lessons. They demonstrate extremely strong reasoning skills and use of independent thought. They articulate their views in a logical manner, such as when they debated the personal qualities of characters from *Jane Eyre* with confidence. Pupils write imaginatively and persuasively about a wide range of subjects, and take pride in neat presentation. In history, pupils compiled diary entries, comparing the lives of rich and poor Victorian children. In mathematics, pupils relish problem-solving opportunities and competently apply this skill to other curriculum areas, such as when calculating variables in electronic programming. They confidently use information and communication technology (ICT), both as a research tool and to present their work. The pupils' high standards in creativity are evident in the breadth of colourful displays around the school. Pupils sang in harmony and with evident enjoyment when presenting an excellent rendition of songs for a forthcoming performance. Pupils develop excellent physical skills through the curriculum and activities, such as in cheerleading, rugby and ballet.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve highly in both group and individual achievements outside the classroom. They participate in local and national sporting, musical and dramatic competitions and achieve notable success at events, such as at the regional festival for performing arts. The pupils' high standards of academic achievement are reflected in their successful application to their secondary schools, including maintained selective and independent schools.
- 3.5 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. These excellent levels of attainment, as judged, are evident in results from standardised tests; they indicate excellent progress in relation to those of similar ability. Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of the pupils' workbooks, lesson observations and interviews with the pupils, supports this judgement. Pupils with SEND or EAL also make excellent progress because of the additional strategies that staff put in place to support their individual learning needs. More able pupils make good progress because of the additional challenge provided for them, such as the opportunity to conduct independent research in the library; their progress is sometimes hindered when teaching offers insufficiently high levels of challenge.
- 3.6 Pupils are happy and thrive in an atmosphere, which nurtures their individual talents and interests. They have excellent attitudes to learning and capably work both co-operatively and independently. They are motivated, keen to embrace challenge and use their initiative, giving their best at all times. Pupils take great pride in both their own achievements and the successes of others. There is a strong atmosphere of

mutual respect. Pupils are considerate and tolerant towards differing viewpoints and the individual needs of their peers.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum meets the school's aims by providing a stimulating and supportive learning environment. The curriculum is broad, balanced and provides comprehensive coverage of the requisite areas of learning. There is a strong emphasis on numeracy and literacy. The provision is enhanced by an extensive extra-curricular programme, which offers an excellent range and breadth of enrichment experiences. A well-planned and comprehensive personal, social and health education programme (PSHE), is delivered effectively during form tutor times and covers relevant topics, including internet safety. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, almost all parents expressed extreme satisfaction with the curricular and extra-curricular provision.
- 3.9 The curriculum suits all pupils' ages and particular needs, including those with SEND or EAL. Throughout it provides excellent support through a range of strategies, including one-to-one provision to meet individual needs. Carefully formulated support plans, different tasks given in class work and specialist intervention all give strong support; pupils who have difficulties with spelling or mathematical skills receive individual precision sessions to help clarify their understanding. The curriculum also provides many opportunities for more able, gifted and talented pupils to use independent research. Detailed curriculum policies and schemes of work link closely with the school's aims and values. Curriculum planning is thorough; all staff contribute ideas to ensure the provision is stimulating, and incorporates a broad range of learning experiences. Collaborative planning to develop cross-curricular links is also highly effective.
- 3.10 Since the previous inspection, resources for learning have been considerably enhanced, especially in ICT. Additionally, French has been introduced as a second modern foreign language and the structure of the school day has been revised to maximise learning. These measures have had a positive impact on the pupils' learning and achievement. Within the curriculum, there is now a greater emphasis on individual pupils' learning skills, supported by training for staff and curriculum meetings. The curriculum provision is regularly reviewed and updated.
- 3.11 The extensive extra-curricular programme, considerably enhanced since the previous inspection, matches the pupils' interests extremely well and provides excellent opportunities beyond the classroom, such as 'mathletics', the early morning reasoning club and touch-typing. During discussions, pupils commented that they greatly enjoy and appreciate the range of activities available and can easily participate in whatever they choose. British values are implicit in the curriculum provision, with an extremely strong focus on equality of curriculum access for all pupils. Any references within subjects to political views, such as discussions about the recent general election, are well balanced.
- 3.12 The school ensures that curriculum provision enables pupils to learn about their cultural heritage, for example, living in a maritime town, and the importance of the geographical features of their local area. Additionally, the many school trips help curriculum experiences to be more immediate for pupils. Pupils visit local art galleries and museums, for example, to support study of the Victorians. They enjoy

twice-yearly visits from a theatre and drama company and activities such as walks and pond dipping.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.14 The high quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to the pupils' excellent achievements in learning. This successfully supports the school's aims and values by encouraging pupils to achieve high academic standards.
- 3.15 As pupils progress through the school, they benefit considerably from increased specialist teaching. Teachers are highly knowledgeable about individual subjects; lessons are structured extremely well to suit the ages and abilities of the pupils. Lesson planning is thorough; teaching is inspiring, delivered with a brisk pace and includes a vibrant range of approaches. Teaching encourages pupils to be actively involved in each lesson, which provides excellent support for their confidence and application. Teaching shows excellent knowledge of individual pupils' needs and provides clear learning objectives for each lesson. Resources are of high quality, plentiful and well deployed; ICT resources are used extremely well to enhance learning in a variety of subjects. Highly qualified teaching assistants provide excellent teaching support.
- 3.16 Since the previous inspection, the school has made significant progress in its provision for pupils with SEND or EAL, and for the more able, by incorporating personalised learning into planning for these groups. Additionally, specialist teaching is provided as needed. Excellent use is made of different levels of questioning to support pupils' specific needs. Effective strategies develop higher order thinking skills for more able pupils. For example, pupils use portable electronic devices to conduct independent research and extend their learning, such as in older pupils' research on China. On a few occasions, opportunities are missed to challenge and extend the most able further. The school is aware of, and is addressing this, through further staff training.
- 3.17 Rigorous assessment and efficient tracking systems inform teaching and promote the pupils' progress at every level. Marking is a strength of teaching; it is regular, and adheres stringently to the marking policy. Pupils, during discussions, commented that marking is encouraging and helpful, and that systems are consistent. Peer and self-assessment successfully involve pupils in evaluating their own learning, through strategies such as 'traffic lights', which pupils feel are valuable guides to how they may improve. Feedback on the pupils' work in the form of stamps and rewards encourages pupils to take time to consider and respond verbally to comments on their work.
- 3.18 Supportive relationships between staff and pupils underpin the pupils' confidence and enthusiasm for learning. The high quality of teaching fosters pupils' interests and encourages them to work independently. Good levels of purposeful homework extend pupils' learning at home. Pupils are enthusiastic to share what they have learnt with their peers. Teaching allows pupils time to think critically and analytically.
- 3.19 All teaching promotes tolerance and respect and is non-partisan in the coverage of political views, as evidenced in pupils' recent debates about the rights and wrongs of opposing election policies. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents and pupils were overwhelmingly positive about the quality and support that teaching provides.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages are developing extremely positive personal qualities. This is fully in accordance with the school's aim to help them become the proud, confident and articulate young citizens of tomorrow.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They are polite, self-confident, respectful, and emotionally mature for their ages. Pupils develop a strong appreciation of the non-materialistic aspects of life through the richness of the curriculum, activities and clubs. For example following work in science, they articulated that food chains are a way of life and necessary for existence. During lessons, pupils show great empathy towards the needs of others, listening respectfully to those whose views or beliefs differ from their own. They relish moments for quiet reflection, such as during assemblies or resting on seating in the outdoor area, which they describe as relaxing and calming experiences.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of moral understanding. They understand the difference between right and wrong and that rules are necessary within the school and wider communities, helping to prepare them for future life. During discussions, pupils commented that the rule of law within society is important and that everyone must take personal responsibility for their own behaviour. They understand that anti-social behaviour will have repercussions, such as that people who steal or damage property may well go to prison; they consider this to be fair and just.
- 4.5 Pupils have excellent social awareness, which is nurtured through the genuine sense of community created in the school, and the positive role models that staff present. Pupils describe the school as 'one big happy family' and feel valued as individuals. They are kind and considerate towards one another, and keen to use their initiative. They embrace opportunities for responsibility, such as prefect roles or being the classroom register monitor. The pupils' understanding of democracy is developing well. For example, older pupils were proud of their recent mock election contributions, which required them to present campaign speeches and respond to the audience questioning in a calm and confident manner. Pupils recognise that public institutions and organisations, such as the government and the emergency services, play a crucial role in society. They relish opportunities to help those less fortunate than themselves and speak proudly about their excellent efforts in raising money for both local charities and those wider afield.
- 4.6 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. They develop respect for their own culture through their musical, dramatic and creative experiences within school. Additionally, they benefit from frequent visits to local places of worship and museums. Pupils mix easily with others from different faiths and cultures; they are tolerant of each other's physical and other needs, and understand that everyone has a right to equal treatment. The PSHE programme, assemblies and religious education lessons promote excellent cultural understanding. Themed days, such as a recent Japanese day and celebration of religious festivals, such as Chinese New Year and Diwali, enable the pupils' strong tolerance and understanding.
- 4.7 By the time they leave school, pupils have excellent standards of personal development. They are happy, self-assured and have a well-balanced outlook on

life. During discussions pupils said they look forward to facing new challenges in their future schools.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.8 Arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.9 The school successfully achieves its aims by providing an environment in which pupils feel valued within a highly effective pastoral structure. Weekly meetings ensure that staff are fully aware of pupils' individual needs and any concerns they may have. Relationships throughout the school are highly supportive and mutual respect is evident between teachers and pupils, and among the pupils themselves. Pre-inspection questionnaire responses indicated that a few pupils are unsure about staff support in times of difficulty. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The pupils' well-being is supported and closely monitored. During discussions, pupils comment that staff are always on hand to provide any support or guidance and readily listen to their concerns.
- 4.10 The pupils' understanding of healthy living is extremely well supported by displays and posters around the school. School lunches offer a wide variety of tasty, nutritious and healthy options, including a salad bar and a selection of hot meal choices. During discussions, pupils comment that they greatly enjoy the meals provided. The extensive games and activities programme provides excellent opportunities for physical exercise.
- 4.11 Policies and procedures to promote good behaviour, and guard against harassment and bullying, including cyber-bullying, are suitable and effectively implemented. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a small minority of pupils considered that teachers are not always fair in the way they give out rewards and sanctions. Inspection evidence does not support this view; the recently reviewed system of rewards and sanctions is clear, consistent and thoroughly understood by all pupils. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Any unacceptable behaviour is fairly and appropriately dealt with, taking due account of any related difficulties or disabilities that pupils may have. In their pre-inspection questionnaires, a very small minority of pupils' commented that the school does not deal well with bullying. No evidence was found to support this view, including in parents' questionnaire responses. During discussions, pupils confirmed that incidences of bullying are extremely rare and that they feel safe in school.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable accessibility plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.13 A small minority of pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses felt that the school does not ask for their opinions or respond to them. Inspectors do not agree. The school enables pupils to contribute their opinions and views through the active school council forum; during discussions, pupils commented that they can easily do so. They confirmed that the school acts on their suggestions, such as requests for additional extra-curricular clubs and more reading resources in the library.

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

- 4.14 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are sound.
- 4.15 Comprehensive policies and procedures are effectively implemented in practice to ensure the welfare of both pupils and staff. All staff receive regular safeguarding

training and during discussions, demonstrated that they have a thorough understanding of safeguarding reporting procedures. Designated safeguarding staff have undertaken advanced training and have an excellent understanding of their roles. The recently updated child protection policy now has the correct regard to official guidance for safeguarding children.

- 4.16 Sound progress has been made on addressing regulatory failings from the previous EYFS inspection; staff who work with children under three years old have appropriate safer recruitment checks. All staff and governors have enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS) certificates. Prohibition checks have been correctly undertaken on those who work in a teaching capacity. However, historically, when appointing staff with existing DBS certificates from other schools or organisations that were issued more than three months before appointment, the school has not carried out recruitment checks against the barred list or undertaken new DBS checks. References have not always been obtained in a timely manner prior to appointment. The school acted swiftly to rectify these failings, as far as possible, by the close of the inspection.
- 4.17 All necessary preventative measures are taken to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Regular fire drills take place and are correctly recorded and monitored. External specialists regularly check the school premises for safety appropriately, including the testing of electrical and fire appliances. Prompt action is taken to rectify any identified issues. All aspects of the facilities are well maintained and risk assessments provide comprehensive evaluations of the school site and for any off-site activities that pupils participate in. Parents and pupils, in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses comment overwhelmingly positively about the safety of the school environment.
- 4.18 Highly effective health and safety arrangements include excellent provision for pupils who become unwell or injure themselves. Staff are appropriately trained in first aid and some have paediatric training. First-aid provision is timely and competent. Records for accidents and medication are correctly maintained and monitored. A trained first aider is always on the school premises when pupils are present, and accompanies them on off-site visits. At all times, pupils are supervised by experienced staff, who have an excellent understanding of their individual needs, including those with SEND.
- 4.19 The registers for pupils' admission and daily attendance are correctly maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The governing body provides appropriate oversight of the work of the school, ensuring its successful operation overall and highly successful fulfilment of its published aims, evident in the pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. Board members provide a valuable range of expertise and experience and have a stringent focus on the quality of the educational standards. For example, since the previous inspection, prudent financial and administrative management has resulted in the expansion of the educational accommodation, the provision of more resources for learning and the appointment of experienced staff, including at senior leadership level.
- 5.3 Governors visit the school regularly, which provides them with a good insight into the working of the school. They are pro-active in monitoring and reviewing the provision, including visits to teaching areas, and meeting with staff to discuss their practice and vision for the school's progression. Additionally, governors meet regularly with the school's senior leadership and provide effective levels of support, challenge and stimulus for the school's growth and improvement.
- 5.4 Governors suitably discharge their statutory responsibilities. The board regularly reviews policies and procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, including appropriate monitoring of health and safety arrangements. However, review has not always been wholly effective. Governors have not fulfilled their responsibilities relating to safer recruitment checks on staff, in line with statutory requirements. The school's designated safeguarding lead annually presents the child protection policy to the board and the arrangements are appropriately reviewed; meeting minutes demonstrate the breadth and depth of discussions. When a new member joins the board, they receive thorough induction and all governors have received recent update training in child protection. Some board members have attended external training to support their monitoring roles.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is sound.
- 5.6 Senior leaders and managers are effective overall in the discharge of their delegated responsibilities and highly successful in ensuring the pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. They demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that the school's aim to create a community based on a strong sense of family is fulfilled. The underpinning core values of commitment, opportunity, respect and excellence are the shared vision of the school and contribute significantly to its success.
- 5.7 Senior leaders regularly review operational systems and those for the welfare, health and safety of the school community, including safeguarding pupils. Policies and procedures are periodically scrutinised for their effectiveness and implemented successfully. The school swiftly addressed the minor amendments required in

documentation prior to the inspection process. There is an overwhelmingly strong culture of support for the pupils' well-being. For example, during weekly staff meetings, pupils' welfare needs are discussed as appropriate, ensuring that all staff are fully aware of any support strategies.

- 5.8 Senior leaders provide a strong educational direction and demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of the school's needs. Systems for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching are highly effective and include lesson observations, evaluating curriculum planning, scrutinising pupil workbooks and meeting with staff to discuss their practice. However, currently responsibility for the management of all educational aspects, curriculum oversight and pastoral care rests entirely on the leadership, limiting the amount of support that management can provide. Resources for learning are plentiful and appropriate for the pupils' ages at all levels. Pastoral management is a focused priority and valued as a key contributor to pupils' success in their future lives. Fundamental British values, respect for others and democratic tolerance permeate throughout all that the school provides. This results in excellent support for the pupils' personal development, as reflected in their mature attitudes and readiness for the next stage of their education.
- 5.9 Since the previous inspection, there has been significant investment in ICT, both as a teaching tool and for the pupils' independent research. Changes to systems that track the pupils' progress, and a programme of support and challenge for individual abilities has also been introduced. The classroom areas have been re-organised. For example, younger pupils are now situated closely together, which greatly assists their transition to new classes. Additionally, the specialist expertise of individual staff has been skilfully integrated into curriculum teaching. This has had a highly positive impact on the pupils' achievement, as demonstrated by their excellent achievements when they leave the school.
- 5.10 Leadership and management have high aspirations and a strong vision for the school's improvement. Effective self-evaluation systems provide a realistic analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. These processes include considering the views of the staff, pupils and parents. Sharply focused development planning efficiently covers all areas of the school. Documents are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that priorities are achieved within the timescales identified.
- 5.11 Leadership is successful in recruiting and retaining high quality staff who are well qualified and experienced for their respective roles. A system of staff review has been introduced and is now deeply embedded in practice. Staff comment that they feel extremely well supported by the school's leadership and that training opportunities to enhance their professional development are plentiful. When new staff and governors join the school they undergo thorough induction which includes training on safeguarding pupils and ensuring their welfare, health and safety. Job descriptions are clearly defined and ensure that staff are fully aware of their respective roles and responsibilities. Staff receive regular additional training in these areas, for example about procedural changes, such as safeguarding updates, which ensures they understand how to keep pupils safe. However, discrepancies were identified during the inspection in the operation of pre-employment recruitment checks on new staff. By the end of the inspection, the school had, as far as possible, taken all the necessary steps to correct matters and to ensure recruitment stringency in the future. The staff handbook and supporting documentation, provides comprehensive information about the school's expectations of staff conduct and the operational procedures of the school's life. In their pre-inspection

questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of parents were extremely happy with the leadership and management of the school.

- 5.12 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, the vast majority of parents felt that the school encourages them to be involved in its life and work, are happy with the information they receive about their child's progress and would recommend the school to other parents. This is in accordance with the school's aims and values.
- 5.13 The school maintains a constructive relationship with parents. It strongly promotes an 'open door' culture, and staff and senior leaders are always available at the beginning and end of the school day. Any concerns are quickly addressed in line with the school's published procedures.
- 5.14 Parents report that there are many opportunities for them to be involved in the work and progress of their children. For example, parents' evenings keep them informed about children's achievement and learning and discussion evenings update them on issues such as internet safety and future school choices. An enthusiastic parent and teachers' association regularly raises money for the school resources, as well as organizing social events such as a family fun day for new parents and pupils.
- 5.15 Detailed information is readily available to parents and prospective parents through the prospectus. The informative website provides a wealth of information about school policies and procedures, events and the school's achievements. Additionally parents receive weekly newsletters and a termly magazine, the 'Avalon Times'.
- 5.16 Parents receive clear and helpful reports on academic achievement and progress twice a year and grade reports termly. However, report texts lack detail on what pupils need to do next to improve their work, which limits the effectiveness of reports in enabling the pupils' progress. Parents, during discussions, reported that staff know their children extremely well and instil good behaviour and an excellent work ethic in their children.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

- 6.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. The educational programmes have depth and breadth across the seven areas of learning. This enables all children to achieve high levels of development, in relation to those of similar age and ability.
- 6.2 Staff set high expectations for both themselves and the children; they have a thorough understanding of how children learn. They plan a stimulating range of learning opportunities, stemming from children's interests. The indoors and outside provision provides exciting learning experiences and strongly motivates children's involvement and interest. For example, the children have their own outdoor garden where they plant and look after flowers and vegetables.
- 6.3 There is an appropriate mix of child initiated and adult-led activities, which enable children to investigate and develop with confidence. Enthusiastic staff engage with children effectively during activities, allowing them time to think and solve problems. For example, the youngest children demonstrated great perseverance in trying to master mouse skills on the computer, with gentle guidance from staff. Staff encourage older children to use tablet computers independently and make excellent use of questioning, such as when discussing the life cycle of plants. Consequently, children are extremely well prepared for their next stages in education.
- 6.4 Staff, with the support of specialists, quickly identify children who need early support and promptly put strategies in place. Assessment is thorough and detailed, supported by excellent systems for tracking children's progress. There is a prominent focus on helping children to acquire communication and language skills, which has a highly positive impact on their learning.
- 6.5 Staff work closely with parents to help children settle. Parents have many channels of communication with staff, including speaking with them on a daily basis. This enables them to share home experience of children's development. They also have more formal discussion opportunities and can regularly peruse their child's learning records. Parents receive excellent information about the setting's routines through letters, emails and newsletters.

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

- 6.6 The contribution to children's well being is outstanding. The key person system is firmly established and all staff understand children's individual needs extremely well. Staff help children form secure emotional attachments; they provide a strong base for children to develop confidence and independence. Daily routines ensure that they feel secure. The youngest children co-operate well at 'tidy up time' and older children manage their self-care independently and confidently stand up to receive certificates from senior leaders.
- 6.7 The wide range of activities, both indoors and out, enable children to make choices about what they do, and to explore their surroundings confidently. Children have many opportunities to use their imagination, such as enjoying playing doctors and

nurses with a staff member as a patient. Children talk happily with staff and one another as they play, sharing their personal experiences, such as a time when they were personally unwell.

- 6.8 Staff are exemplary role models. They encourage children to behave well and play co-operatively through the constant use of language which reinforces good behaviour. Staff pay careful attention to safety routines and undertake daily checks on learning areas to ensure children's safety. Children are developing a strong understanding of healthy living. Younger children know the importance of hand-washing after gardening and older children understand the benefits of exercise. For example, during a physical activity they felt their heart beating fast and knew that this was because of their rapid movements. Children greatly enjoy the nutritious lunches provided and know that vegetables and fruit are good for health. This provision for children's well-being prepares them extremely for their future transitions.

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

- 6.9 The leadership and management of the EYFS requires improvement. Governors provide suitable support for the EYFS but they have not fulfilled their statutory safeguarding responsibilities in ensuring that all the required recruitment checks are undertaken on staff who work with children over the age of three years. The school took prompt action to remedy this as far as possible by the close of the inspection.
- 6.10 Senior leaders and managers maintain stringent oversight of the educational provision. They have an excellent understanding of systems to ensure children's welfare and implement procedures thoroughly in practice at all times. This helps create an environment which is welcoming, safe and stimulating for children to enjoy.
- 6.11 Self-evaluation is rigorous, and involves all staff. It clearly identifies future priorities. This contributes significantly to development planning, which sets challenging targets for future improvement. Managers in the EYFS meet regularly to ensure continuity and progression for the children. However, there are no regular formal meetings with whole school senior leaders to discuss the EYFS in the wider context of whole-school development.
- 6.12 Highly effective systems are in place to support staff. This includes regular review meetings and supervision, which provide opportunities to discuss practice, areas for development and future professional development needs. This has a highly positive impact on teaching and children's learning and development.
- 6.13 Staff have strong partnerships with parents and outside agencies which ensure all children receive the help that they need to support their development.

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

- 6.14 The overall quality and standards requires improvement. Children make excellent progress in their learning and development relative to their starting points. Children who have additional needs, including those with SEND make outstanding progress in their learning and development because of the early support and help that staff provide for them during activities. For example, younger children are beginning to learn letter sounds; they can form letters from their name and can count independently within ten. Older children are competent readers and can mentally double numbers to double nine. Children's communication skills are excellent

throughout the setting and by the end of the EYFS, children confidently articulate their thoughts and opinions when talking to the staff or to each other.

- 6.15 Children's personal development is excellent. They behave extremely well and show that they enjoy coming to school. They feel safe, secure and are happy in the caring environment that staff provide.
- 6.16 Staff receive regular training in child protection and health and safety procedures. High priority is placed on children's welfare needs and staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities to protect children. The regulatory issues raised at the previous inspection relating to recruitment checks have been correctly addressed for all staff who work with children under three but shortcomings remain in checking new staff who work with older children, such as those with existing checks from other organisations.
- 6.17 The leadership and management demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous improvement to ensure the best outcomes for children. The recommendations from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. Links between staff are now strong, enabling the sharing of good practice and planned activities include a wealth of opportunities for children to solve problems and enjoy independent learning.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.