

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **Bury Lawn School**

Full Name of the School	<b>Bury Lawn School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>826/6001</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>N/A</b>
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Headmaster	<b>Mr John Moreland</b>
Proprietor	<b>Global Education Management Systems</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Bury Lawn educates boys and girls between the ages of three and eighteen. The school aims to provide a family atmosphere in which everybody is valued as an individual and is encouraged to reach their full potential within a disciplined yet caring atmosphere. In addition, it seeks to offer a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural opportunities, and to encourage pupils to reach for the very highest standards they can achieve, not only academically, but also in areas such as leadership and communication. The school aims to equip pupils with the relevant skills to contribute to the local community and to the wider world.
- 1.2 Bury Lawn has been managed by Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) since September 2003. Directors in the central office, housed at Sherfield School in Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hampshire, undertake the required proprietorial responsibilities and manage centrally many of the financial and budgetary aspects of the school, and provide support and guidance on education, human resources, health and safety and legal issues. Management and leadership within the school are responsible for the education provided, the development of pupils, academic standards, health and safety, child protection, admissions, staff development, and strategic and development planning in the wider context of GEMS planning and strategy. The headmaster took up post in September 2007.
- 1.3 The school is located close to the centre of Milton Keynes. It is set in its own private grounds on a single site among residential properties at the end of a cul-de-sac. The nursery is housed in a separate building close to the entrance to the school grounds. The rest of the school is housed in one building with linking corridors giving ease of access between the primary and secondary schools. The buildings are relatively new and purpose built. More recent additions have included a sports hall and some specialist classrooms such as the dedicated room for performing arts. Three hard-surfaced areas and a playing field provide outdoor space for play and games.
- 1.4 Since the last inspection in 2002 there has been no change in the nature of the school. Since then, a number of changes have taken place in the educational provision and in the buildings. The age of transfer to the secondary school is now at the end of Year 6 and not at the end of Year 5. The provision for learning support which was offered through in-class support is now also offered through withdrawal for one-to-one tuition as appropriate. An information and communication technology (ICT) suite is available in each of the secondary and primary schools. A primary school library has been set up.
- 1.5 Pupils are grouped in three sections across the school. The primary school is made up of the infant section, with 28 part-time pupils in the nursery, 7 pupils in reception class and 16 boys and 9 girls in Years 1 and 2. The junior section of the primary school has 34 boys and 25 girls between the ages of 7 and 11. The secondary school consists of 54 boys and 29 girls in Years 7, 8 and 9, and 77 pupils in Years 10 and 11. The sixth form is made up of 9 boys and 9 girls in Year 13. The school decided not to have pupils in a Year 12 group this year but will introduce it again in September 2008. In the secondary school, a house-based vertical tutoring system is used to group pupils for registration and pastoral purposes. It has been in place since the start of the current academic year. Pupils in the primary school are grouped for teaching and pastoral purposes into class groups, although they are designated as belonging to a house system which operates throughout the whole school and which gives membership of a house to all staff as well as to all pupils.

- 1.6 The school does not select by ability. There are no joining requirements other than an assessment that the school can provide a suitable education for each pupil who applies. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) are offered a place if the school judges it has the resources and the capability to respond to their identified learning needs. The results of standardised tests indicate that the ability range in the primary and in the secondary sections of the school is broad, ranging from far above average to well below average. However, the overall average ability of the school is broadly in line with the national average. Therefore if pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in national tests and public examinations will be broadly in line with the averages for all maintained primary and secondary schools.
- 1.7 Six pupils have statements of special educational needs. Two of these are funded by a Local Authority. The others are funded by their parents. Sixty-two pupils are listed as having LDD. Twenty-seven of these receive specialist learning support from the school. Fifty pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and eight of them are given specialist learning support by the school. A high number of international companies are located in Milton Keynes and employ personnel from overseas, many of whom are employed on short-term contracts. This ever-changing population means that pupils enter the school at any stage of the school year rather than at the regular key points of entry. Some pupils stay at the school for a limited number of years because of their parents' work contracts coming to an end.
- 1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The school provides a good range of educational opportunities suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. In so doing, the school successfully achieves its declared aim to provide a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural opportunities. In the last inspection report it was judged that the curriculum provided by the school, apart from some deficiencies in the Foundation Stage and in science in Years 10 and 11, offered a broad and balanced education suited to all pupils across the full age and ability range, with the needs of each being given great attention. The deficiencies in the Foundation Stage and in Years 10 and 11 have been remedied.
- 2.2 All pupils have access to a broad range of educational experiences. Good provision is made for pupils to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The development of technological abilities through the use of ICT is not well catered for. Limitations in this area are a result of lack of maintenance, inadequate arrangements for access to the ICT suites and no technical support being made available to the part-time teacher appointed last September to teach the subject. Pupils in the primary school are given a broad educational experience that offers all the required elements appropriate to their age. The teaching of science, mathematics and French is either delivered by, or under the direction of, subject specialists. The broad range of subjects and experiences available to pupils in Years 7 to 9 gives a good foundation on which they can build their learning and their development. In addition to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils follow a broad curriculum embracing humanities, food technology, art and design, music, drama, dance and games and physical education (PE). All pupils study at least one modern foreign language, beginning with French. Spanish, German and Latin are available for the more linguistically able. The core subjects continue to be the foundation of pupils' programmes of study in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. A full range of subject choices in these year groups, in addition to the core subjects, gives pupils the option to create a balanced programme of study that matches their capabilities and needs. Pupils are given ample opportunities in lessons and in activities in the secondary school to listen, to voice opinions and to consider the opinions of others.
- 2.3 One of the school's aims is to encourage pupils to reach for the highest standards they can achieve, not only academically, but also in areas such as leadership and communication. In this way the school aims to equip pupils with the relevant skills to contribute to the local community and to the wider world. This aim is supported through the very good relationships between staff and pupils, and the rich experiences provided by music, art, drama and sport which give many opportunities for pupils to grow in self-confidence and to achieve success. Respect and consideration for others and an appreciation of the differences between people are developed in the day-to-day life of the school, in the range of voluntary service opportunities available through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DoE) programme and through contacts with the local community. Expeditions, participation in competitions, and trips to art galleries and places of interest abroad and nearer home make significant contributions to enriching pupils' education. The range of activities and after school clubs is limited by the transport arrangements for pupils who live a distance from the school.
- 2.4 Pupils have opportunities through team or through individual activities to develop personal skills and interests. The small number of pupils available for selection limits the number of teams the school can field for competitions with other schools. Pupils achieve commendable success, take pride in representing their school and take responsibility for improving their performance.

- 2.5 The school prepares pupils well for the next steps in their education. Transfer between the sections of the school is eased through early contact between pupils and some specialist teachers from the secondary school who teach in the primary school. Access to some of the specialist resources of the secondary school helps prepare primary school pupils for the transfer to that section. Preparation for GCSE and A-level examinations and support for application to universities and colleges are thorough and well structured. Older pupils now have access to a high quality of support in their selection of the next step in their education.
- 2.6 The curriculum prepares pupils well for adult life. Pupils develop understanding of key social and personal issues in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, covering such topics as sex education, drugs, citizenship, relationships, responsibility, leadership and the appropriate safeguards to take when using the internet. The key element in the GEMS educational vision of awareness of the wider world is fostered through the international considerations pupils pursue in lessons, and through the daily interaction between pupils from different cultures, ethnic backgrounds and world religions. These contacts encourage pupils to develop a keen awareness of cultural differences and sensitivity to the practical variations between cultures and religions.
- 2.7 Pupils of all abilities, as well as those for whom English is an additional language, benefit from access to the broad education provided and from the support they are given. An excellent programme for assessing and profiling pupils' learning needs identifies the best response the school can make to meet the requirements of pupils with LDD. Each of these pupils has a precise Individual Education Plan (IEP), given to all teachers. These IEPs are used well by many teachers in lessons. Extra provision for pupils with LDD is well structured and ranges from support in lessons by the learning support teachers, to teaching pupils in small groups, or in one-to-one tuition. The quality of this support is of a very high standard. It was singled out for praise by pupils in the secondary school because of their easy access to it and for the range of personalised support they receive. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and a range of options for their development is being developed. Pupils for whom English is an additional language find help in a well-organised programme of a very high standard.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.9 Pupils of all abilities are well educated and achieve good educational standards in knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects and activities provided. They can apply these effectively and they develop the essential skills and attitudes for work and study. Standards in numeracy and literacy are good. Pupils' ability in critical and creative thinking stands them in good stead and contributes to the successes they enjoy in learning and in moving to the next stages of their education. The school fulfils its aim of enabling pupils to reach the very highest standards they can achieve. In the last inspection report, the quality of pupils' learning was judged to be good overall and pupils were seen to be competent and active learners. This continues to be the case.
- 2.10 Pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding. They are good at critical and creative thinking. Clear examples were seen of pupils applying their prior knowledge, understanding and skills to support their learning. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 in art and science lessons responded well to the challenge to think critically in the use of experiments, and in the way they utilised sketch books to reflect their thinking as they explored and developed their artistic ideas and techniques. In a Year 10 English lesson, pupils showed perception in discussing some of the more demanding themes in *Romeo and Juliet*. They showed subtlety and sophistication in contrasting the different ways two directors structured the opening

scenes. Year 6 pupils were skilfully challenged in a mathematics lesson to undertake a range of activities and investigations that stimulated their creativity and critical thinking, as they showed in their responses.

- 2.11 There were no discernible differences in relative attainment between different groups, subjects or curriculum areas. Boys and girls of all ages and abilities reach good levels of attainment and make good progress.
- 2.12 The school does not enter pupils for national tests at age eleven. Overall results in national tests at age fourteen in 2005 and 2006 were above the average for maintained secondary schools and were thus good in relation to pupils' abilities. Pupils were not entered for these tests in 2007. During 2004 to 2006, the last three years for which national comparative data was available at the time of the inspection, GCSE results were above the average for maintained schools and good in relation to the pupils' abilities. At A level, performance during the same period was satisfactory in relation to pupils' abilities. Results were in line with the average for maintained schools. On leaving the school, pupils are successful in gaining entry to a wide range of higher and further education courses and employment.
- 2.13 The school provides opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of music competitions, sports, games and other activities, where teams and individuals have achieved some notable successes. The school goes out of its way to accommodate the requirements of individuals working to achieve success at local and national levels in the activity of their choosing, while maintaining their educational development. The encouragement and flexibility of the school in promoting the talents of these pupils is a contributory factor to their success. Such achievements are celebrated by all pupils and are publicised to parents and, where appropriate, to the wider community.
- 2.14 Pupils develop as articulate and accomplished communicators. They speak purposefully, listen intelligently and write fluently and imaginatively for a variety of purposes. This is more evident in the secondary school than in the primary school. Secondary school pupils acquire subject specific language and use it in a way that contributes to both their understanding and their ability to explain and to explore ideas in lessons. In many science lessons in the secondary school, extended writing describing experiments and individual research carried out by pupils showed their good grasp of scientific ideas. In a Year 10 media lesson, pupils showed their skills at exploring in groups the themes, characters and language of TV sitcoms and then collaborated in bringing together their ideas for a school-based sitcom. In a Year 8 English lesson, pupils showed flair and assurance in discussing how language, structure and layout were deployed to influence readers.
- 2.15 Pupils make good use of their mathematical understanding and apply mathematical concepts and use their knowledge in a focused manner across a range of subjects. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to work at their own pace so that some pupils move quickly to a higher level. In mathematics lessons in the primary school, pupils are able to move on according to their ability and not according to their age so that the more able are making very good progress in developing their mathematical abilities.
- 2.16 Pupils' use of ICT is basic. While there is some use of data logging activities in science, the main use of ICT by pupils is in word processing and in internet searches.

- 2.17 Pupils are generally good at organising their work. Pupils with LDD are given extra help in this area. Written work is generally well presented. There is good note taking in many subjects. There are signs of independent and creative work in the secondary school. The use of sketch books in art to develop ideas and practice techniques is a significant factor in the high quality of art produced by pupils. Nursery pupils are encouraged to make choices and to pursue aspects of their work that interest them. The work in the primary school is limited in the options it offers pupils to make choices and does not give enough scope to pupils to develop independence in their work. In the last inspection it was suggested that more scope should be given to pupils in choosing how to participate in their learning. While some good progress has been made in this area, there is still room for further development.
- 2.18 A clear feature of the school is the willingness with which pupils work co-operatively in whole-class discussion and activities as well as in paired and small group work. This is one of the ways in which pupils with LDD are supported. In a Year 7 drama lesson, pupils undertook a variety of roles using both language and movement to illustrate the importance of trust, moving from group to group showing enthusiasm and enjoyment in what they were doing together.
- 2.19 In lessons and activities throughout the school, pupils settle quickly to their work. They persevere in their assigned tasks and show obvious enjoyment in what they are doing. Behaviour in lessons is good and creates an atmosphere in which learning can take place. Pupils are proud of their work and are willing to talk about it. Pupils said they were happy with what they learn at school and they feel they are achieving and making progress.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.20 The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. The school meets its aim of encouraging pupils to reach for the very highest standards they can achieve, not only academically, but also in areas such as leadership and communication, and so equips them with the relevant skills to contribute to the local community and to the wider world. In the last inspection it was observed that the school gave a range of suitable opportunities through which its pupils could develop a moral code, as well as developing appropriately personally, socially and culturally. However, the report pointed out that opportunities for spiritual development were less frequent, especially from Year 10 upwards. The provision for personal development is still good, and opportunities for spiritual development are now found throughout the school.
- 2.21 Pupils develop a sense of their identity and self-worth through activities, relationships and in the choices they are given to exercise responsibilities for others and to contribute to the well being of the school community. In subjects and activities, pupils learn to listen, to show respect and to be aware of the needs of those around them. They develop self-confidence and enhance their skills by performing for a variety of audiences, by participating in sports and games, and through exhibiting the work they produce in art. Pupils gain insights into values and beliefs and into the way in which religious belief affects peoples' lives, through topics in religious education, through the PSHE programme and through mixing with fellow pupils from different nationalities and world faiths. In an outstanding dance lesson, Year 11 pupils were able to explore religious concepts of resurrection and sacrifice and a range of human emotions. Assemblies are used to develop insights into basic values and to refine awareness of the religious practices and celebrations of world religions.
- 2.22 Pupils' moral development is good. Pupils commented positively on the school's insistence on kindness and truthfulness. They learn to distinguish right from wrong and they abide by the school's rules, which they feel are strict but fair. Moral issues are raised in a number of subjects such as English and science and are discussed in lessons in the PSHE programme.

The behaviour of older pupils is good, and they provide a role model for younger pupils. They support the younger pupils in the nursery and in some junior school lessons, and play an active role in the pastoral system. Consequently, senior pupils contribute to moral development through their example as role models and through the practical support for good behaviour they offer younger pupils.

- 2.23 Pupils' social development is good. At all ages, they respond very well to the many opportunities they have to undertake responsibilities. Selection as a prefect is valued by pupils. In this role they make a positive contribution to the smooth running of the school. Within the house system, which fosters the growth of community spirit, pupils show consideration for the welfare of others. Pupils are aware of the wider world in which they live. Citizenship issues are covered well in the PSHE programme and in a range of subjects. In addition, contacts with outside speakers and visitors develop an understanding of key issues in society.
- 2.24 Pupils acquire a keen appreciation of, and develop respect for, differing cultural traditions. Pupils from a variety of countries enrich the cultural and religious diversity within the school. Pupils from abroad, remembering when they joined the school, sometimes with little or no English, recalled the warmth of welcome that made them feel comfortable in their new school. As one pupil said: "no one is allowed to be a stranger here." Pupils accept the religious, cultural and ethnic diversity in the school as the norm and see the benefits they draw from that experience. As one Year 5 pupil commented: "it's nice to have people from different countries; we get to see what they do and they see what we do." The programme of educational visits, including trips to the theatre, art galleries and historical sites, builds pupils' appreciation of and respect for their own traditions and cultures. The particular contributions of the music, art and drama departments add richness to the cultural experience of pupils.
- 2.25 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

## **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.26 The quality of teaching is good. Staff teach their pupils well and help them to think for themselves and to be critical and creative in their work, so realising the school's aim of encouraging pupils to reach for the very highest standards they can achieve. In the last inspection, teaching was judged to contribute well to pupils' attainment and progress. This continues to be the case.
- 2.27 The quality of teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability. Particular care is taken to ensure that pupils with LDD and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress according to their ability. The detailed IEPs for pupils with LDD give clear guidance to staff on how to work successfully with these pupils. The one-to-one support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is well structured and addresses the needs of individuals. Provision for the gifted and talented pupils is being developed.
- 2.28 Teachers plan and organise their lessons well. The variety of materials and equipment and the quality and quantity of resources provided are sufficient and are well used. As a result, teachers have a range of options as to how they present their lessons and involve pupils. The good understanding teachers have of their pupils influences the planning and the delivery of lessons.
- 2.29 In the best lessons, pupils are challenged to apply prior knowledge and understanding and to be creative and critical in their thinking. In these lessons a good degree of independence is given to pupils in the manner in which they approach their tasks. In a Year 11 chemistry lesson, pupils were required to use their prior knowledge to analyse the creation of ions capable of conducting electricity and were led to analyse results of solubility and conductivity to deduce the nature of bonding. In a mathematics lesson, Year 5 pupils working on calculating areas were required to apply their learning throughout the lesson through a mixture of investigations and co-operative small group working. The appropriateness of the tasks and the variety of activities engaged the pupils from the start so that they developed a good understanding of the topic and made good progress in their learning. In lessons where pupils are challenged to carry out practical activities or to work out solutions to problems, they show an eagerness to think for themselves. This was evident in a Year 9 art lesson where the active participation of pupils in the creation and realisation of their ideas through a given medium greatly assisted their progress and learning. The good natured interaction with individual pupils, the variety of activities and the smart pace of the best lessons promoted outstanding learning. In a Year 7 English lesson, the enthusiasm of the teacher and the enjoyment of the pupils in working through the tasks made for a winning combination that promoted learning.
- 2.30 Occasionally, lessons concentrated too much on explaining and reinforcing the content, or the teachers provided too few opportunities for pupil participation. In the primary school, a preoccupation with following set procedures diminished pupils' opportunities to be creative and to use their initiative in some lessons. While generally teachers' explanations and instructions to pupils were clear, there were a few occasions when a lack of clarity left some pupils uncertain about the task. In a few lessons in the examination classes in the secondary school where there was a wide range of abilities, teachers' preoccupation with the lower ability pupils meant that the more able pupils were not helped to make good progress.
- 2.31 Evaluation of performance against national norms is carried out on the publication of GCSE and A-level results. Standardised tests and measures of progress are used well to build an understanding of pupils' progress and of their needs. Detailed records are kept of performance by pupils with LDD and those for whom English is an additional language.

This information is readily available throughout the school. A detailed assessment tracking system is being constructed by the secondary school. In the areas where it is already in use it is giving teachers clear insights into individual pupils' learning and progress.

- 2.32 Marking is good, with many subjects in the secondary school including written comments and suggestions for improvement. These comments are detailed and helpful, and are used to promote development and to give pupils insight into their work. In other subjects, while good oral feedback on performance in lessons and on homework gives pupils the guidance they need to move forward in their learning, there is no record of this feedback. However, pupils confirmed they understand and benefit from the responses of teachers to their work.
- 2.33 Teachers establish a friendly and hard-working atmosphere, in which pupils generally behave well and take pride in their work. The orderly behaviour of pupils in lessons is a consequence of the good relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils themselves. The use of humour and the calm approach of teachers in many lessons created an atmosphere of enjoyment that fully engaged pupils in their learning. In this atmosphere, teachers can concentrate on using a variety of teaching styles to respond to the learning needs of their pupils, so helping each to make progress in their learning.
- 2.34 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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

- 3.1 The staff successfully care for all pupils' well being and development. A well-structured management framework supports this good quality of care. The school meets its aim of encouraging pupils to reach their potential within a disciplined yet caring atmosphere. In the last inspection, the provision for the care and welfare of pupils was judged to be good.
- 3.2 Staff provide strong support and clear guidance for pupils. The newly introduced vertical tutoring system in the secondary school is a key structure around which the pastoral care of pupils is built. Pastoral provision in the primary school still revolves around the class group and the class teacher, but pupils are assigned to a house even at this early stage so that a sense of identity is being established that will ease their transfer into the secondary school when the time comes. In addition to this structure, there still exists a number of heads of year and key stage co-ordinators who add another dimension in providing comprehensive and focussed attention to the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, pupils have access to a range of individuals who know them well, should they need help or guidance. The careers teacher and the LDD and EAL co-ordinators work in close harmony with the house leaders and the co-ordinators to provide co-ordinated care and guidance for pupils. In interview, pupils said they had no hesitation in turning to staff for assistance and welcomed the range of teachers to whom they could turn.
- 3.3 Staff are well supported in the exercise of their responsibilities. The pastoral system is directed well by the heads of house in the secondary school and by the co-ordinators in the primary school who give tutors the guidance and support they need. Each of these managers of the pastoral system works under the clear direction and with the active support of the deputy head. All required policies for the pastoral care of pupils are in place, giving due guidance to staff on how best to serve the needs of their pupils.
- 3.4 The positive relationships between staff and pupils from the nursery through to the sixth form are a key element in creating and sustaining the ethos of the school and in promoting the welfare of pupils. The relaxed and friendly manner in which pupils and staff work together enhances every aspect of the life of the school and promotes the development of pupils.
- 3.5 Pupils are aware of their responsibility for considerate behaviour. This theme is well covered in assemblies, in the PSHE programme and in tutor discussions. Pupils know the anti-bullying stance of the school. In interviews, pupils said they knew what to do if bullying should occur, but expressed the opinion that it happened only rarely, if at all. Strategies to foster good behaviour and to prevent bullying are based on encouragement and positive reinforcement. Considerable support and guidance are given to pupils who have misbehaved to ensure they understand the reasons their behaviour is unacceptable and to help them change their ways.
- 3.6 Clear child protection arrangements are well documented in the staff handbook, expressed in the school policies, known by staff and carefully observed. The named person for child protection is the deputy head. Her training and that of all staff is appropriate and on-going.
- 3.7 Appropriate health and safety policies and procedures are in place. However, risk assessments lack the required attention to detail. Pupils taken ill are treated with due care and consideration. Suitably qualified first-aiders are readily available throughout the school. The admissions register is well kept. Registration procedures are thorough, and lateness and

absences are dealt with appropriately. Good levels of attendance allow pupils to benefit from the many experiences the school provides as part of their education. All necessary measures have been taken to minimise the risks from fire and other hazards, and full records of fire drills are kept. The quality and quantity of the food served are very good, with a wide choice available to suit all requirements. Catering staff and teachers supervise the dining area and observe the eating habits of pupils, offering guidance and suggestions about healthy eating where appropriate. Some issues concerning health and safety were raised with the school during the inspection and were dealt with immediately.

- 3.8 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) complete all risk assessments, adding the details required [Regulation 3.(4)].

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.9 The school has a good relationship with parents and strong and worthwhile links with the local community. The value of these contacts was recognised in the last inspection. The quality of these links continues to be a feature of the school, ensuring it meets its declared aim of equipping pupils with the relevant skills to contribute to the local community and to the wider world.
- 3.10 The responses to the parents' questionnaire, completed before the inspection, reflected parental satisfaction with the education and the support given to their children. A small number of parents raised concerns about the help available to pupils with LDD. The inspectors found no evidence to support these concerns.
- 3.11 Parents are encouraged to be involved in the work and progress of pupils. The school's parents association, The Friends of Bury Lawn, runs an active programme of events aimed at encouraging a sense of community within the parent body. Parents are invited into school to speak to pupils on issues of importance, and to share their expertise on a range of topics. Parents are generous in supporting school trips and many help with the reading programme in the primary school. These occasions and ready access to senior staff afford parents further opportunities to meet staff and discuss issues about their children's education.
- 3.12 Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school. Clear and useful reports about pupils' work and progress are followed up by parents' evenings so that parents can discuss points raised in the reports. The reports are variable in the quality of the information they give, ranging from detailed assessment of performance against the objectives for that term, to those that are exhortatory and general in their comments. In only a few subject reports in the secondary school are targets given for improvement. The ease of contact between the school and parents, if there is any cause for concern about a pupil, allows for early intervention to resolve problems. Regular newsletters, a website and a termly calendar are greatly appreciated by parents and keep them informed about school news and activities. The use of email is increasing as a method for maintaining good communications between parents and staff.
- 3.13 The school handles the concerns of parents with due care. The school publishes its formal complaints procedure as required, and tells parents of the number of complaints raised in the preceding academic year.
- 3.14 The school actively promotes strong links with the wider community. Very good links of great benefit to pupils have been set up through the work of the PE staff. Pupils are given access to local clubs and sport associations through these links. As a result, they can compete at a local and national level and develop high-level skills in a variety of sports.

Similar benefits accrue from the community contacts of the music staff in both the primary and secondary sections of the school, giving pupils the wider audience and the more specialised tuition they require to develop their musical skills to a high level. Community connections through the work of the art department enrich pupils' experiences, opening for them a wide range of possibilities for developing their art. Community service is an active part of the DoE, taking participants out into Milton Keynes to serve the needs of the community.

- 3.15 Trekking and camping around Britain and in places overseas, such as New Zealand, bring pupils into contact with an international community. The group participating in the DoE scheme is composed of pupils from other schools and associations as well as pupils from the school. This mix of young people from different backgrounds enriches the experience for all those involved.
- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good. The board of GEMS has set appropriate aims and values, and provides direction for the school. The breadth of expertise of the board members makes them a valuable resource from which the school draws benefit.
- 4.2 The structure and management arrangements GEMS has put in place are well defined and support strategic oversight of the school. GEMS has a comprehensive and detailed operating manual that can be accessed by the school management at any time, giving the support and guidance on all issues that make for good management. The GEMS executives are aware of their legal responsibilities and are involved in educational development and financial planning, and in setting up strategies to ensure good educational provision. They have a clear understanding of their role in the management of the school, and allow the headmaster to exercise his responsibilities accordingly. Regular meetings between the headmaster and the executives of GEMS give them the information they need to be conversant with the needs and opportunities facing the school. Regular visits to the school by various members of the GEMS board give them the chance to support developments in the school. Good planning is in place that recognises the responsibilities and the contributions of the GEMS board and of the headmaster.
- 4.3 The GEMS executive is generally effective in discharging responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Required policies are appropriate but procedures for health and safety are incomplete because the required details for risk assessments are not yet in place. Members of the board are involved in drawing up policies and in reviewing their impact. However, the monitoring and evaluation of these policies are not yet embedded in the governance process for this school.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.4 The quality of leadership and management is good. In the last inspection, management overall was judged to be satisfactory in ensuring that the aims of the school were met but a number of recommendations were made. All these recommendations have been met.
- 4.5 Very good educational direction and leadership and management are provided by the headmaster and the deputy head. The clear vision of the headmaster and the strategies for stability and development he has put in place are giving the school a sense of purpose and ensuring that the aims of the school are met. As a consequence, staff morale is high, while pupils feel secure and are of the opinion that they are making good progress and benefiting from their time in the school. The senior management team is well informed on all aspects of the life of the school and gives purposeful leadership. The future direction and development of the school, as expressed in the school development plan, are based on a clear understanding of the school's key strengths and identified areas for development. All staff are involved in the consultation process underpinning this development planning.
- 4.6 Senior staff monitor and lead reviews of the impact of all policies and procedures. Much informal monitoring takes place. Careful analysis of pupil performance and scrutiny of tests and assessments results give the monitoring the substance it needs to be reliable.
- 4.7 The school has a thorough system for checking the suitability of staff, supply staff and visitors. There is a suitable programme for the induction of new staff. There are no newly

- qualified teachers. Lesson observation, mentoring and well-structured meetings give staff the guidance and support they require to improve their professional standing. Clear plans are in place to develop further the curriculum and to reactivate the appraisal and professional development programme.
- 4.8 Sound and prudent financial management of the school's allocated budget underpins the development process. The rolling programme of building and refurbishment over the past few years has provided pupils with an attractive and stimulating environment. Resources are sufficient for good teaching. The estate and premises are well maintained and cared for by a committed staff who make a positive contribution to the well being and to the ethos of the school. However, there are several areas where under-funding remains an issue. Insufficient funds have been made available for the upgrading and the development of the ICT provision. The provision is barely adequate to serve curriculum needs. High demand for the use of the ICT teaching rooms limits access. The part-time ICT teacher in the secondary school lacks technical backup and is managing a system that is not working properly. Both primary and secondary school libraries are inadequate in the range, age and number of books available for study and for personal reading. Work is in hand to refurbish and extend these libraries and to add to the range and number of books available.
- 4.9 The administration of the school is effective. The administrative, catering and maintenance staff contribute to achieving the aims of the school through the range and quality of support they offer. The inclusion of all staff as members of the houses in the pastoral system gives them a sense of identity with the core activities of the school, and allows them to operate as role models and as an extra resource in supporting the development and well being of the pupils. The good humour of these staff and the high quality of their relationships with pupils make an important contribution to the community atmosphere of the school.
- 4.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.11 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

### **Overall Conclusions**

- 5.1 The school is successful in its aim of providing a family atmosphere in which everybody is valued as an individual and is encouraged to reach their full potential within a disciplined yet caring atmosphere. The school meets the needs of pupils with a wide range of abilities and interests, and from a variety of backgrounds. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of their learning and development, and achieve good levels of attainment in public examinations and in activities. The quality of personal development and care for others is good. The provision for the needs of pupils with LDD and for those for whom English is an additional language is of a very high standard. Support for the gifted and talented is being developed. Pupils themselves make a positive contribution to creating a sense of community within which all are made to feel at home. A strong partnership with parents and worthwhile links with the wider community, including an international dimension, enrich the provision for pupils' education. The very good leadership and management of the headmaster and the senior management team give clear direction and strong support in creating an educational experience of benefit to all pupils. Proprietors, in partnership with the leadership of the school, have established a clear strategic plan to take the school forward.
- 5.2 Most of the issues raised at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The curricular provision across the school is now broad and balanced. Staff are trained in the use of ICT but access to the ICT facilities is still limited by a number of factors. A formal system of professional review is in place but is only now beginning to be used properly. The management and leadership structure of the school has been reshaped, giving clear areas of responsibility to post holders. Posts have been created that focus on support for pupils' development and learning. All staff are involved in review and in planning.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils).

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 The school has very few issues to resolve, but in order to improve its provision further it should address the following matters.
1. Develop ICT by providing technical support and maintenance and designing a system that allows for good access to the ICT suites.
  2. Improve the quality of the libraries by increasing the numbers and relevance of titles in the book stock.
  3. Develop the role of middle managers by using the performance review procedures, and by offering training for all post holders on the essential activities of good management and leadership.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) complete all risk assessments, adding the details required [Regulation 3.(4)].

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with a representative of the GEMS executive, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and an assembly. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr Edward Dunphy	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Jane Disley	Headteacher, IAPS school
Mr Gareth Williams	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mrs Penny Goodman	Deputy Warden and Headteacher, HMC school
Mr Colin Cooke	Head of Department and Senior Master, ISA school
Mr Peter Dass	Former Headteacher, ISA school
Mr Stuart Nicholson	Headteacher, ISA school