EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

LITTLEGARTH SCHOOL

MAY 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Littlegarth School			
DfE number	881/6019			
Registered charity number	325064			
Address	Horkesley Park Nayland Colchester Essex CO6 4JR			
Telephone number	01206 262332			
Email address	office@littlegarth.essex.sch.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Peter Jones			
Chair of governors	Mrs Elisabeth Mimpriss			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	330			
	Boys	192	**Girls**	138
	EYFS	98	**Juniors**	232
Inspection dates	24 to 25 May 2017			

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PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates on behalf of the DfE, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest report on the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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 specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

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INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with 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 assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Jan Preece	Reporting inspector
Mr Michael Higham	Team inspector (Former headmaster, IAPS school)
Miss Finola Stack	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

1.1 Littlegarth school is an independent day school for boys and girls aged two to eleven years. It is administered as a charitable trust by a board of governors. The school was founded in Dedham in 1940. It became a charitable trust in the 1950s and moved to its current location in 1994.

1.2 Since the previous inspection the school has increased its provision for Information and Communication Technology (ICT). It has developed the use of its woodland area to provide problem-solving and teamwork activities for all pupils. The availability of learning support has been increased and the pastoral care system reviewed. A large teaching block is nearing completion.

What the school seeks to do

1.3 The school's aim is to educate each child to the best of their ability by offering a well-balanced and broad curriculum that places particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills. It seeks to value each child as an individual by encouraging them to have a positive and ambitious attitude to life and learning, to encourage them to develop a sense of responsibility and to show respect for one another. It aims to encourage close relationships between parents and the school.

About the pupils

1.4 Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is well above average. The school has identified 90 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia and the autistic spectrum, of whom 72 receive additional support. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or statement of special educational needs. Very few pupils require additional support for English as an additional language (EAL). The curriculum is modified for pupils whom the school has identified as being the most able, as well as for other pupils who have particular abilities in drama, sport, art and music.

1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

School name	*National Curriculum name*
Lower Nursery (2-3 years)	Nursery
Upper Nursery (3-4 years)	Nursery

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils of all abilities make rapid progress, so that standards of knowledge, skills and understanding are high across the curriculum.
- Pupils achieve considerable success in areas outside the curriculum such as sport, drama, art and music.
- Throughout the school, pupils' listening and communication skills are particularly strong.
- Pupils' success is underpinned by their highly enthusiastic and positive approach to learning and desire to do well.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate exceptionally inclusive values and high levels of care and support for one another, and their behaviour is excellent.
- Pupils are very self-confident and highly co-operative and respectful of one another's ideas.
- Pupils exhibit a mature sense of right and wrong and display a strong empathy towards others.
- Pupils' excellent personal development is promoted by strong pastoral care and the exceptionally warm relationships between staff and individual pupils.

Recommendation

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Ensure that the outstanding teaching seen in many lessons which matches activities to individual pupils' abilities and offers sufficient challenge to the most able, is implemented even more consistently.

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3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.2 The school is entirely successful in fulfilling its aim to educate each child to the best of their ability by offering a broad and well-balanced curriculum that places particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, pupils demonstrate high standards of knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum and standards in English and mathematics are particularly high.

3.3 Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with widely varying levels of development. Their basic skills for learning are developed highly effectively through the planning of activities which reflect their interests and thorough on-going assessment of their needs. Children demonstrate excellent imagination in role play; for example, they work cooperatively in solving problems when building, using realistic resources provided by staff in response to their interest in the adjacent construction site. Children make good progress in lessons provided by specialist staff in music, drama, physical education (PE) and French because their next learning steps are shared effectively, enabling appropriate activities to be provided. Across the school pupils benefit from the priority given to the acquisition of secure skills in English and mathematics. They apply these across a broad curriculum which enables each pupil to discover their strengths and particular interests. Pupils progress well because they are well-challenged in many lessons by questioning matched to their individual abilities, and through tasks which enable the most able to produce work of very high quality. For example, in an English lesson, older pupils wrote extended metaphorical poems using images they had chosen to determine the mood of each line. However, this is not consistently the case. Sometimes an over-reliance on worksheets limits opportunities for independent learning and challenge for the most able.

3.4 Pupils throughout the school apply excellent recall of previous learning to fresh topics, and they use technical vocabulary, such as in science, correctly. They develop good standards in the expressive and creative arts through working with specialist teachers; for example, the youngest children in Nursery use body percussion rhythmically and extend this to percussion instruments, while older pupils create an effective African drumming piece using an ostinato. Pupils display well-developed acting skills; for example, in history they worked on Greek plays, some of which they had written themselves, on a stage created in a natural amphitheatre in the school's grounds. The pupils produce most attractive artwork which demonstrates a growing awareness of the techniques of famous artists. Pupils develop their thinking and learning skills outside of the classroom when they undertake interesting activities led by staff specially trained in woodland learning or on day visits to places of interest. For example, younger pupils demonstrated excellent observational skills in identifying different materials in nature that are useful in building a nest.

3.5 Children in the EYFS make excellent progress from their starting points so that by the time they leave Reception most are at the expected levels of development for their age and many are exceeding them. They continue to make substantial progress and are successful in gaining entry to schools of their choice, including highly selective independent and grammar schools. In the three years from 2013-2016 pupils gained 100 academic, art, sports or all-rounder awards. The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests but evidence from assessment data, work scrutiny and lesson observations shows their attainment to be above average in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils with SEND and the most able make similar good progress to their peers because in many lessons planning takes into account detailed information issued by the learning support team. All pupils' success is further promoted through careful monitoring of their progress by senior leaders which ensures that any who are under-performing receive highly effective support either within class or by

individual or small group provision. The leadership also ensures that staff receive sufficient training on pupil's specific learning needs to enable them to confidently manage their progress. The governing body maintains careful oversight of the curriculum through governor visits and its curriculum committee, which receives a detailed analysis of pupils' attainment in English and mathematics each year. Pupils' progress does not flag at transition stages because staff conduct comprehensive handover meetings each academic year.

3.6 Pupils of all ages develop excellent communication skills. Children in the EYFS listen attentively to staff because they are read stories which catch their imagination and lead to interesting activities. They are inquisitive; for example, after enjoying a counting game on the interactive board, a child in Nursery asked, "What is software"? As they grow older pupils become highly articulate and confident, able to explain their reasoning and ideas and to speak publicly in school productions and assemblies. By the time they leave the EYFS pupils have developed strong phonetic skills which enable them to read well for their ages and abilities. Older pupils apply fluent reading and comprehension skills to read for both pleasure and research. Throughout the school pupils' writing is often of a high standard and demonstrated across a range of genres. They develop a good grasp of punctuation and spelling due to systematic teaching and regular practice and are adept in transferring written skills to subjects other than English.

3.7 Pupils have well-developed numeracy skills. The youngest children in Nursery understand one-to-one correspondence when counting objects. As they grow older, pupils use their knowledge of numbers and calculating skills in problem solving; for example, a more able pupil created a mathematical expression following an investigation into the movements of frogs. Pupils apply their mathematical skills in subjects such as information and communication technology (ICT), science and PE. In the EYFS children become very confident and competent in using a range of digital devices such as interactive whiteboards, digital cameras, computers and programmable toys. Their oral communication skills are promoted particularly well when they use sound buttons to record their thoughts. Pupils demonstrate strong technological skills to research and present projects such as on the rain forest and use software to enhance their learning such as in mathematics and French. Leaders and governors are aware that opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum are currently limited and have planned to enhance these significantly in the new teaching block.

3.8 Pupils' all-round excellent progress is strongly supported by their highly positive and ambitious attitudes towards their learning. They maintain a high degree of focus during lessons and are curious and enthusiastic. They develop useful study skills such as the ability to use inference when explaining a metaphor in a text and to make and justify predictions in science and mathematics. They are adept at note-taking and research, and can analyse and synthesise information in projects such as on Queen Elizabeth 1 in history and on climate change in geography. Children in the EYFS demonstrate creative thinking and the ability to work collaboratively. These skills are developed steadily as pupils progress, so that older pupils are able to discuss ideas to market and design their own chocolate bar, having conducted market research. Older pupils assert that they are ready for their new school due to expectations from staff that they have the self-discipline to work on their own.

3.9 Pupils demonstrate considerable success in a wide range of activities both in and out of the classroom, for example in national mathematics and essay writing competitions. Their achievements cover many pursuits due to the leadership's promotion of a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities and the priority given to encouraging each pupil to find what they are good at and to succeed in it. Pupils also succeed highly because achievement in all areas is celebrated, whether in or outside of school. The school's sporting teams, such as the girls' netball and boys' soccer and rugby teams have been successful in

recent Independent Schools' Association (ISA) national tournaments and the boys' and girls' swimming and athletics teams have won the ISA regional titles for the past seven years. The school's ski team has won the national U12 title for the past two years and several girls have been selected for the English National Ski Squad. Many pupils learn at least one instrument and participate in school choirs and ensembles where they demonstrate good musicianship, such as in the informal concert observed during the inspection. Pupils are successful in national music and ballet examinations as well as in speech and drama, as reflected in their confident participation in school productions such as the *Wind in the Willows* rehearsed by the oldest pupils.

3.10 Every parent who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the range of subjects is suitable for their child and the overwhelming majority agreed that the school provides a good choice of extra-curricular activities and that teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future. All the pupils agreed that they have the opportunity to learn and make progress, that teachers are supportive and helpful if they encounter any problems with their work and that they can be involved in a good range of activities.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

4.2 This fully reflects the priority given by the leadership to the school's aim to value each child as an individual by encouraging them to have a positive and ambitious attitude to life and learning, to encourage them to develop a sense of responsibility and to show respect for one another. Pupils' well-developed personal skills are promoted by warm, relationships provided by staff, who know each individual very well and carefully monitor their welfare. The leadership ensures that the particular needs of individual pupils are regularly discussed with staff to ensure that appropriate support is available to any encountering social or emotional difficulties. As a result of strong pastoral care, all the pupils agreed in the questionnaire that they have someone to talk to at school if they have a concern or worry, and a very large majority of parents agreed that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development.

4.3 As they progress through the school, pupils develop very mature self-knowledge which enables them to understand and articulate their personal strengths. For example, pupils in the middle part of the school told inspectors that they have come to understand that hard work and perseverance improves their performance across a range of activities. The pupils exhibit a natural self-assurance as a result of the staff's use of focused praise to reward effort and achievement. They say they trust staff to support them with any difficulties that they may encounter. Children in the EYFS build secure relationships with the adults who work with them which enables them to approach school routines with growing confidence and independence. Older pupils recognise one another's strengths and areas of difficulty and support and encourage each other whenever they can. Consequently, pupils' self-esteem is excellent and promoted further through the leadership's emphasis on celebrating and sharing all success both in and out of school. The composition of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, which allows topics such as self-esteem to be re-visited at various points throughout the school, ensures that pupils are able to explore personal feelings and develop their inter-personal skills in an age-appropriate way.

4.4 Pupils are able to exercise strong initiative and understand the importance of making the correct decisions since they are given many opportunities to develop this skill from an early age, such as when choosing their activities in the EYFS. As a result, young learners persevere with self-chosen tasks, sensitively supported by adults. Older pupils told inspectors that they do not worry about making mistakes because they are encouraged to 'have a go'. Pupils develop good independence and self-organisation skills on residential trips. They appreciate that the wide choice afforded by the many extra-curricular activities offered enables them to discover new interests and abilities. They told inspectors that they value opportunities for decision making in their work, such as by self-setting personal targets, though some more able pupils feel too directed at times.

4.5 Pupils are able to reflect maturely upon spiritual areas of their life. They appreciate the beauty of the school's rural setting and enjoy activities in the woodland or growing vegetables that enable them to closely encounter the natural world. They understand the part that music plays in giving them pleasure, both in performance and the appreciation of other's work, and they demonstrate excellent aesthetic appreciation of art and literature. They show a strong understanding of major world faiths gained through religious education (RE) lessons and the school's marking of major religious festivals, particularly those embraced by members of the pupil population. Pupils of all ages are thoughtful and respectful in assembly prayers and demonstrate a good understanding of non-material considerations such as what makes something precious. Their engagement is promoted in RE where religious stories are linked to their own lives, such as when they reflect on the nature of happiness and what makes them

personally happy, after studying the beatitudes. Older pupils appreciate the opportunities for relaxation and reflection given in a well-being lunchtime club.

4.6 From an early age, pupils demonstrate a very well-developed sense of right and wrong. Throughout the school they articulate a strong affinity with the *Littlegarth Way*, a simple set of rules devised by the school council some years ago. Pupils told inspectors that they believe this code promotes fairness within the whole school community and helps them to develop resilience. They are prepared to challenge unkind behaviour should they see it, confident that a member of staff will provide support should it become necessary. They recognise the role of rules in keeping them safe and that they are the basis of the law in Britain. The pupils accept responsibility for their own behaviour, which is excellent, yet retain a natural exuberance, for example behaving impeccably when not required on stage during a play rehearsal and, in assembly, joining in vigorously when required but remaining silent when appropriate. They take great pride in being awarded merits which contribute to the house cup competition.

4.7 Throughout the school pupils show an excellent social awareness. They are caring and mindful of one another's needs and able to show strong empathy. In the EYFS children play happily and cooperatively together, learning to take turns and to share toys and equipment. Pupils are very loyal to their houses and act as a team to achieve success in house competitions, showing a genuine appreciation of one another's contributions. They also participate in and enjoy sports, music and drama groups, understanding that by teamwork they will achieve good outcomes. They collaborate well in lessons, willing to negotiate and adapt their own ideas and to allocate tasks which accommodate one another's views. Pupils are keen to contribute to the school community and undertake their responsibilities willingly. They help with tasks such as distributing snacks in the EYFS and the oldest pupils all undertake prefectorial roles which include, for part of the year, major responsibilities such as House Captain. Pupils appreciate the role of the school council and feel it has been instrumental in making improvements, such as additional playground equipment. Choirs sing at local care homes and to raise money for charity. The school has identified furthering links with the local community as an area for development. The oldest pupils are enthusiastically involved in an initiative where they work in teams developing business opportunities to raise money for a local hospice. They are organising this themselves as part of the Young Enterprise scheme.

4.8 Pupils demonstrate exceptionally inclusive values, such as acceptance and respect, which are modelled by staff and promoted effectively through PSHE and RE lessons and assemblies. They enjoy talking with each other about their different faith and cultural traditions and on a day to day basis those from different backgrounds work and play harmoniously, as seen at break and lunchtimes. They accept variation as an important factor in their uniqueness because senior leaders emphasise difference as a positive attribute to be celebrated within the school. In the questionnaire, the vast majority of parents and all the pupils agreed that the school encourages pupils to respect other people and to be tolerant of other faiths and beliefs.

4.9 Pupils feel safe in school and well-cared for. They know how to keep safe on the internet because this is taught frequently from an early age; for example, an engaging story in the Nursery taught children the need to tell an adult where you are going and that people on the internet may not be who they seem. Pupils of all ages understand what constitutes a healthy diet and praise the quality of the school lunches. They know that exercise is beneficial to their health and relish the space they have to play and all the sporting opportunities offered. Older pupils also articulate the importance to their well-being of getting enough sleep and are aware of the importance of mindfulness and relaxation to their emotional health.

4.10 By the time they leave the school, pupils have well-developed personalities. They feel prepared for the transition to senior school, confident and excited about the fresh challenges

they will encounter, and recognise that they have learned a lot about themselves to equip them for their future lives.