

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Terra Nova School

Full Name of the School	<b>Terra Nova School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>875/6006</b>
Early Years Number	<b>N/A</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>525919</b>
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Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Peter Johns</b>
Age Range (of the whole school)	<b>3 to 13</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009</b>
Head of Early Years Setting	<b>Mrs Christine Boyce</b>
Early Years Age Range	<b>3 to 5</b>
Early Years Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Early Years Foundation Stage Inspection Dates	<b>19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009</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 Department 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 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. The inspection was carried out by ISI, a body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting EYFS provision in schools belonging to the ISC Associations. Section 7 of this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

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 Terra Nova began as a school for boys in 1897, and now educates boys and girls from three to thirteen years of age. Children aged three to seven attend the pre-preparatory department, and pupils aged eight to thirteen attend the preparatory department. A charitable trust since 1955, the life and work of the school are overseen by a governing body drawn from varied, appropriate backgrounds. Situated in a rural area near Holmes Chapel, the school is self-contained in thirty acres of land, with extensive playing fields and a number of buildings housing teaching facilities.
- 1.2 The school aims to work with parents and children to provide the best possible education for all, meeting individual needs and encouraging children spiritually, emotionally and socially to lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives. It seeks to do this by promoting academic excellence and enjoyment, outstanding teaching, safe and secure learning, respect for self, others and property, pride in the school and helping and supporting the wider community.
- 1.3 The school has changed significantly since the last inspection. Weekly and flexi-boarding have replaced full boarding, and accommodation has been upgraded. New teaching and changing rooms have been added, dining facilities extended and the swimming pool has been covered. A new digital language laboratory and interactive whiteboards have been installed.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, 265 pupils attended the school, of whom 141 were boys and 124 were girls. Sixty-seven pupils aged three to five were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); 55 were in Years 1 and 2; and 143 were in Years 3 to 8. The boarding community operates from Monday until Saturday afternoon each week. Of the 265 on roll, six boys and six girls board every night, and a number of pupils board on a regular, flexi-boarding basis.
- 1.5 Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, with the majority of parents from business and professional sectors. Most day pupils live within 30 miles of the school, though some travel considerably further; boarders range from the very local to those from much further afield. Parents have high expectations: most seek 13+ places at senior independent boarding schools, and an increasing number are considering 11+ and 13+ entry to local selective independent day schools.
- 1.6 Pupils enter in all age-groups and at all stages of the year. The school is non-selective, offering education to children of a broad ability range, subject only to the headmaster's agreement that the school is able to cater for the child's educational, physical and emotional needs. Prospective pupils may also have an informal meeting with the head of learning support.
- 1.7 The school's ability profile is marginally above the national average overall. Data from a variety of standardised tests shows a wide range of ability, with verbal, quantitative and non-verbal reasoning scores which have been, on average, above the national average over the last four years. These results are consistent with internal assessments and evidence gathered during the inspection. Pupils do not sit national tests at the ages of seven or eleven.
- 1.8 Thirty pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom twenty receive specialist support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Almost all pupils are white British. The school has eleven pupils for whom English is not their principal language (EAL), but only one who requires extra support.

- 1.9 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.
- 1.10 See Section 7 for the report on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 A stimulating range of rich and varied experiences meet the needs, abilities and interests of pupils well throughout the school from the EYFS to Year 8. These experiences are thoroughly consistent with the school's aim of providing the best possible education for all. The school has responded very positively to the last ISI report and has significantly improved the overall quality of educational experiences for both day pupils and boarders.
- 2.2 The curriculum is broad and balanced, and has been enriched by the development of numerous cross-curricular initiatives. It aims to provide additional breadth and depth through specialist teaching and the early introduction of subjects such as French and Latin. Pupils enjoy good opportunities, both in and out of class, to practise and develop listening and speaking skills. Discussion is a major feature of many lessons, both during whole-class debate and when smaller groups explore different issues in preparation for presentations to their classmates. Pupils also take part actively in assemblies, a range of dramatic activities and external speech and drama events. Numeracy and literacy skills are promoted effectively across subjects. The school values creativity highly, encouraging it strongly in all age-groups and for all abilities. It features across the curriculum, and is evident in a wealth of imaginative and visually stimulating displays that support pupils' learning. In the performing arts, drama and music are also used to extend pupils and encourage personal growth.
- 2.3 In accordance with the school's aims and ethos, great importance is attached to personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and to developing a sense of community. A particularly strong platform for learning in these areas is created through thoughtful cross-curricular planning, assemblies and extra-curricular activities, all of which complement PSHCE lessons.
- 2.4 Varied activities enable pupils to pursue many interests. For example, music, dance, art, drama and DT offer creative outlets; shooting practice, football, circus skills and swimming offer opportunities to develop physical skills; Cubs promotes personal development and the science club challenges the mind. Provision for games is good. Excellent outdoor facilities, including a seasonal, covered swimming pool, enable the school to offer a varied programme of sports and games. Staff are committed and provide expert teaching and coaching, enabling a number of pupils to enjoy competing against each other and against other schools. Pupils also benefit from opportunities to enhance learning through careful cross-curricular planning that extends to school trips as well as classroom activities. The whole range of extra-curricular activities contributes positively to pupils' personal development.
- 2.5 Transfer from the pre-preparatory to the preparatory department of the school is smooth and natural, undertaken in a climate of strong pastoral care. Pupils are well-prepared, and are familiar with the preparatory site as a result of the activities they experience in the main school, ranging from lunch in the dining room to physical education (PE) and dance in the performing arts centre. Ease of transfer is also supported by good management, via clear and informative meetings with parents and planned changeover visits for pupils. Academic preparation for 13+ transfer examinations to senior school is excellent. Provision for personal development and pastoral care is outstanding, and prepares pupils particularly well to move on to their next schools with confidence and maturity.

- 2.6 Curriculum planning is much improved. The development of a faculty structure has strengthened departments and led to clear and comprehensive documentation that provides robust frameworks to assist teachers and gives line managers satisfactory guidelines for monitoring standards across the curriculum.
- 2.7 The learning support department is a great strength of the school and is extremely effective in meeting the needs of LDD and EAL pupils. Support is provided by teaching staff, teaching assistants, the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and an external teacher. Depending upon a pupil's needs, support is available both within the classroom and in the learning support department for literacy and numeracy work, as well as for guidance over prep and examination preparation.
- 2.8 Throughout the school, teachers are expected to exercise responsibility for pupils with LDD and to plan work accordingly. The head of learning support has run study skills workshops for the whole staff to raise awareness of learning styles and differing needs. Individual education plans (IEPs) are drawn up for all pupils requiring them: from Reception to Year 4 the SENCO writes the IEPs with the class teacher, and from Year 5 teachers write their own action plans to link with targets. EAL pupils are expertly assessed and taught by an external teacher.
- 2.9 Pupils are regularly assessed and the head of learning support liaises with the deputy headmaster weekly. Children whose test results highlight discrepancies undergo further assessment from the SENCO so that appropriate programmes can be devised.
- 2.10 The school has compiled a register of gifted and talented (G&T) pupils, and initiated a project to extend them: at present they are exploring the theme of 'space'. Medium and long term plans exist to extend enrichment activities for these pupils, for example by developing links with maintained schools in the surrounding area. In Years 7 and 8, the most able and gifted pupils are presented with further stimulating and sustained challenges through scholarship work that encourages them to think critically, creatively and originally.
- 2.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.12 In both their academic and their broader education, pupils achieve well throughout the school and develop good skills for learning, meeting the school's aim to offer a stimulating education in which high expectations and a broad range of opportunities encourage pupils to make the most of their abilities. The good standards found in the last inspection have been maintained, and in a number of areas are now outstanding.
- 2.13 Pupils transferring from the EYFS to Year 1 do so having achieved higher standards than those expected nationally. These pupils are well grounded in knowledge, understanding and skills in all that they do, and have learned to apply these skills as well as thinking and acting creatively and critically. From the EYFS onwards, pupils have positive, enthusiastic attitudes to study which enable them to benefit from their lessons and activities. As they move through the school, they become increasingly competent learners.
- 2.14 Logical and independent thought are evident in all year groups. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, for example, an investigation into angles demanded rational and autonomous thought to arrive at appropriate conclusions. Many pupils exhibit good critical and creative thinking. For example, in art, DT and music, pupils show originality and critically analyse both their own work and that of others. In Year 8 music, pupils enthusiastically devised and executed a rap routine before evaluating their performances and suggesting improvements. In a number

- of cases, work of outstanding quality is produced, vividly illustrated in the profusion of inspiring art, and design and technology work displayed around the school.
- 2.15 Very good foundations are laid in the pre-preparatory department for the development of literacy skills, which are built upon in later years. As pupils move through the school, they read and write with increasing fluency and for a widening range of purposes; much of this writing is of a high standard. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils dealt with challenging dialect to write outstandingly creative poems based on their reading. Both boys and girls are articulate and confident, and they use language to great effect; in interviews they stated their points of view fluently and discussed topics in a sophisticated fashion.
- 2.16 Overall, pupils display good mathematical skills, not only in numeracy and mathematics lessons but also in other curriculum areas, seen for example in project work involving graphical presentation and analysis of data to arrive at reliable conclusions.
- 2.17 Since the last inspection, pupils' use of ICT has improved. Good examples were seen in some subjects, for example in a Year 6 World War I history presentation and in 'newspaper reporting' on flooding in Bangladesh produced by Year 6 geographers; but insufficient use is made of ICT as a learning tool across the whole curriculum.
- 2.18 There are no significant differences in relative attainment between groups of pupils, subjects or curriculum areas. The attainment of all pupils, including those with LDD and high achievers, is good in relation to their abilities. Pupils are helped by the encouragement they receive from teachers and, where appropriate, from their learning support teachers.
- 2.19 Direct comparisons of pupils' standards with those achieved nationally are not possible, since national tests are no longer taken at the ages of seven or eleven. Nonetheless, standardised tests of progress suggest that pupils often achieve above the level indicated by their ability scores. The school enjoys a strong tradition of success in selective transfer examinations, and since the last inspection the overall number of awards and scholarships has doubled.
- 2.20 Individual and group achievements are valued; standards in extra-curricular activities are high, and in many areas excellent. In recent years, pupils have gained art, design, drama, music, sport and all-rounder scholarships to a wide range of senior schools. Pupils have been selected for local drama productions and the northern department of the National Youth Choir. Others have reached the finals of the national schools Primary Maths Challenge. The school has achieved significant sporting success in recent years, including national titles in rugby, shooting and athletics. Individuals have played representative sport for both the county and the region in football, hockey, netball, rugby, shooting and tennis.
- 2.21 Pupils' workbooks are well organised and clearly presented. As they move through the school, pupils show increasing ability to abstract information from a range of texts and make effective notes.
- 2.22 Pupils work very effectively as individuals and exceptionally well together, giving each other productive support in both lessons and activities. Excellent co-operative work was seen, for example, in Year 8 history, where pupils greatly enjoyed the intellectual challenge of collaborating to explore sources and evaluate different perceptions of slavery, resulting in a high standard of work. In games practices, successful team work was evident in both rugby and netball, with pupils helping each other to improve and succeed.

- 2.23 A sense of enjoyment pervades many lessons and activities. Numerous examples of this sense of fun were seen during the inspection, ranging from highly interactive French lessons to a Year 2 music lesson where pupils sang and smiled continuously as they made rapid progress on their part-songs. Throughout the school, pupils display very positive attitudes to their work and play. They demonstrate a genuine interest in their studies; they almost always settle quickly and maintain good levels of concentration throughout hour-long lessons. They are enthusiastic about their learning, persevere in all that they do and are eager to show the results of their efforts, taking pride in what they have accomplished.

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

- 2.24 The spiritual development of pupils is good, and their moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Exceptionally strong beginnings in the EYFS continue throughout the school, enabling it to meet its aim of instilling firm values, based upon Christian principles but not limited by religion, that show respect and concern for others, good manners, self-discipline and responsibility for the environment. Since the last ISI inspection, significant improvement has occurred in all four aspects.
- 2.25 Pupils develop well spiritually. They gain an increasing awareness of themselves and the world around them by exploring a broad range of spiritual and other related themes, not only in lessons but also through a wide variety of age-appropriate and whole school assemblies. Pupils' understanding of the school's Christian ethos is reinforced by occasional talks from the Vicar of Goostrey Church, and work in religious studies (RS) books shows a growing understanding of world religions as well as Christianity. A group of pupils recently visited a synagogue to extend their experience and understanding of non-Christian faiths. Good levels of spiritual understanding were seen in an English lesson where effective cross-curricular links stimulated pupils to move from general discussion about symbols to specific and perceptive consideration of religious symbolism.
- 2.26 Pupils exhibit good understanding and appreciation of beauty, individuality and the joy of sharing the gifts and talents of people and nature. Their positive response to the historic buildings and spacious grounds and to the school's culture of celebrating individuality helps them to make good progress on their journey to find their unique place in the world around them. As a result, they in turn contribute greatly to the overall ethos through imaginative and at times inspiring creative work that significantly enriches the visual environment.
- 2.27 Pupils possess a highly developed awareness of moral responsibility and regularly explore moral issues in lessons, ranging, for example, from a study of slavery to a project on the work carried out by Shelter. Work in class is reinforced by imaginative and effective displays, such as one demonstrating pupils' appreciation of the experiences of those less fortunate than themselves.
- 2.28 A strong and genuine concern about the impact of man upon the planet and its creatures is evident in pupils' written work and discussions. In one science class, for example, pupils studied alternative methods of producing energy from renewable resources, in an attempt to understand how minimising the negative impact of energy production might help to safeguard the planet for future generations. Classroom study is again reinforced by very effective displays and by creative projects such as the production of World Wildlife Foundation T-shirts by Year 5. Cross-curricular links promote the work of national and international charities.

- 2.29 Pupils show a clear awareness of public institutions and social structures, encouraged across the curriculum as well as in PSHCE lessons. In Year 7 RS lessons, for example, pupils discuss contemporary law and order issues and relate them to the Ten Commandments. The concept of right and wrong is clearly understood.
- 2.30 Pupils display a strong sense of belonging to the school community and develop excellent social and interpersonal skills. In lessons, they work collaboratively and assist their peers when appropriate. They also demonstrate respect for others and take responsibility for themselves in their everyday lives in school.
- 2.31 From their earliest years in the pre-preparatory department, children grow in confidence, supported by continuous informal encouragement and by formal structures such as excellent assemblies for parents, teachers and children, during which staff celebrate pupils' achievements by the giving of awards. Older pupils continue to respond extremely positively to the numerous structures in place to encourage personal and social growth, which include the Good Marks (GM) system, for encouraging good work attitudes, and the Pastoral Marks (PM) system, for encouraging helpful behaviour and good manners.
- 2.32 Pupils exercise social responsibility and care in several ways. An effective 'buddy' system pairs younger pupils with older ones, and is much enjoyed by both. Regular 'buddy' sessions cement these relationships: for instance, Years 2 and 7 have recently been on a nature walk together. Prefects set a good example and give younger pupils goals to aim for, and members of the school council accept responsibility for representing the views of their peers at regular meetings. Such structures demonstrate commitment to the school community and a willingness to assume responsibility.
- 2.33 Pupils are interested in and extremely sensitive towards different cultures, vividly illustrated in a superb display of work in the main entrance hall, based around President Obama and Martin Luther King and produced as a result of excitement generated amongst pupils by the American presidential elections. From this initial stimulus, pupils explored racism and the history of prejudice towards black Americans. Assembly themes have included the Muslim faith and Muslim countries, and the GAP Year students included the pupils in their Australia Day celebrations. An awareness of other cultures and creeds is also a strong feature of PSHCE.
- 2.34 Trips and visitors increase and enrich pupils' awareness and understanding of their own and other cultures. Excursions to London, Manchester and Liverpool have included art galleries, theatres and museums to reinforce work in school. Recently a group of Indian dancers visited to entertain and enlighten pupils with aspects of their culture; and the highly imaginative 'life poles' produced by pupils in art demonstrate both interest in and sensitivity to Aboriginal culture, drawing on the beauty of very different traditions to enrich their own.
- 2.35 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.36 Throughout the school, from EYFS to Year 8, the quality of teaching is good, and a significant proportion is excellent. High expectations, careful planning, thoughtful matching of work to pupils' needs and skilful classroom practice ensure that the school succeeds in its aim of enabling all pupils, whatever their ability, to reach their full potential. Judged to be good in the last inspection, teaching has improved further and is a strength of the school.
- 2.37 Teaching enables all pupils, including those with LDD and EAL, to make progress according to their abilities, increase their understanding and develop their skills. Excellent support from the SENCO promotes awareness of pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses, helping them to plan accordingly. All teachers see it as their responsibility to cater for every child in their class, and special needs are seen as integral to their teaching.
- 2.38 Teaching fosters the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort. Questions probe understanding and encourage independent thinking. In one class, for example, pupils were encouraged firstly to think individually, then to share their ideas, about the symbolism represented by different animals. They then successfully explored the use of symbolism in a literary text. Their responses were treated with respect and encouragement, ensuring that no one was afraid to question or offer opinions and enhancing their learning. Cross-curricular links are actively sought and pursued, exemplified in an English lesson when pupils used pastels to draw representations of how they felt a character in the text they were studying had changed.
- 2.39 Staff enjoy a highly productive rapport with pupils, and lessons are characterised by an air of mutual respect. Teachers understand the individual and group needs of the pupils in their care, and encourage them to relish learning and to behave well. In a history lesson, for example, the teacher's enthusiasm and sympathetic guidance stimulated pupils' interest as four groups eagerly explored different aspects of mediaeval life before excitedly presenting their findings to classmates via illustrated group talks. As a result of such positive encouragement, pupils remain focused and good behaviour is the norm.
- 2.40 Meticulous pre-lesson organisation, particularly in areas such as DT, creates safe but stimulating environments and contributes to the maintenance of interest, concentration and good behaviour by occupying pupils purposefully from the moment they arrive. Good planning, variety of pace and an interesting range of appropriate activities enables pupils to concentrate for an hour. Time management is good: aims are realised, pupils clear away before proceeding calmly to the next lesson and prep diaries are checked to ensure that they are completed. Pupils thus learn to organise themselves, and to be responsible for their learning.
- 2.41 Teachers know pupils and understand their aptitudes, needs and prior attainments well. Heads of departments oversee the use of assessment to guide planning, helping to ensure that all staff provide for pupils' needs. Almost all lessons contain a good balance of teaching methods and cater for all pupils, including those with LDD and those who are highly able. In a geography lesson, for example, work was effectively matched to pupils by task and outcome, including an open-ended challenge involving 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' style questions for the most able, and a simpler, more directed task requiring only 'true or false' answers for those requiring more structure.
- 2.42 Teachers generally demonstrate excellent understanding of their subjects, are hard-working and conscientious. They are enthusiastic, and in the best lessons their passion and energy inspire and challenge pupils. This was particularly vivid in a Year 5 music lesson on chromaticism, in which the teacher's willingness to take risks by encouraging pupils to

- explore the concept of chaos as the precursor to organisation in the awakening of time led to a highly effective outcome.
- 2.43 Teachers make effective use of resources, which are appropriate, of good quality and plentiful in quantity and variety. Some staff make good use of ICT, including interactive whiteboards, but practice is inconsistent, especially where staff lack confidence.
- 2.44 Pupils' work is assessed regularly and marking is thorough, with targets often set at the ends of individual pieces of work. Some of the best practice employs checklists for pupils, so that they can ensure they have covered all that is required. Good work is rewarded through the GM system about which pupils are very enthusiastic. New report cards are discussed with pupils at the start of term, when pupils are encouraged to set their own targets. The aim is that Year 8 pupils should use self-evaluation effectively to monitor and guide their progress.
- 2.45 The school makes excellent use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and to guide planning. Children in Reception are assessed using a baseline screening programme, and older pupils are assessed using a wide range of standardised tests that provide data about potential and performance in core areas of literacy and numeracy. Results are collated onto a central database, soon to be transferred to a new management system that will allow clear, continuous and immediately accessible tracking of every pupil's progress. Examples of moderated work are kept centrally, and the school plans to keep samples of work for each pupil every year as a record of their progress. The head of learning support and the school's deputy headmaster meet weekly, scrutinise assessments thoroughly and highlight any discrepancies so that further assessment can be planned.
- 2.46 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 school provides outstanding pastoral care. Exemplary practice in the EYFS and in after-school provision is sustained in the various care structures of later years. Staff are highly proactive in offering support, putting into daily practice the school's aim to create a foundation of happiness, enabling pupils to thrive. Numerous extremely positive changes since the last inspection have resulted in significant improvements in the quality of care.
- 3.2 The new management structure is excellent. The appointment of a pastoral deputy, the restructuring of boarding provision and the allocation of responsibilities to the head of the pre-preparatory department, the middle-school co-ordinator and the senior mistress have all had positive impacts. The pastoral deputy delegates responsibility appropriately to these staff and to form tutors, whilst retaining a clear overview and ensuring that unsolved problems are passed to him very quickly when necessary. A pastoral development plan now supports current provision and future development.
- 3.3 Teachers are supported by database records that enhance communication about pupils, and are also used effectively for registration. Time is dedicated to discussion about pupils at the start of every staff meeting and this is used to share information about concerns as well as about discipline issues. Clear action plans are decided and concerns are followed up. Pupils are encouraged to talk to adults whenever appropriate, and there is an effective complaints procedure if the pupils feel that they are not being treated fairly.
- 3.4 Pupils are confident and express their opinions readily, demonstrated in pupil interviews where they talked positively about their experiences. Good relationships mean that pupils find almost all staff approachable, and if they need guidance they know they can turn to a member of staff and be heard sympathetically. They appreciate the high standards of care they receive from their form tutors on a daily basis. The school puts children first and the pupils are confident in that knowledge.
- 3.5 Like most children, pupils frequently prefer to sort out any problems that arise amongst themselves, and have developed extremely strong, mutually supportive relationships. They recognise different friendship groups but the clear understanding that pupils are not excluded is one of the reasons why they are happy at school. The 'buddy' system contributes to the quality of care as well as to the personal and social growth of pupils. Younger pupils feel cared for, and older pupils demonstrate family values of support and responsibility. These values were seen at lunch, where older heads of table exercised genuine care for younger diners.
- 3.6 The school council offers a valuable forum for the discussion of pastoral issues. The relationship between the council and the staff who guide it is a very productive one, and pupils know that their opinions will receive serious consideration. Clear evidence of responsive pastoral care was seen in the prompt response of the school and its caterers to views expressed by some pupils and parents about school food. The caterers willingly reviewed aspects of provision and entered into discussions with pupils at the school council. Resultant changes to certain menu items have met with great approval.
- 3.7 Expectations of good behaviour are high and pupils respond positively. Teachers deal with minor infringements quietly, and senior managers step in only when more serious sanctions are necessary. The emphasis upon discipline is at all times constructive, seeking to guide and

increase understanding as a step towards the development of self-discipline. Conduct cards and detentions form part of the sanction process, but are rarely used.

- 3.8 Pupils have been consulted in drawing up a code of conduct that expects all pupils to behave well towards one another. It is kept in each pupil's personal folder, alongside other documents that allow pupils to make comments and observations about matters of pastoral care and pupil welfare. It is also displayed in classrooms as a constant reminder. An extremely good example of the effectiveness of the code was seen during the inspection, when it was particularly well used by a tutor in the classroom to focus thought on pupil behaviour. Pupils own up quickly if they know that they have offended, usually accepting their punishment as fair. Parents are informed about minor misconduct through notes in pupil diaries, or by contact from a form tutor or a senior member of staff in more serious cases.
- 3.9 Anti-bullying guidelines are clear. A strong, supportive and immediate response is made when necessary. The school has comprehensive and effective structures and procedures for child protection. The two child protection officers are fully trained on a two-year cycle, and are aware of statutory regulations and procedures. All staff are trained on a three-year cycle and sign a declaration that they understand and comply with procedures.
- 3.10 The school takes all necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Regular risk assessments are made and supported by appropriate training. Clear fire notices are displayed and regular practices are undertaken for day pupils and boarders. Additional risk assessments cover maintenance and renewal of electrical and other equipment.
- 3.11 Effective arrangements exist to safeguard the health and safety of pupils and staff. Accurate registers are maintained for admissions and attendance, and an accessibility plan takes due regard of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Regular health and safety meetings include a representative from a specialist firm to advise on procedures and compliance. Staff are trained appropriately. First-aid is dealt with well; matrons provide professional, friendly and effective care, supported by qualified first-aiders on the teaching staff. Pupils are given a clear safety code and know what is expected of them.
- 3.12 Pupils learn about healthy living in science and take regular exercise in a broad range of activities, including PE and games. Pupils are monitored at meals by staff and caterers. Any pupil whose eating habits cause concern is reported to the member of staff on duty, who will offer advice and inform a tutor, the head of boarding or a senior manager. Pupils are aware of the need to take regular breaks and rest.
- 3.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

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

- 3.14 Links with parents and the community are outstanding. From the EYFS onwards, the school successfully meets its aims to provide open relationships which emphasise collaboration, co-operation and trust, and to maintain frequent contact and good relationships with parents in order to develop a positive partnership between home and school. The school has improved this sense of partnership since the last inspection, and parents particularly appreciate the fact that the teachers and headmaster are more readily accessible than in the past. Numerous initiatives have also been introduced since the last inspection to expand and improve links with the local and wider communities.
- 3.15 Responses from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive and extremely supportive of the school, as were the views expressed by a group of parents who met with an inspector during the visit. Parents are delighted with the treatment and information received from the school prior to their children joining, and they appreciate the fact that no surprises await them upon arrival. They are particularly pleased with the way everyone is made to feel welcome. No concerns were raised in significant numbers. A very small number of parents reported that they had been concerned in the recent past about some aspects of food and teaching, but now feel that standards have improved as the school has taken positive steps in both cases. The inspectors found no cause for concern on either front during the inspection.
- 3.16 Parents are extremely happy with the information and feedback they receive during the course of the academic year. Frequency of reporting has increased with a new reporting structure using the school's computerised management system. It enables staff to report against more criteria because it is less time-consuming. Some parents prefer the old style of reports, which they feel went into more detail, but the new style meets with the approval of the majority, as does the fact that they receive them every six weeks. Parents also appreciate the number and effectiveness of parents evenings held each year. A few parents question the value of holding one early in the first term, when teachers are still getting to know children, but the school sees the meeting as a valuable means of establishing positive relationships between parents and staff.
- 3.17 The weekly newsletter is informative, well presented and contains links to the school's website, enabling access to articles in greater detail. The website is useful, imaginatively designed and vibrant. It is easy to navigate, contains a wealth of information for current parents and gives a good insight into life at Terra Nova for the parents of current and potential pupils. A colourful publication entitled *Our Terra Nova* is distributed on a termly basis.
- 3.18 Parents are always welcome in the school, and their support and help are much appreciated. The social committee is very active, helping new parents to become familiar with routines and to feel part of the school. It organises social events throughout the year, culminating in the Summer Ball, described by some as the best social event in the area. The committee also raises incidental funds for the school, but this is not seen as a specific part of its remit. Parents are welcome to support matches and to stay afterwards for match teas.
- 3.19 Prep diaries facilitate communication between teachers and parents, and almost all families use them well. The 'open-door' policy is much valued: the opportunity to speak to the headmaster with little or no notice is greatly appreciated. Parents feel that impromptu communication with any member of staff is easy and greatly benefits the children.

- 3.20 Almost all parents are extremely happy with the speed and manner with which concerns are handled. Those interviewed have complete trust in the school, saying that confidentiality is always maintained and the headmaster and teachers respond in a sensitive and caring way, tackling problems early before they become more difficult to resolve. A good, formal complaints policy exists and is readily accessible to parents. There have been no formal complaints during the current academic year.
- 3.21 The school has worked very hard in recent years to increase and strengthen its links with the community, which is welcomed into the school and supported in a number of ways. A local football team plays some of its home fixtures at the school and invitations extended by the school have led to an outside Cub Scout pack joining in activities with the Terra Nova pack and a group of Girl Guides using the school's facilities. A regular link has been established with the Twemlow Parish Council, and the school takes part in the Lower Withington Church Hall Concert. The school is actively pursuing links with primary schools in the area, so that its facilities and expertise might enrich the education of other pupils in the community, for example by offering its interactive language teaching facilities and staff expertise, both for boys and girls and for evening adult use. Good links between the Church and the school have been established and continue to evolve. Pupils use local facilities for events such as the Annual Leavers' Service which is held at Goostrey Church, and also regularly participate in a local arts festival.
- 3.22 The school regards its responsibilities in the wider world as extremely important, and seeks to contribute in a number of ways. Recent links, both in England and abroad, include support for the Manchester New Children's Hospital, the NSPCC, the Rainbow Family Trust, the Bobby Moore Cancer Fund, the Chernobyl Children's Lifeline and a special relationship with families in Sri-Lanka where, following the devastation caused by the tsunami, both pupils and parents at Terra Nova have raised funds to sponsor schooling for children.
- 3.23 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].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.24 The quality of boarding education at Terra Nova is outstanding and is a major strength of the school. It provides an excellent experience for pupils moving onto senior boarding schools, and thoroughly supports the school's aims of promoting independence and personal organisation, developing self confidence and allowing children to have fun. The quality of provision has improved greatly since the last inspection. The school has responded very positively and quickly to both the last ISI report and the recent Ofsted Children's Directorate report on boarding. A major refurbishment programme is well underway, with the senior dormitories already completed and the next phase planned for this year.
- 3.25 Boarders are significantly assisted by the high quality of personal, social and emotional support that boarding offers. Every aspect of the experience derives from a central philosophy of security, safety and happiness. Great thought and care have been given to the creation of an environment that allows pupils to retain their childhood during the years when that is crucial for the promotion of balanced and healthy growth of mind, body and spirit.
- 3.26 The accommodation is welcoming, warm, homely and safe. Refurbished areas are sympathetic to the historic listed building, whilst providing modern, small, dormitories that the senior weekly and flexi boarders think are "awesome". There are clean washing areas and comfortable spaces to relax, watch TV or play games.

- 3.27 Boarding staff are organised, energetic, enthusiastic and thoroughly committed to their roles, seeing them as a way of life rather than simply a job. The team of matrons, teaching staff and GAP Year students look after their charges not only conscientiously, but with much fun and affection. Their enthusiasm is infectious and a major reason why the boarders enjoy the experience so much.
- 3.28 All matters of health are expertly supervised by the matrons, and the boarders enjoy healthy and nutritious meals. Relationships amongst boarders, and between the boarders and staff, characterise the caring ethos of the school and are relaxed and respectful, resulting in a convivial atmosphere. Boarders trust the staff and feel that their voice is listened to sympathetically.
- 3.29 The boarding experience is enriched by a good range of evening activities, such as art, DT, table tennis, dance, shooting practice and films. The wide range of 'special' evenings is imaginative and fun, varying from trips to the theatre to electric racing car nights. During the inspection, the 'special' evening consisted of a fashion design competition; boys and girls from Year 3 to Year 8 worked together to make outfits from bin liners and other common materials and then entertained each other as they 'took to the catwalk' in a grand finale.
- 3.30 The family atmosphere and friendliness found in the boarding house make it an exceptionally happy place.

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 Good governance provides a strong and supportive framework to assist the headmaster and staff in promoting the school's declared aims and values. Governors are interested and committed, with a range of particularly useful skills and experience to help them to carry out their duties successfully. Most have parental experience of the school, greatly increasing their knowledge and understanding of how it works. The board has maintained the good standards of governance noted in the last inspection.
- 4.2 Good oversight is maintained through full board meetings each term and regular meetings of the finance committee and chairman's working group. Accurate minutes provide a sound framework for following up issues. Board meetings include detailed discussions with the headmaster about all aspects of school life. In addition, the deputy headmaster presents a comprehensive academic report annually to keep governors up to date with current performance and with the school's analysis of how effectively this meets overall academic aims.
- 4.3 A realistic development plan enables governors to assist the headmaster with strategy and the setting of priorities, though it currently lacks strong enough links with the work of the academic board to plan most productively for development in this area. Effective financial planning results in excellent educational provision and appropriate investment in human and material resources.
- 4.4 Governors exercise responsibilities in one or more areas of school life according to individual experience and expertise. In some cases these responsibilities relate to finance, business or marketing, whilst in others they relate to educational matters or compliance with statutory requirements.
- 4.5 Governors work productively alongside staff and undertake appropriate training in areas such as health and safety, and child protection. They discharge their responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of pupils effectively.

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

- 4.6 Leadership and management are good throughout, with some outstanding features. Continuous monitoring of all aspects of school life, begun extremely effectively in the EYFS and sustained through later years, enables the school to meet its aims successfully. Both leadership and management have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- 4.7 The headmaster, ably supported by his senior management team (SMT), brings visionary, committed, caring and firm leadership to the school. The extremely proactive SMT represents all age groups and every area of academic and pastoral care. The presence of the head of the pre-preparatory department contributes greatly to the sense of unity that runs throughout the school and to the constant monitoring of pupils' progress from one phase of the school to the next.
- 4.8 The SMT meets weekly, with all members contributing to formal agendas. Feedback is regular, via weekly staff meetings that also provide the main forum for discussion of new and ongoing issues. Observations, suggestions and responses from staff are welcomed, enabling everyone to feel a sense of shared ownership over important decisions.

- 4.9 New initiatives and strong direction have brought clarity and strength to existing middle management structures. A faculty approach to subject management has greatly increased staff unity and promoted vigorous and effective cross-curricular co-operation. Departments have worked hard to develop more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation structures, and practice is becoming increasingly consistent across the curriculum, though in the EYFS managers have limited opportunity to monitor teaching. Further positive responses to the last inspection report, such as the creation of the academic and pastoral boards, have resulted in much improved standards of management overall.
- 4.10 The academic and pastoral boards provide excellent structures to develop continuous monitoring of fundamental aspects of school life. The academic board meets twice each term to discuss all aspects of curriculum, achievement, teaching and learning. The pastoral board meets termly to discuss all areas of care, welfare and wellbeing. Both boards feed into the SMT. In addition, the introduction of departmental audits conducted with the headmaster and the deputy headmaster has led to a clearer awareness of strengths and weaknesses and to a more accurate identification of training priorities.
- 4.11 Thorough background checks are carried out on all staff and governors, and a centralised register of appointments is kept accurately. Strong informal guidance and support are continuously available for staff, but the school's appraisal scheme is not currently used well enough to provide them with effective formal support. No appraisal structure currently exists for the headmaster. Procedures for guiding and mentoring newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are effective.
- 4.12 The unity seen amongst teaching staff extends to embrace the many support staff in all areas of school life, who are highly valued contributors to the community. Their wholehearted commitment and care for the pupils ensure that the school runs effectively and happily on a day-to-day basis.
- 4.13 Financial and other resources for learning are managed efficiently and in a manner that helps the school to meet its educational aims and the needs of the pupils. The school has made considerable progress since the last ISI inspection and the Ofsted Children's Directorate boarding inspection, adding many new facilities and resources both for day pupils and boarders. Accommodation is good overall, with numerous excellent features, and forward-thinking planning demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement.
- 4.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.15 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 Terra Nova realises its aims well: it meets the individual needs of pupils and encourages them spiritually, emotionally and socially to lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives. A secure and exceptionally caring environment enables pupils to develop particularly well as individuals with a keen understanding of their responsibilities within society. Pupils are prepared very successfully for the next phase of their education, and move on as confident, mature, articulate and friendly young people. The ethos of the school, built around a strong value structure of trust and respect for self, others and property, binds staff and pupils into a strong, supportive and productive family. The educational experiences offered enable pupils to achieve good, and in a number of areas extremely high, standards and to develop lifelong interests. The effectiveness of EYFS provision in meeting the needs of children is good, as is the children's achievement. Pupils with individual needs are supported extremely well. The school is strongly led, and greatly improved management structures now provide a robust framework for the future development of consistent and successful monitoring of teaching and learning in every subject. The school's formal appraisal structure is not currently used effectively to support staff and their professional development. This is recognised by the school.
- 5.2 No major weaknesses were found during the last ISI inspection, and the school has responded extremely positively to the recommendations made for the improvement of the existing good provision. The profile of academic leadership has been raised and structures created to enable subject heads to work more effectively. The use of ICT as a tool for learning has improved in a number of areas, but it is still not employed consistently well. The school has responded extremely constructively to the recommendations of the boarding inspection by the Ofsted Children's Directorate. A planned programme of refurbishment and redecoration is well underway, greatly enhancing the boarding environment.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. In order to improve upon existing good and outstanding provision, it should:
1. update and reintroduce its formal appraisal structure in order to support staff by monitoring their contributions, recognising their strengths, offering structured guidance and promoting their continuing professional development;
  2. review the relationship between discrete, specialist-taught ICT lessons and the use of ICT within subjects, seeking to ensure that the good practice seen in some departments becomes an integral feature in the planning and practice of all.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.
- 5.6 Any failures to meet EYFS requirements are detailed in Section 7.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009. 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 governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the health-related facilities. 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.
- 6.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009 by one inspector. The inspector observed sessions, talked to the children, examined samples of work, and held discussions with staff and governors. Comments from parents and carers were considered, and the inspector examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr Ron Ward	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Lesley Edge	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mrs Diana Faulkner	SENCO, IAPS school
Mr Warren Hilton	Headmaster, IAPS school
Dr David Livingstone	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mrs Sandra Gordon	Early Years Lead Inspector

## **7. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)**

- 7.1 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting in Terra Nova School provides up to 48 Nursery places for three year olds, who may attend full or part-time, and up to 48 full-time Reception places for four year olds. At the present time, 67 pupils attend the EYFS: 22 boys and 19 girls as full-time pupils and 11 boys and 15 girls as part-time pupils. Government funded places are available in both groups. No pupils have English as an additional language and one pupil requires learning support. A few children attend the after-school care facility. The Nursery achieves its aim to offer a bright, happy and safe environment in which children flourish and grow into confident, responsible and independent learners. The desire of Reception provision to enable children to continue their exciting journey in a rich and stimulating environment is suitably reflected in day-to-day practice.
- 7.2 In this effective setting good and on occasion outstanding provision ensures children's needs are met. The quality of teaching assists children to surpass the goals expected by the end of the EYFS. The exemplary quality of care and direction children receive contributes significantly to their excellent personal development. The school successfully nurtures and promotes children's welfare. Managers have identified the lack of monitoring of teaching and the insufficient provision for more able Reception children as areas for development.
- 7.3 The children are happy, progress well and achieve at least good and on occasion high standards in relation to their starting points and capabilities. They speak confidently and their meaningful conversations with adults significantly enhance their communication skills. They enjoy books and both ask and answer questions using well-constructed sentences. They like manipulating numbers and solving problems, and they use basic information technology competently to enhance their learning. As they explore, investigate and respond to challenges they concentrate and persevere until successful. The children are agile, imaginative and very well co-ordinated when they negotiate outdoor apparatus. Children experience a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and those they choose themselves.
- 7.4 Children's outstanding personal development, positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning are significantly influenced by the excellent example set by staff. Children who are dependent upon adults are slowly encouraged to become independent. Behaviour is good throughout the EYFS. The children are self-reliant, they play well together, share and take turns, care for their possessions and have high standards of personal hygiene. They understand the importance of personal well-being and safety, as demonstrated when Nursery children crossed the road to bird-watch. Their knowledge of healthy food is assisted by discussing the snacks they share and by tasting samples of different vegetables before lunch each day. During the year, role-play activities, visits and talks from adults in the local community extend children's knowledge of the wider world.
- 7.5 Adults celebrate each child's uniqueness, approaching their individual needs sensitively and unobtrusively and encouraging productive learning habits. Efficient planning links indoor and outdoor activities and balances teacher-led activities with productive play and free choice. In the outstanding Nursery provision, staff promote progress, encourage excellent learning habits and raise children's self-esteem through listening carefully, observing and noting progress during daily assessment and adapting provision accordingly. The sensitive Reception staff build effectively upon this strong foundation. Their constant praise, encouragement and individualised guidance, together with the value they place upon children's work, motivates children to achieve. Throughout the setting, staff encourage children to celebrate diversity and difference. Parents share stories from their own particular

heritages with children; language days enable children to hear other languages, taste food and celebrate festivals from other cultures. New systems in Reception to record observations of children's progress are linked suitably to final assessment profiles for each child. All staff provide well for children with specific learning needs.

- 7.6 Children's welfare is exemplary throughout the setting. Key persons know the children well and have excellent relationships with all those in their care. Safety is constantly monitored through the comprehensive and regular assessment of risk. Medical concerns are covered thoroughly and sensitively by well-qualified staff. Children's health is closely monitored and good health is strongly promoted.
- 7.7 Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The staff are well-qualified and experienced. Arrangements to ensure that only suitable adults have access to children are implemented correctly. Managers' daily monitoring and evaluation have enabled them to identify the lack of provision for more able children. In addition, managers have limited opportunity to monitor teaching, which restricts their knowledge of effective practice and of areas requiring development. The key persons charged with children's care are supported by detailed policies, procedures and practice, adapted from main school documentation, that are implemented with a high level of consistency. Inclusive practice is enhanced through staff treating every child as a unique individual, through excellent links with parents, who have extremely positive views of the setting, and through growing links with local agencies. The setting has met the recommendations of the previous inspection.

### **What the Setting Should Do to Improve**

- 7.8 To improve still further the good quality of its provision, the setting should:
1. provide sufficient time for managers to monitor teaching and learning throughout the setting;
  2. implement plans to improve provision for more able children.
- 7.9 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.