

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Grace Dieu Manor School

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| Full Name of the School | Grace Dieu Manor School |
| DCSF Number | 855/6007 |
| Registered Charity Number | 1115976 |
| Address | Grace Dieu, Thringstone, Leicestershire LE67 5UG. |
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| Headmaster | Mr Charles Foulds |
| Chairman of Governors | Fr. Brian Cuddihy |
| Age Range | 3 - 13 |
| Gender | Mixed |
| Inspection Dates | 1st to 4th October 2007 |

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 Grace Dieu Manor School is a Roman Catholic foundation within the Rosminian Order; it is a co-educational day school, with its own pre-preparatory department. Initially, it was established at Grace Dieu in 1933 as the preparatory school for Ratcliffe College, which was founded a century earlier by priests of the Rosminian Order as a senior day and boarding school for boys. At the time of the previous inspection in 2001, the two schools shared the same trustees and board of governors; and the headmaster of the senior school had only just ceased to have overall responsibility for the preparatory school. Today, the two schools, which are 15 miles apart, are totally independent educationally and financially. The Board of Trustees of the newly constituted educational charitable trust, Grace Dieu Manor School, has appointed a separate Board of Governors, whose chairman is also a trustee. The present headmaster took up his position in September 2002.
- 1.2 The aims of Grace Dieu Manor School are based on the educational philosophy of Antonio Rosmini, who founded the Rosminian order in 1828. The school aims to develop the whole person through a strong focus on the following five areas of personality which their founder believed must be at the heart of a school's mission:
- intellectual development to encourage enquiring minds and academic excellence;
 - physical development to promote a healthy lifestyle;
 - moral development to ensure that pupils mature into responsible adults who are mindful of the needs of others;
 - spiritual development to assist the formation of personal beliefs;
 - aesthetic development to promote an appreciation of the arts.
- 1.3 Grace Dieu Manor is set in extensive parkland in the midst of the Leicestershire countryside. The manor house, which dates from 1833, was originally home to a large Victorian family. It has its own chapel, which was extended and adorned by Pugin. The house and grounds are owned by the Rosminian Order, and at the heart of Grace Dieu is the Community which founded the school. This is a reminder to all of the ideals and aims on which the school was established and which still hold true today. Although a Roman Catholic foundation, the school welcomes young people from all families who are in sympathy with its ethos and mission.
- 1.4 The manor house has been extended and refurbished to provide reception and administration offices in addition to classrooms, libraries, catering, dining and recreational facilities. In the surrounding grounds are set further classrooms, including the nursery and reception classrooms, garden and play area, teaching and performance facilities for music and drama, a swimming pool and new sports hall, playing fields and tennis courts.
- 1.5 The proportion of girls has increased since the last inspection. Overall, the numbers of boys and girls are now almost equal. There are 300 pupils in school at present: 34 boys and 24 girls in the Foundation Stage; 25 boys and 30 girls in Years 1 and 2; 70 boys and 73 girls in Years 3 to 6; and 28 boys and 16 girls in Years 7 and 8. Virtually all pupils are British; only four pupils do not have English as their principal language; a small number of pupils come from different ethnic backgrounds. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. Pupils are offered support in school in literacy or for other mild learning difficulties. Forty-eight pupils are identified as requiring learning support.

- 1.6 Most pupils join the school in the nursery or reception years; additional pupils often enter classes from Year 1 upwards. There is no formal assessment for entry to the Foundation Stage. From Year 1 onwards, pupils entering the school are given standardised tests in English and mathematics.
- 1.7 The range of academic ability is wide, from well below to far above the national average: in general, three-fifths of pupils are of average or above average ability; one fifth is well above average, and one fifth below. The overall ability profile is broadly in line with the national average. Where pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results would be expected to be in line with the national average for all maintained primary schools.
- 1.8 At the end of Year 8, most pupils transfer to local independent selective schools; a few may move to boarding schools. At the end of Year 6, a minority of the year group may leave to join local independent selective schools. Pupils mostly come from families with business, professional or farming backgrounds and their homes are within a radius of 20 miles from the school.
- 1.9 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the pre-preparatory department and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

| School | NC name |
|---------|-----------|
| Cygnets | Nursery |
| Swans | Reception |

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 A major strength of the school is the quality of its education, not only in the academic sense but also in the wider sense of the development of the whole person. The education encourages enquiring minds and promotes a secure and happy environment in which pupils of all abilities flourish. A warm and caring family atmosphere is evident throughout the school. The school is very successful in achieving its aims to promote the intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development of its pupils through a wide range of academic, sporting, creative and cultural activities, which are well matched to the needs of individuals. Since the previous inspection, academic results have improved and the curriculum has become broader and more balanced with the introduction into the timetable of more music, art, physical education and sport, and the appointment of specialist teachers. Following comments in the earlier report that the Roman Catholic ethos was not clear in the school, increased and appropriate emphasis has been given to morning chapel, assemblies and to the religious education and personal, social, health and citizenship curriculum areas. In addition to the recent sympathetic renovation of the chapel, a spacious, well-presented and welcoming Religious Education Study Centre has also been developed.
- 2.2 The school provides an education which is entirely consistent with the aims and philosophy of its founder. The quality of the education and learning is supported by effective documentation. The curriculum contributes positively to the acquisition of speaking and listening skills and good standards of literacy and numeracy, and to the pupils' social, physical, creative and aesthetic development. Provision for physical development is a strong feature of the wider curriculum and all years benefit from the wide variety of sporting activities available to them. A carousel of activities, entitled 'Discover and Do', is well planned to interest and benefit those who are not involved in team games on Wednesday afternoons. Art, music and drama make important contributions to expressive and creative development, and pupils benefit from the specialist teaching they receive in these and many other subjects. A Year 3 'Romans' assembly during the inspection week provided an excellent opportunity for pupils to have fun, to be creative and to consider challenging concepts about the qualities needed to be a good leader. The school has adequate provision for science teaching and is developing its facilities for design and technology, but it does not make sufficient use, with the senior age groups, of the excellent opportunities for scientific and technological discovery offered in its spacious grounds.
- 2.3 The wide range of extra-curricular activities, which include sport, music, drama and creative arts, is a strength of the school. Almost all parents and pupils agree. The broad educational experience of the pupils is significantly enhanced by the extra-curricular programme and pupils consider that the choices they are given make an enjoyable and important contribution to their school life. The inclusive well-staffed programme provides excellent opportunities for pupils of all ages to participate and develop skills across a wide range of activities. Participation is carefully monitored by the school, which keeps a detailed register of pupils. Additional lessons are available in speech and elocution, woodwind, brass and singing; almost three-quarters of pupils receive additional tuition in these areas. After-school clubs and activities, many of which are oversubscribed, include hockey, rugby, choir, arts and crafts, drama and orchestra, and each makes a valuable contribution to individual personal development.
- 2.4 There are a good number of links with the community and regular opportunities for pupils to participate. The school is involved in the local and wider community through trips to local and national places of interest, such as the local county council and the National Space

- Centre. The local community makes use of several of the school's facilities; the swimming pool is used by neighbouring schools and the grounds are extensively used by a range of local groups and societies, including the Scouts and a rugby club. A commitment to charity work is evident across the school. A recent initiative to collect jewellery for auction, to raise funds for a local hospice, was promoted at a morning assembly.
- 2.5 In the pre-preparatory department, children are given a very positive start to school life in the nursery and reception classes: their teachers ensure that they move up happily and successfully to Year 1; and later, the transition from the pre-preparatory department to Year 3 is carefully planned. Within the school, 'hand-over' meetings for staff ensure that all teachers are fully informed of the needs of each pupil, and special 'moving up' days in the summer term, in preparation for the new academic year, help to ensure a seamless transition within the school. Curriculum heads have written comprehensive documentation which ensures continuity of teaching throughout the school. Older pupils also have good opportunities to prepare for the next stages of their education and are well prepared for transfer, at 11+ and 13+, to a range of selective secondary schools in the independent and maintained sectors. In Year 8, a visit to a retreat centre provides time for reflection and preparation for moving on to a new school. Another day visit enables these senior pupils to learn about personal safety in the wider environment.
- 2.6 The academic curriculum is effectively planned, and progression from the Foundation Stage through to Year 8 is increasingly at its core. It is well balanced and provides access to pupils of all ages and abilities to develop their linguistic, mathematical, physical, aesthetic and creative skills.
- 2.7 From Year 5 onwards, classes are arranged according to ability in the core subjects and this enables teaching to be targeted to the specific needs of all pupils. Good curriculum planning for different ability groups was evident in French and mathematics, in particular. There are increasing opportunities for cross-curricular work, examples of which were seen throughout the school. This is an area that the staff are working hard to develop at all levels in the school; the art and geography departments have recently collaborated successfully on a field trip to Dovedale in Derbyshire. Parents, in their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, were in almost total agreement that the school provides an appropriate range of subjects.
- 2.8 The needs of pupils with particular learning difficulties or disabilities are well met. All pupils are assessed to determine whether they need special learning support. The emphasis is on extra help in English and pupils are mostly withdrawn from other classes for specialist help, either individually or in small groups. Withdrawal arrangements are carefully planned, although on occasion, lessons in core subjects may be missed. The use of monitored and regularly reviewed individual education plans is effective. Staff in the learning support department have good communication with the rest of the teaching staff through regular meetings, and all staff are well informed and given a good understanding of the needs of individual pupils, particularly any with a statement of special educational need. For example, in a mathematics lesson on fractions and another on angles in parallel lines, careful thought was given, from the introduction onwards, to the provision of suitable explanations and work for pupils of different aptitudes. Pupils who might have felt discouraged became involved in the lesson and took a pride in their work. Specialist help is also arranged for the occasional pupil for whom English is an additional language. Formal provision for gifted and talented pupils is receiving careful attention; a member of the management team has responsibility for this development.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 In the subjects they study and in the activities in which they participate, pupils have a thorough grounding in the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills, which they can then apply effectively both in specific and general situations. Significant emphasis is given to the subjects examined in national tests, English, mathematics and science, and subsequently to those subjects required for entrance examinations for senior schools. Literacy and numeracy are effectively embedded throughout the curriculum. Standards are consistently good in this respect in relation to the ability of the pupils from nursery to Year 8. The Ofsted report of January 2004 referred to the very good standards of nursery education and these standards have been maintained. The skills and attitudes of pupils for work and study are well developed; as at the time of the previous inspection, they are well motivated and keen to learn. From an early stage, their work on display and their response in and out of lessons show that pupils can think and act critically and creatively.
- 2.11 Throughout the school, well-structured curricular activities ensure that literacy and numeracy skills are developed effectively. In the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, the importance of literacy and numeracy is recognised and emphasised in the planning. In Years 3 to 8, pupils achieve very good standards in reading and comprehension; there is a high degree of accuracy in their writing and grammar activities. The volume of work in all year groups in mathematics is substantial, and shows a good depth of understanding over a range of topics. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils demonstrate clearly their investigative and practical skills in science and information communication technology (ICT). In addition to the carefully planned work in the core subjects in Years 7 and 8, due and effective regard is given to the Common Entrance syllabi in other subjects. Creative skills are well developed in art, design technology and music and there are some excellent creative displays in the school, such as the work of Year 5 on the Victorians. Standards observed in physical education lessons and sporting activities were also high.
- 2.12 Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress and attain good standards in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils needing learning support also achieve well in relation to their age and abilities. Such support in lessons is good and was observed to be a particular strength of mathematics teaching. From Year 5 onwards, pupils are grouped, in the core subjects, into classes of similar ability levels; this allows additional support for the less able and helps to extend the most able pupils. Careful attention, including whole staff training, has been given to the needs of any pupil with a statement of special educational need.
- 2.13 Pupils achieve very well at the Foundation Stage and many attain the Early Learning Goals before the end of the reception year. Overall results, for the three years from 2004 to 2006, in national tests at ages seven and eleven, demonstrate that, on average, pupils are performing well above the national average in all maintained primary schools; this is well above what might be expected for the range of ability in the school. These results have steadily improved since 2004. At age seven, in reading and writing pupils are performing in the top five per cent of the ability range, nationally. At age eleven, girls achieve better results than boys in English and mathematics. Statistics kept by the school indicate that pupils clearly make progress and standards are rising.
- 2.14 Commercially produced, nationally standardised tests are used to assess attainment and progress in English and mathematics throughout the school, and results indicate continual improvement in attainment and progress. At 11+, a number of pupils take and are successful in entrance examinations to local grammar schools and selective independent schools. Virtually all 13+ leavers gain entry to their chosen selective independent school, with a few gaining scholarships for academic achievement or prowess in sport or ICT.

- 2.15 The school is successful in both sports and in the arts. Individual or group achievements are valued and encouraged through praise and recognition. An increasing number of pupils receive instrumental tuition and there is competition to be selected for and involved in the successful and enjoyable musical and choral life of the school. Rugby, cricket, hockey and cross-country teams have been especially successful in recent years at county and regional levels. Pupils do well in National Mathematics Challenge competitions in Years 6 and 8, and an increasing number of pupils are gaining merits and distinctions in external music, speech and drama examinations. These achievements enrich significantly the education of pupils and give them increased confidence as they move to their senior schools.
- 2.16 In nursery and reception classes, children speak, listen, read and write with growing confidence. Most pupils in Years 1 to 8 show good listening skills. In assemblies during the inspection, they demonstrated their ability to read and speak with a quiet self-assurance. In an interesting display of book reviews by Year 8, they illustrated their ability to write logically and express their own views.
- 2.17 Pupils show a very positive attitude to mathematics and were seen to enjoy the subject, especially in lessons where good use was made of interactive whiteboards. In a Year 5 lesson about angles, they remembered their previous work well and were able to apply mathematical concepts effectively.
- 2.18 The use of ICT extends beyond ICT lessons when, and where, there are available resources. In Year 4, pupils worked with enthusiasm and skill as they designed an advertising leaflet for wooden toys and dolls' houses. Attractive ICT display material supports the work produced in lessons and confirms that pupils make effective use of their learning.
- 2.19 In lessons, in discussions and in their written work, pupils demonstrated that they could reason and argue cogently and think for themselves. In Year 8, some excellent, discursive written work on the Creation was seen. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, pupils enjoyed the challenge of investigating prime numbers and learning about the Sieve of Eratosthenes. Pupils are offered a significant range of after-school activities, and it is an important part of school life that they are given the opportunity to make reasoned choices. Good behaviour in class is expected and pupils respond very well to their teachers. In line with the caring and forgiving ethos of the school, pupils meet with understanding, and encouragement to make the right decisions. The inception of the school council is eagerly awaited, because pupils are aware that it will help them further to debate and to express themselves. Pupils take notes, study and organise their work independently; there are numerous examples of independent work in exercise books, together with extension work for brighter pupils. For example, some pupils in Year 8 have shown much interest in researching into Edward Jenner and his work on microbes.
- 2.20 Pupils throughout the school work well and co-operate effectively together; this was particularly noticeable in physical education lessons. Successful 'paired' work was observed in the classroom in modern foreign languages and in the study of Judaism in religious education.
- 2.21 A good work ethic is successfully encouraged and achieved. Registration periods are used effectively to support and monitor pupils' homework through the collection of 'merits' for good work. Most pupils arrive promptly to lessons and settle quickly to work. Pupils concentrate well, persevere and show good levels of enthusiasm in their lessons and activities. Clearly, they enjoy coming to school and are keen to participate and achieve well in the many opportunities provided by the school.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.22 Both the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, and the progress they make in this aspect of their lives, are outstanding. This successful development is evident throughout school life, both within and outside the curriculum. The aims of the school are well supported, especially in the religious education (RE) curriculum and the effective personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme which all enhance and promote the spiritual life of the school. The nurturing of the whole person is an important element in the philosophy of the school.
- 2.23 Pupils' spiritual development is encouraged through a range of activities and experiences. In RE, pupils have the opportunity to discuss their faith and reflect on its relevance for each of them. Their positive relationships with staff and other pupils help them develop self-esteem and confidence. Pupils attend morning prayers and chapel on a regular basis and are quietly confident in their contribution to prayers and readings; all this helps them grow in familiarity with their own faith, and appreciate the faith and beliefs of others. There are opportunities to attend Mass on occasions during the term, in addition to a weekly voluntary Mass. The atmosphere and beauty in chapel gives them the opportunity to think more deeply about the spiritual dimension; pupils say that when they enter the beautifully designed peace garden in the cloistered courtyard outside the chapel, they feel that "they go into another world".
- 2.24 The school provides an environment in which pupils recognise Christian values and they have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They are allowed to learn from their mistakes and are encouraged to reflect on their experiences. In subjects such as RE, PSHCE, English, history, geography and drama, pupils explore moral values and are helped to develop morally in their ability to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law. Goodwill, co-operation, high expectations and good examples are evident in all aspects of school life, and this enables pupils to develop a strong moral code of their own.
- 2.25 Pupils have a high degree of social awareness and social values; they are encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour. From the Foundation Stage, pupils relate positively to one another and are gently persuaded to take account of the needs of others in their daily routines.
- 2.26 As pupils progress through the school, they are given more responsibilities. This gives them a sense of self-worth, increased self-confidence and encourages initiative and independence. They behave very well and are very courteous. They generally abide by the school rules and recognise the need for and the value of a code of discipline; they also appreciate and value the fairness of the rewards and sanctions system. They show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life. This is displayed in their support for various charity events such as Blue Peter appeals, fund-raising for the local hospice and environmental issues such as 'Make Poverty History'.
- 2.27 Pupils are knowledgeable about the main elements in public institutions and services in England through the curriculum in history, RE and PSHCE. The school are currently establishing a school council, and exploring the principles of electing representatives through a democratic process.
- 2.28 Pupils successfully develop their cultural awareness through a variety of well-planned experiences within the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. They enjoy curriculum-focused trips, such as a recent trip to the National Gallery in London. Younger pupils appreciate and enjoy their own cultural traditions and those of others by sharing experiences; for example, a pupil who celebrates Diwali may share this with his or her class. Older pupils study Judaism and Hinduism, and explore related social and cultural issues. The pupils'

increased interest in music and drama is encouraging. The school recognises the value of these activities and the need to create further opportunities to promote and enhance cultural development; it is considering appropriate ways of achieving this. The ethos of the school ensures that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at Grace Dieu is a very significant part of their education.

- 2.29 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.30 The quality of teaching is a strength of the school, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Examples of outstanding teaching were numerous and in nearly all the lessons observed the teaching was highly effective. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are enabled to achieve their potential, in keeping with the aims of the school. The teaching stimulates and develops curiosity, and promotes an enthusiastic approach to learning. Both parents and pupils were almost unanimous in their agreement that the teaching helps pupils to learn and make progress. Since the previous inspection, this has been supported by the considerable improvements made to assessment and marking procedures.
- 2.31 Teaching ensures that the required curriculum is covered and that schemes of work, which are, for the most part, well planned, are fully implemented. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, because the teaching enables them to acquire the necessary knowledge and understanding in the different subject areas and to reinforce their skills through regular practice. Pupils respond well to the teaching; they demonstrate enthusiasm in their lessons and they visibly enjoy applying themselves to their thinking and learning, whether in the classroom, on the games field, or in the art or music rooms.
- 2.32 Teachers manage classes well and create a purposeful atmosphere for learning. Lessons are almost always well planned, and suitable well-chosen activities promote learning. The careful planning and excellent practice in the Foundation Stage gives children a very secure basis for their future education. Extremely well-organised lessons in modern foreign languages provided challenge, stimulation and motivation. Increasingly, pupils are being given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. The quality and quantity of work completed by pupils is usually good, although, at times, their presentation is inconsistent. Planned activities to enhance provision for gifted and talented pupils are now being considered and developed in most subjects.
- 2.33 Occasionally, lessons are didactic which restricts the pace of learning and the involvement of pupils. In this small number of lessons where work was extensively teacher led, the scope for pupils to understand the purpose of learning, to think for themselves and to show initiative was limited.
- 2.34 In the outstanding lessons, the teaching elicits a high level of enjoyment because the pace is stimulating, pupils are challenged to think and their learning is extended practically and imaginatively. Modern foreign language lessons provided examples of enthusiastic and energetic teaching that engaged the pupils and inspired learning. The best teaching inspires pupils by building on their knowledge while actively engaging their interest, and stimulating their thinking.
- 2.35 Teaching shows a professional awareness of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils, including the most able. Discussions with heads of departments and with pupils confirm that teachers have a good understanding of pupils' needs and use a variety of

- different teaching styles. This was evident in mathematics in Years 2 and 5 and in a Year 2 English lesson, where provision for specific individual needs was very effective. Teaching assistants support learning well in all areas of the school. Learning support is effective in building pupils' skills and encouraging confidence in their own abilities.
- 2.36 Teachers, from the Foundation Stage upwards, have a very secure knowledge of the areas of learning or the subjects which they teach. Their enthusiasm for teaching, which enhances greatly the pupils' learning experiences, was evident in nearly all lessons, and notably in modern foreign languages, PE and games, music and art. The depth of their knowledge enabled teachers both to question well and to answer questions in appropriate detail, and encourage even their younger pupils to think critically and analytically. In a Year 2 PSHCE lesson relating to the forthcoming elections for the new school council, pupils were encouraged to think about what was involved in making decisions, particularly when presented with difficult choices.
- 2.37 Teachers use effectively the ample resources available to them to support teaching. Pupils spoke positively of the variety of teaching styles they experience, including the use of ICT and interactive whiteboards. Reception children enjoyed using a scanner on the bar codes of their library books when learning about the electronic record-keeping system used in the school; they showed good control of the mouse when using their computers and could print off their work. Attractive displays help both to focus and to reflect learning in many classrooms. Increasingly effective use is being made of the school's new interactive whiteboards, though these have been installed in only a few classrooms at the moment.
- 2.38 Efficient assessment and recording systems are in place in most subjects and include the use of information from standardised tests to evaluate progress. Marking is largely constructive, though there are a few inconsistencies; not all teachers are following the school's guidelines. Much discussion has taken place, and much careful thought has been given to the new marking policy. When correctly implemented, it is already enabling pupils to move forward in their learning and understanding. In discussions during the inspection, pupils spoke very positively about the supportive marking used by many teachers; this marking provides good feedback and clear targets to ensure continued good progress. Ongoing and regular assessment together with data from standardised testing is being used increasingly well to identify future needs and help with planning, in order to ensure that each pupil's progress is maintained.
- 2.39 The school has a clear programme of assessment; it uses Foundation Stage profiles, then national test papers in Years 2 and 6, together with optional national test papers in other years, to evaluate pupils' performance. The school's own assessment procedures contribute to the evaluation process. Extra help is given to those who perform below expectation, and extra teaching time has recently been given to English and mathematics. In Years 7 and 8, the school evaluates pupils' performance through its own internal assessment procedures.
- 2.40 Teachers encourage pupils to behave responsibly and pupils respond positively, showing good levels of self-discipline and respect for staff and each other. Teachers take every opportunity to help their pupils understand the importance of behaving sensibly and safely. For example, clear instructions regarding the safe use of equipment are given during design and technology lessons. In the sports hall and in the swimming pool, careful attention is also given to behaviour and safety.
- 2.41 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 quality of pastoral care, support and guidance given to the pupils is excellent and a most definite strength of the school. The school meets its aims by encouraging pupils to work hard, enjoy learning and achieve their best. The staff, with wise and experienced advice and direction from the deputy headmaster and the headmaster, provide effective support and clear guidance for all pupils. The school nurse also plays a valuable role in supporting and caring for pupils and the wider school community. Since the previous inspection, when the tutorial system was considered insufficiently detailed to support educational and personal growth, relevant policies have been updated or introduced, and much more effective pastoral care systems and procedures are in place. Welfare arrangements are effective, and health and safety arrangements are sound. Both continue to improve and respond to new requirements.
- 3.2 The school has clearly defined, well-documented arrangements to support and guide staff in their pastoral care responsibilities. In regular staff briefings, time is dedicated to concerns about pupils; their various needs are discussed and appropriate support is planned.
- 3.3 Relationships between staff and children are excellent, with trust and a sense of fairness at the heart of the caring, positive ethos. Pupils interact well together; they are friendly and considerate towards each other in class, around the school, and in the playground. They are very aware that bullying is not acceptable. New pupils feel welcome in the school, a point made by one who joined in Year 6 and quickly made friends.
- 3.4 Very effective and successful measures are in place to promote positive behaviour; these are clearly understood by all pupils. When interviewed, pupils said that they understood all the arrangements and felt they were fair. The system of rewards and sanctions reinforces positive behaviour, and this is valued by the pupils. Parents have an opportunity to share in the pupils' success and achievements by attending weekly assemblies. Parents were almost unanimous in their agreement that they were happy with the support and guidance given to their children, and that the school achieved high standards of behaviour.
- 3.5 School policies to guard against bullying and harassment are detailed, and procedures are well known to staff and pupils. These courses of action are reinforced through many areas of the curriculum, particularly in RE and PSHCE, where pupils have opportunity to discuss and debate. The underlying philosophy of the school is forgiveness, and pupils are allowed to learn from their mistakes and are encouraged to reflect on their experiences. The school thus successfully meets the objective in its mission statement of providing a secure and caring environment where each child is valued and nurtured.
- 3.6 Effective child protection policies and measures are in place and are successful. The headmaster, as the child protection officer, attends courses at the required intervals. Staff are made aware of the correct procedures and receive regular refresher training to maintain their heightened awareness. The approach to welfare and child protection procedures is very thorough. Any incidents would be reported and investigated, and staff informed as appropriate. Relevant documents are reviewed regularly and updated. Records are kept securely and confidentially. At intervals, pupils are encouraged to take part in a programme of confidential questionnaires. The school adheres to its mission statement in acknowledging that pupils have a right to feel safe and be heard.
- 3.7 The necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are well in place and instructions are clear. Comprehensive steps to ensure fire safety have been taken and

compliance with regulations and requirements has been carefully checked by the bursar. Premises, resources and equipment are well maintained and careful thought has been given to the needs of those with difficulties or disabilities.

- 3.8 The school has an extensive and comprehensive health and safety policy which has been professionally prepared and recently updated. Sound arrangements are in place and show that the school has due regard for health and safety regulations. The number of first-aid trained staff is high, and includes a full-time qualified school nurse whose record-keeping and procedures are meticulous. Admissions and attendance registers are kept correctly; procedures for lateness are efficient and attendance is very good.
- 3.9 The school has its own chef and catering team who work hard to provide a plentiful selection of healthy, nutritious food at break, lunch and tea times. Pupils have an ample choice of fruit or vegetables, although many would still prefer biscuits, for morning break. The lunch menu caters well for a wide variety of preferences; portions are ample and clean plates and smiling faces indicate a good degree of satisfaction. The light and bright dining hall provides a pleasant, happy, social environment for pupils and staff.
- 3.10 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

- 3.11 The quality of links with parents and the community is excellent and a major strength of the school. Parents are very happy with the education provided for their children; they have a definite sense of trust in the school, which reinforces the happy family atmosphere. The results of the pre-inspection questionnaire completed by parents in the summer term were overwhelmingly positive. The small number of criticisms mainly related to concerns about continuity between stages in the school; changes introduced by the senior management in the autumn term were designed to alleviate these concerns. Links with the wider community have been strengthened significantly since the previous inspection.
- 3.12 The school is a busy environment which affords many opportunities for parents to become involved in activities and in the work and progress of their children. Excellent links with parents of nursery and reception children lay the foundation for future successful home/school partnerships. Parents work with teachers to evaluate progress within the Foundation Stage. An energetic Parents' Association organises many events, which are also attended and appreciated by staff. Parents assist with younger children at swimming lessons; this has contributed to their increased confidence in the pool and has enabled them to make progress more rapidly.
- 3.13 Parents receive good clear reports about their children's attainment and progress; these are appropriate to each stage in the school. Information about the school is available in a variety of formats, ranging from the prospectus, website, regularly updated notice-boards, a parents' information pack and a helpful parents' guide for the younger children.
- 3.14 The school has an open-door policy and parents, especially of the younger children, are made to feel very welcome by teaching and administrative staff. It became apparent in conversations with parents at the start of the day that there are many opportunities for parents of younger children to air concerns with teachers. Parents of older pupils also find staff accessible and helpful; they are always welcome too at generous teas after midweek and weekend matches.

- 3.15 Staff are very approachable, thus ensuring that small concerns are dealt with swiftly and rarely escalate. Effective systems are in place should a more serious matter occur.
- 3.16 The school itself sends a questionnaire to parents of Year 8 leavers; their replies praised the caring, supportive environment and the all-round education their children had received, in particular the good balance between academic and non-academic aspects of school life. Apart from a few constructive remarks about improving the classrooms and the car park, parents' comments were all positive, even to the point of wishing that their children could continue their education there.
- 3.17 The school promotes positive links with the wider community; it willingly opens its doors and shares its wealth of facilities and this is yet another significant strength of the school. On Friday mornings, the swimming pool is lent to five local maintained schools. Links are also being successfully forged with the local and wider Catholic community. This aspect has improved considerably since the last inspection and has included hosting the annual Rosary Rally for the Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocese. The visit of Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor on Speech Day last year has emphasised the place and importance of Grace Dieu within the Catholic community. The school's other links are extensive, ranging from visiting other preparatory and primary schools, and sharing good practice, to welcoming parents from other schools to Grace Dieu when they attend the tournaments organised by the physical education department or welcoming the local community to events such as Bonfire Night. The choir have sung with the King Singers and members of the D'Oyley Carte group, to raise funds for Cancer Research.
- 3.18 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 school has an effective governing body. Since the last inspection, much has improved. The school now has a newly formed governing body, whose members have been carefully chosen and offer an appropriate and valuable range of business and professional expertise and experience in support of the aims of Grace Dieu, where several were themselves educated.
- 4.2 The minutes of the termly meetings indicate that the structure and management of the governing body have been carefully planned in order that it may give effective support and helpful oversight to the school to enable it to achieve its aims and uphold its values. Minutes of these meetings are well kept, with discussions and decisions recorded and followed up. Expert advice is taken when necessary on matters such as security, health and safety and marketing. One governor has special responsibility for child protection and careful consideration is given to this area.
- 4.3 As a committee with an experienced chairman who is also a trustee of the recently constituted charitable trust, the governing body's responsibilities, including statutory and legal requirements, are clearly well understood. Governors are aware and supportive and recognise the need for the continued development of educational provision at Grace Dieu and for careful financial planning. The governing body is a thriving, forward-looking well-organised group, with no complacency.
- 4.4 Relationships between governors and key staff within the school are positive. Governors are very well informed: they receive a report on each subject area of the school at each meeting, and an analysis of parents' views from the Year 8 leavers' questionnaire; they review and approve policies at their meetings; the vice-chairman, a former parent, regularly spends time in the school visiting lessons. In addition, the governing body receives careful briefings and accounts from the bursar and a comprehensive report from the headmaster.
- 4.5 The headmaster feels well supported by the governing body which offers him its support and advice whenever necessary. It is a fitting testimony to the dedication of the staff and the faith of the governors in them that the 75th anniversary of the founding of the school should see the start of the building of a new classroom block.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The quality of management is very good, and the leadership has outstanding qualities. Again, much has changed since the previous inspection. The headmaster, a former pupil of the school, was appointed in 2002. Under the exceptionally clear educational direction and leadership of the present headmaster, supported by the commitment, experience and expertise of the deputy headmaster, the bursar and members of the senior management team, the school has flourished. The quality of education has improved progressively, the care of the pupils has continually strengthened, and the aims at the heart of the school guide it in all it does.
- 4.7 The needs of the school have been analysed in a most professional way: priorities wisely identified and set; skilful planning has then enabled decisions to be put into practice. The school development plan is comprehensive and well thought through. Preparations are underway for the replacement of older temporary classrooms in the grounds by a new

building which will enhance the learning environment and improve facilities, especially in ICT, for teaching. The school's self-evaluation document illustrates the understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and the depth of commitment which guides the life of the school.

- 4.8 The members of the carefully chosen and recently appointed senior management team are very successful in their roles and in the fulfilment of their delegated responsibilities. Much careful thought has been given to the procedures and policies which guide the academic life of the school and are effectively implemented. A hallmark of the school is the enjoyment of sport and the commitment to shown to it by the pupils, both boys and girls alike. This is engendered by dedicated direction and expert organisation. Knowledgeable and proficient leadership and management of the pre-preparatory department give the younger age groups a successful foundation to their education.
- 4.9 The headmaster and deputy headmaster successfully lead a loyal and able team of staff. Very thorough child protection and safe recruitment policies and procedures are securely organised. All staff, resident members of the Community and governors are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau, and a central register of all checks has been competently compiled.
- 4.10 Recent appointments indicate that selection procedures are successful and effective; these appointments, and other promotions to posts of responsibility, have resulted in marked improvements in several subject areas. Procedures for induction and appraisal are efficiently in place. Professional development is encouraged; recent courses which have been successfully completed have included the Early Years Professional Status qualification. The middle management role of curriculum heads has been recently established and staff are developing expertise. Financial resources are in expert hands; a depth of knowledge and experience is at the foundation of the successful financial, administrative and estate management. Catering, housekeeping and maintenance staff all make an important and much appreciated contribution to the lives of pupils, staff and parents. Administrative staff are efficient and effective, and above all are patient and welcoming in all they do.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 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 very effectively meets its aims and aspirations and gives pupils a very worthwhile educational experience. The five areas of development which were considered by its founder to be at the heart of a good, well-rounded education are successfully fostered from the nursery onwards, within a framework of excellent pastoral care. A capable, well-ordered governing body and leadership and management of high quality are bringing about improvement in provision for ICT, design and technology, science and for gifted and talented pupils. Staff are being encouraged to move forward with their planning, and their use of marking and assessment guidelines, in the few areas where development is still required. The high quality of a significant proportion of the teaching has led to a noticeable improvement in academic achievement and very effective learning. Pupils are eager for new knowledge and to give of their best in the classroom or on the games field. They are happy, healthy, quietly confident young people who meet with success in both their academic work and in their extra-curricular interests. Their moral, social, spiritual, and aesthetic development is excellent. In keeping with its mission statement, this inclusive school is most certainly creating and maintaining a community which recognises each individual as a unique part of God's creation, a community which nurtures a sense of value and self esteem and fosters supportive and caring relationships. There is a joy in living and learning amongst the pupils and a joy in the giving of this which reaches down from the leadership. Children and adults alike respond to the ethos of faith and encouragement and praise which is the hallmark of the education at Grace Dieu.
- 5.2 Six years ago, the significant strengths of the school lay in the teaching, the very good standards achieved in literacy and on the games field, the good behaviour and diligence of the pupils, and the very good start given to the children in the Foundation Stage. These aspects are still important strengths today, and since the previous inspection, many other aspects of the school have improved significantly. The high quality of the present leadership and the very effective management of the school, together with the support and expertise of the new governing body have enabled it to successfully attend to the recommendations of the previous report and plan ahead with efficiency, confidence and faith in the future. Curriculum planning and schemes of work have been carefully considered and improved to emphasise progression from one stage to the next; and assessment procedures have been well developed in order that information obtained can be used to benefit the pupils' education. Reorganisation of the timetable and the appointment of an increased number of specialist staff have enabled more time to be given to RE, design and technology, drama, music and physical education, especially for girls. The induction programme has been strengthened to follow national guidance in respect of newly trained teachers. Admission and attendance procedures have been upgraded to follow current good practice. The Roman Catholic ethos of the school has been upheld and affirmed; a quiet faith underpins the life of the school.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no significant weakness. In order to further improve the existing very good educational experience which is offered to the pupils, the school should take the following steps.
1. Place continued emphasis on the monitoring of:
 - schemes of work to bring planning in all subjects to the standard of the best;
 - marking and assessment to ensure that the marking policy is always used consistently;
 - provision for the teaching of gifted and talented pupils.
 2. Further develop the provision for ICT, design and technology and science and thereby:
 - improve the integration of ICT into the curriculum;
 - give pupils more frequent access to the benefits of technology and ICT in the wider sense; in particular, interactive white boards and related resources;
 - extend the use of the school grounds as an integral part of the teaching in science and technology.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 1st to 4th October, 2007. 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 the first-aid/medical centre. 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

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|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Mrs Danice Iles | Reporting Inspector |
| Mr Jerry Bridgeland | Former Head, IAPS school |
| Mr Philip Foley | Head, ISA school |
| Mrs Vanda Marchetti | Former Head, IAPS school |
| Mrs Catherine Nathan | Deputy Head, IAPS school |