

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Grimsdell, Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School

The preparatory school, Belmont, and the senior school, Mill Hill School, were inspected at the same time and separate reports published.

Full Name of the School	Grimsdell, Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School
DCSF Number	302/6000
Registered Charity Number	1064758
Address	Winterstoke House, Wills Grove, Mill Hill, London NW7 1QR.
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Email Address	office@grimsdell.org.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Pauline Bennett-Mills
Chairman of Governors	Sir Robert Balchin
Age Range	3 to 7
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	5th to 8th November 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 Grimsdell, Mill Hill Pre-Preparatory School is a day school for boys and girls from three to seven years of age. It is one of three schools that comprise the Mill Hill School Foundation which is administered by a Court of Governors consisting of sixteen members. The head teacher of each school is known as an executive with the head of the senior school acting as the chief executive. Grimsdell opened in 1995 and occupies a large Victorian building, formerly a boarding house for Mill Hill School. It is located close to the senior school in a private road surrounded by its own play areas, approximately 10 miles north of central London. Grimsdell shares many facilities on the Mill Hill School campus including a theatre, chapel, sports pitches and an indoor swimming pool. The current headmistress has been in post since 1995, when Grimsdell was first established as the pre-preparatory school of the Mill Hill School Foundation.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, there were 185 pupils on roll, of whom 110 were boys and 75 were girls. In total, 35 pupils up to the age of 4 attended the Nursery part-time and 150 pupils were in Reception and in Years 1 and 2. Pupils come from mainly business and professional families. Some pupils live locally though a large number come from a wider geographical area. The school population reflects the multi-cultural population of North London.
- 1.3 Within a Christian ethos, Grimsdell accepts pupils of all faiths and of none. It aims to instil in each child a love of learning by helping them gain confidence and self-esteem within a happy and rich learning environment, and to maximise their potential through positive encouragement with recognition of individual needs.
- 1.4 Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are offered a place in the school according to date of registration, with a balance of boys and girls, and subject to an informal interview with the parent and the child. Occasional places in Years 1 and 2 are offered subject to an informal interview and an assessment in mathematics and English. Pupils take a variety of standardised tests during their time at Grimsdell and the information from these tests confirms that overall, their average ability is above the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their ability, their results will be above the national average for all maintained primary schools.
- 1.5 No pupils have statements of special educational needs, although 16 have been identified by the school as requiring some degree of learning support. Most pupils are proficient in English; out of 55 pupils for whom it is not their principal language, 5 receive extra language support in written and spoken English. The majority of pupils move through to Belmont, the preparatory school of the Mill Hill School Foundation at the end of Year 2.
- 1.6 Since the last inspection the school has undergone a programme of refurbishment and redecoration. Developments to the outside play areas have included a science garden and pond. Investments have been made in a range of resources and in particular, for information communication technology (ICT).
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Pupils enjoy a broad and carefully planned range of educational opportunities well suited to their needs, interests and aptitudes. These strongly meet the school's aims of ensuring that pupils learn in a happy and rich environment. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for their next stage of education, whether socially, physically or intellectually.
- 2.2 Pupils receive a well-balanced, relevant and interesting curriculum which contributes effectively to all areas of their development. Subjects are consolidated and linked through stimulating and imaginative themes and topics, and as a result pupils have a broad knowledge base. In the Foundation Stage learning is nurtured through a wide range of activities that stimulates pupils' interests and imagination, both inside and outside the classroom, but does not constrain their sense of fun. Pupils' high standards in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy reflect the emphasis placed upon the acquisition and effective use of these skills from the earliest years. Good quality opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their scientific and technological knowledge and understanding and the recent development of the school science garden allows the pupils opportunities to learn from first-hand experiences. Considerable attention is given to the pupils' creative and aesthetic development by providing valuable and stimulating experiences in imaginative art and model-making and through drama and music. Their experiences are further enriched by the use of specialist teaching in subjects such as French, music, physical education and swimming, and through exciting educational visits.
- 2.3 Valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to gain an understanding of their local community through visits from local services such as the police and through the experience of exploring the surrounding environment, including a neighbour's garden. A variety of good quality clubs enables pupils to spend time with staff in a less structured situation.
- 2.4 The preparation given to the pupils for their next stage of learning is excellent. Transition arrangements are facilitated by regular liaison between staff across each stage, which ensures that pupils are well prepared and excited about moving on. Pupils in Year 2 meet key staff from Belmont, a process which benefits both the pupils and the staff. The transfer of appropriate information ensures new staff have a clear profile of each pupil's ability and friendship group. The parents are extremely positive about the way in which the pupils are prepared for the move to their next school.
- 2.5 Noteworthy progress has been made in curricular planning since the last inspection. The 3 to 18 planning for the whole Foundation provides an excellent starting point for each curriculum area to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils in a wide range of activities. Detailed schemes of work have been written for each subject, but these do not always identify how skills will be developed and how pupils will learn to apply their knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school.
- 2.6 The good standards of support for pupils with learning difficulties, and for those for whom English is an additional language have been maintained since the last inspection. The identification of pupils with learning difficulties and the subsequent individual action plans and reviews are thorough. Parents are involved and the system is well developed. The school is well supported by external agencies when planning and implementing programmes for the pupils, to ensure they make progress. Provision for the most able pupils is not so consistently developed in some subject areas and the school is aware of the need to strengthen strategies to support these pupils.

- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 The school fully succeeds in its aim to instil in each pupil a love of learning. The enthusiasm and enjoyment of all pupils is reflected in their positive attitudes to learning, resulting in significant achievements in their academic and broader education. The high standards noted in the last inspection have been maintained.
- 2.9 Pupils are well grounded in the knowledge, understanding and skills which they need. This is particularly evident in literacy and numeracy where pupils mostly apply their skills with competence and confidence, and achieve high standards. Pupils are imaginative and creative. They develop a sound grasp of scientific concepts and use ICT competently for their age.
- 2.10 In other areas of the curriculum, although knowledge and understanding are well developed and strong links are made between subjects in pupils' topic work, limited opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their investigative skills and intellectual curiosity.
- 2.11 As pupils move through the school, levels of relative attainment between classes do not show significant variation across subjects nor is there any significant difference between boys and girls. Pupils who need extra help are well supported by the class teacher or with a specialist teacher if necessary. However, opportunities given to more able pupils are less clearly defined.
- 2.12 In the Foundation Stage, high priority is given to developing pupils' positive attitudes to learning through good personal, social and emotional provision. As a result, most pupils achieve or exceed the nationally recognised levels by the end of the Foundation Stage. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 build well on the secure start they receive in their earlier years. Consequently, as they progress through the school, they achieve high standards in relation to their abilities and demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subjects they experience and develop a wide range of skills. By the age of seven, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 2.13 Pupils are proud of their achievements, which are recognised in assemblies and through awards made to classes and year groups for good behaviour around the school. These awards, including the sports awards and the annual cup given to a Year 2 pupil who makes the greatest contribution to the life of the school, successfully encourage pupils to try hard and to achieve success in many aspects of school life.
- 2.14 Pupils are willing to engage in learning, and show enthusiasm and interest in their work. They have good work habits that maximise time for learning. Pupils are friendly and helpful and are able to explain confidently and clearly how and what they have learned.
- 2.15 The rapid and sustained progress pupils make in developing their speaking and listening and reading and writing skills is strong throughout the school. From an early age pupils learn how to listen carefully to explanations, questions, stories and instructions. Writing skills develop early and pupils write for a variety of purposes, making correct use of grammatical structures.
- 2.16 Pupils have a clear grasp of mathematical concepts and they develop their understanding well as they move through the school. In the Nursery the good use of programmable toys provides a stimulating and effective tool in developing numeracy skills. The development of basic ICT skills is built up securely. As pupils progress through the school they become increasingly confident in using a broad range of applications and programmes.

- 2.17 Pupils confidently discuss and express their own opinions. They are encouraged to ask questions. Year 1 pupils particularly enjoyed working in pairs sharing ideas with their 'buzz partner' to prepare questions for a forthcoming outing. Pupils become increasingly adept at thinking carefully about controversial issues such as the safety aspects of Bonfire Night.
- 2.18 From the earliest years pupils are well organised and are able to make choices and work independently. They show initiative and take responsibility for organising the resources they need. At all stages pupils work well individually and show a high degree of co-operation when working with a partner or in small groups.
- 2.19 Pupils settle quickly to their work and focus their attention on their tasks and activities, which helps them to maintain the pace of their learning. Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to be involved, responding well to questions and activities in class. A purposeful, busy and enjoyable learning environment is evident throughout the school.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.20 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is an outstanding feature of the school. It is implicit in the school day, in the ethos of the school and the example set by teachers. The school's aim to help each pupil gain confidence and self-esteem is well met.
- 2.21 Pupils are enabled to grow in their spiritual development. Within a close and caring school community of diverse faiths and cultural backgrounds, pupils develop strong empathy and understanding of their own and others' beliefs and values. A collection of poems, letters and pictures written and drawn by the pupils following the death of 'Meg', the school's pet dog, clearly portray a depth of caring sensitivity. Pupils demonstrate strong self-esteem and confidence, developed through the value teachers place on the pupils as individuals and through the good support they provide. Daily assemblies reflect the ethos of the school and bring the school together to share and recognise pupils' achievements in and outside class. Pupils are knowledgeable about world faiths, beliefs and observances. These are discussed in their religious education lessons. 'Circle time' and personal, social and health education (PSHE) allow time for pupils to reflect on how help can be given to people in need.
- 2.22 Pupils have a well-developed moral sense and from an early age demonstrate a growing understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Strong role models and high expectations of staff reinforce this aspect of the pupils' development. Pupils understand the school code of behaviour, 'The Grimsdell Way', which together with 'Golden Time' effectively promotes the development of a strong moral sense from Nursery onwards. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and enjoy being part of its community.
- 2.23 Pupils show a high degree of social awareness. Those in the Nursery are encouraged to take account of each other in their daily routines. As pupils move through the school they are given a variety of responsibilities which not only give them a sense of self-worth and increased self-confidence, but also encourage initiative and independence. This was particularly well illustrated when an older pupil found some toadstools in the playground and, after reporting it back to a teacher, covered them with leaves so that younger pupils would not touch them. Pupils demonstrate a growing sense of social responsibility. They make a positive contribution as members of the school's re-cycling committee, making decisions about their environment and its development. Pupils relate positively to one another, take responsibility and participate fully in the life of the school.
- 2.24 Pupils' appreciation of their own culture and that of others is strongly nurtured. The school is open and welcoming to people from all faiths and cultures and actively seeks to promote this diversity in its daily life. Parents and others visit the school and share their values and

customs which, together with the celebration of a range of festivals, extend the pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoyed learning about Diwali during a notable assembly where, surrounded by Diva lamps, they listened to Indian music, heard the story of Rama and Sita, and were shown Rangoli pictures and patterns. Cultural experiences are further strengthened through French, literature, art and music, through visits out of school and through involvement in school plays.

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

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.26 Throughout the school the good quality of the teaching and exceptionally caring relationships between staff and pupils are essential factors in promoting the pupils' effective learning and high standards. This supports the school's aims well. The school has built well on the strengths highlighted in the last inspection.
- 2.27 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities to acquire new knowledge, make good progress, increase understanding and develop skills. Individual learning difficulties are catered for by careful planning. In lessons, pupils with learning difficulties receive targeted assistance from teachers and support staff with the appropriate expertise. Parents value the inclusive way in which pupils with particular needs are supported.
- 2.28 The teaching encourages the pupils to take pride in their work. A wide range of activities stimulate interest and enjoyment, although on occasions there is a lack of opportunity to develop pupils' curiosity and to provide insight.
- 2.29 Teaching at all levels is planned thoroughly with a coherent structure of stimulating learning activities. In the Nursery, teachers have a good understanding of the needs of very young children. An excellent balance of activity across the six areas of learning is provided for children in the Reception classes. Throughout the school, teachers judge changes of direction well, and question-and-answer sessions are effectively employed. Although teachers' expectations are mostly high, challenging tasks and investigations for the most able pupils are not consistently planned for in all lessons.
- 2.30 Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge to plan lessons which capture the pupils' interest and imagination. Pupils who need additional help are well supported and their progress carefully monitored. On occasions, teachers are not sufficiently rigorous in assessing prior attainment and underlying abilities to ensure that tasks set are appropriate to the ability of the pupils.
- 2.31 The good knowledge that all staff have of their subjects underpins the good quality of teaching and learning. Teachers use their enthusiasm and commitment to benefit all pupils. Pupils respond to this enthusiasm and use it to develop their eagerness for learning. In lessons they query anything they do not understand and show themselves to be effective and confident learners. The use of specialist subject teachers in certain subjects is beneficial and, together with high expectations, contributes significantly to pupils' achievements and rapid progress in these subjects.
- 2.32 Teachers are effective in their use of a wide range of resources to support learning in all curricular areas. By careful planning and the provision of organised activities, they add substantially to pupils' educational experience through a wide range of opportunities, cultural, creative and recreational.

- 2.33 The arrangements for assessing pupils' learning operate effectively. In the Foundation Stage teachers make useful and detailed observations that are transferred to a reliable assessment system. Throughout the rest of the school, attainment is assessed regularly through the use of a range of standardised and other tests. A good start has been made in using the information from assessment to make adaptations to the curriculum. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully. Comments are encouraging and praise is widely used, which give confidence to pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding.
- 2.34 Teachers have effective systems for managing pupils' behaviour and these encourage responsible behaviour. Relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are warm, caring and respectful. Expectations in relation to concentration and co-operation in class are high. Classroom assistants are highly valued and provide excellent support to the pupils. Teaching encourages pupils of all ages to take responsibility for their own learning and to behave appropriately.
- 2.35 Appropriate arrangements are in place for pupils' performance to be evaluated according to the school's aims and with reference to national norms.
- 2.36 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 is good and results from the school's emphasis on developing positive relationships across age groups and within all activities in the school. Staff work well together to secure the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. The aim of creating a happy, secure environment has strong pastoral care at its heart and is fulfilled. The school has acted upon the last inspection report to enhance an already good provision.
- 3.2 Grimsdell provides excellent support and guidance for all pupils. Teachers, assistants and support staff take an active and important role in this. A feature of parents' comments was their appreciation of the work of the staff in ensuring that the needs of individuals are met and handled with sensitivity. Assemblies and PSHE lessons enhance a sense of community and good relationships. Pupils trust their teachers and know they can confide in them and rely on their support.
- 3.3 Staff are supported by effective pastoral arrangements. The Grimsdell Way is a valued and well-understood framework for supporting the development of good behaviour and social skills. The staff handbook sets out clear expectations and guidance. All staff contribute to pastoral development through questionnaires about pastoral issues and regular meetings. The school has produced a plan to develop this area further and this is work in progress.
- 3.4 The good quality relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are based on trust and mutual respect. Teamwork is encouraged and pupils support one another in a variety of situations. In one lesson one of the very youngest pupils was seen comforting a peer, and in another, a young pupil gave her turn in a game to a friend who had not yet been chosen. Pupils care about one another, encourage others to succeed and play together harmoniously.
- 3.5 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour, including procedures to guard against harassment and bullying, are effective and deal constructively with unacceptable behaviour when it occurs. The anti-bullying policy is clear. Parents commented that issues, although rare, had been dealt with particularly well. On a day-to-day basis, the pupils understand and value the sanctions and rewards that help them live and learn happily in a community.
- 3.6 The care of pupils is taken very seriously and the procedures in place reflect this emphasis. Child protection measures are secure. Pupils are well supervised, both inside and outside school buildings. The school complies with the statutory obligations for maintaining admission and attendance registers. The school disability policy has appropriate regard to accessibility for pupils with specific needs.
- 3.7 Formal risk assessments have not been undertaken for off-site visits and areas such as the playground, hall, and stairways, although in practice careful supervision is undertaken. Good measures exist to deal with risk from fire and other hazards. Fire prevention measures are in order and regular fire practices are undertaken and recorded. The matter of fire doors occasionally propped open was drawn to the attention of staff and speedily dealt with.
- 3.8 The school takes every care of pupils' health and well being. The school has a well-equipped medical room where pupils can lie down if they are unwell during the day. First aid provision is good and supported by clear policies and procedures. Pupils have a suitable choice of healthy options for lunch and meals are tasty and nutritious; most pupils enjoy them and are aware of healthy foods and eating habits. Healthy snacks are provided by the

school and the staff are aware of any special dietary needs. Staff encourage hand washing at appropriate times to raise the pupils' awareness of health issues.

- 3.9 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) formalise an effective risk assessment for all aspects of accommodation, outside areas and off-site visits [Regulation 3.(4)].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.10 The school has an excellent partnership with parents and is developing strong links with the wider community which make valuable contributions to pupils' learning and personal development.
- 3.11 Parents are extremely supportive of the school and their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive. Parents particularly appreciate feeling included, valued, listened to and involved in their children's development. They appreciate the attitudes and values encouraged in pupils by staff. A small number of parents expressed concerns about the help provided for pupils needing extra support. Inspectors found that good support was given to those experiencing difficulty but in some lessons insufficient challenge was provided for the more able.
- 3.12 Parents are given many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. Weekly open surgeries, regular newsletters and information evenings help to keep parents fully in touch with events and developments. The thriving Parents' Association is energetic in its organisation of social and fund-raising events. These help to support wider educational opportunities for the pupils such as the science garden or a visit from the travelling farm, all of which enrich the educational experience provided. Social events for both parents and pupils are not only enjoyable, but add to the strong sense of a family community.
- 3.13 Parents are provided with excellent information about the school. The parents' handbook is both comprehensive and useful. Parents appreciate the detail given in oral and written reports and feel that they give an honest and helpful reflection of the pupils. They particularly value the written targets and next steps for their child which are now included.
- 3.14 Any parental concerns are dealt with promptly and sensitively. Parents appreciate the ready availability of staff and their willingness to listen to their concerns. Any complaints are handled with professional care, and parents are aware and have access to the school's complaints procedure should it be needed.
- 3.15 The school has worked hard and has been successful in developing strong links with The Mill Hill School Foundation community. Projects such as the recycling initiative bring the three schools together and pupils from Mill Hill and Belmont work closely with Grimsdell pupils in areas including drama, PSHE, sport and at whole-school events. Links with the local community and beyond are appropriate to the age of young children. The support given to various charities together with visitors to the school and educational visits, all help to germinate the pupils' understanding of the wider world and add breadth to their personal development.
- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Governors provide strong support that contributes successfully to the school's aims and ensures a high quality of education is offered to the pupils at every stage. Governance has strengthened since the last inspection.
- 4.2 The efficient and capable direction of the governing body in carrying out its responsibilities ensures that it makes a significant contribution to the school achieving its aims. The governing body is well defined with appropriate structures, including sub-committees, terms of reference and properly minuted meetings that enable it to oversee the work of the school effectively.
- 4.3 Governors work closely with the bursar and are suitably involved in financial planning and strategies to ensure effective educational provision and the investment in people and material resources. They are fully aware of their responsibilities for monitoring the quality of the school's provision including its regulatory and legal requirements. The professional skills, knowledge and experience of the governors are well aligned to the needs of the school and inform their debate about its future direction.
- 4.4 Good relations between the governors and staff are strongly fostered. The appointment of a designated governor for Grimsdell is a valued asset. Observing lessons, talking to staff, parents and pupils, and attendance at a variety of school functions helps keep governors well informed and allows them to support staff by providing good advice and appropriate levels of challenge. In this way they acquire a good insight into the working of the school and the valuable contribution it makes to the Foundation as a whole.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Leadership and management are highly successful and give clear educational direction to the school, reflected in the high quality of education and the care of the pupils. As a result of the quality of leadership, the school's aims are successfully met. Since the last inspection significant progress has been made in developing the management structure so that those with specific responsibilities are more closely involved in monitoring the work of the school.
- 4.6 The school is led with vision and determination for its direction, and its management is purposeful in pursuit of the school's aims and values. Responsibilities for various areas of school life are delegated well. A vigorous sense of purpose is provided by a well-informed and cohesive management team, which together with the committed and hard-working staff, creates a high level of educational provision and care across the whole school. Grimsdell has played a significant role in forging strong links with the other constituent schools of the Foundation, resulting in the development of a well-considered 3 to 18 curriculum.
- 4.7 Those with management responsibilities play a full role in decision making and are effective in analysing the school's needs, and putting in place strategies to meet those needs. Subject co-ordinators are becoming progressively more involved in the process of the evaluation and monitoring of their subjects. The self-evaluation process, to which the whole staff contributed, illustrates well the commitment to improvement and development. The school is fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses.
- 4.8 Policies and procedures are clear and succinct, and compiled following a process of consultation and review. The school development plan focuses strongly on the educational

needs of the pupils. It identifies areas for improvement and strategies by which objectives can be achieved. The school is addressing the need to further review and develop its plan for pastoral arrangements so that it clearly identifies target areas for future development.

- 4.9 The increased focus since the last inspection on professional development has resulted in a well-established professional review system linked to the school's needs. The strengths of staff at all levels, teaching and non-teaching, are recognised and encouraged. Thorough and appropriate central checks are carried out on all staff and other adults with access to pupils. Safe recruitment policies and procedures are firmly in place.
- 4.10 Grimsdell benefits from efficient financial management, undertaken by the centralised departments of the Mill Hill School Foundation. Finances are prudently managed to secure sufficient resources. Administrative staff are effective in their role. They support the aims of the school well, demonstrating a consistently warm and positive response to staff, pupils, parents and visitors alike.
- 4.11 Accommodation is compact but the school makes the best use of the available space. Outdoor play areas are well equipped and enhance the learning experiences of all pupils, but the lack of a well-drained surface means that pupils are not able to play on these areas in all weather conditions. The school makes full use of the excellent facilities on the Mill Hill School site.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Grimsdell is a friendly, caring school with many strengths, and is highly successful in meeting its aims and aspirations. The good quality teaching and close support given to pupils are key factors in the pupils achieving high standards. Lessons are carefully planned with a varied range of interesting and stimulating activities. The school recognises the importance of identifying pupils with learning difficulties and provides good support for them, although planning for the most able pupils is less consistent in some subject areas. The school fully achieves its aim to nurture in each child a love of learning through positive encouragement in a rich learning environment. In this, it is supported by strong governance and by its assured educational direction, with much positive support from parents. Pupils show an interest and motivation to learn and they achieve well. Their personal development is of high quality. Pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are excellent. The staff and pupils respect each other and value individual differences. The school is developing strong links with the local community and these links further enrich the pupils' education. Pupils are proud of their school and have very positive attitudes to their work. In this warm and happy environment, the pupils grow into confident young people who are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- 5.2 The school has maintained and strengthened the good qualities noted in the previous report and in many respects has made improvements well beyond the original scope. These improvements have been possible due to the commitment of the whole Grimsdell community in evaluating its strengths and identifying areas that needed improvement. In particular, the school has made significant progress in curricular planning, marking and many aspects of its assessment procedures. It has been highly successful in developing stronger links between the three constituent schools of the Mill Hill School Foundation. It is aware of the need to develop strategies to challenge the capabilities of the most able, to provide more opportunities for all pupils to develop their thinking skills and to ensure learning is consistently linked to the pupils' prior knowledge.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils).

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has many strengths. To continue to improve its present high quality of educational provision and build on the improvements made since the last inspection, the school should:
1. develop a policy for teaching and learning, which ensures that planning takes account of the pupils' prior knowledge and their potential, and enables them to undertake challenging activities, whilst developing their independent thinking skills.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) formalise an effective risk assessment for all aspects of accommodation, outside areas and off-site visits [Regulation 3.(4)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 5th to 8th November 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. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Gail Purt	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Julia Jones	Head, pre-preparatory HMC/IAPS school
Mrs Gillian Pinchbeck	Head of Nursery, IAPS school
Mrs Maxine Shaw	Head, pre-preparatory IAPS school