



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**AKS LYTHAM**

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## AKS Lytham

Full Name of School	<b>AKS Lytham</b>
DfE Number	<b>888/6014</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1016538</b>
Address	<b>AKS Lytham Clifton Drive South Lytham St Annes Lancashire FY8 1DT</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01253 784100</b>
Fax Number	<b>01253 784150</b>
Email Address	<b>info@arnoldkeqms.com</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Mike Walton</b>
Proprietor	<b>United Church Schools Trust</b>
Chair of Local Governing Body	<b>Mr Chris Dickson</b>
Age Range	<b>2 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>712</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys and Girls (373 boys; 339 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>2-5        79        5-11: 148 (EYFS): 11-18:    485</b>
Acting Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Miss Jane Allen</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Boys and Girls</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>09 Feb 2016 to 12 Feb 2016</b>

## PREFACE

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The school is an amalgamation of two schools. The previous ISI standard inspections of King Edward VII and Queen Mary School and of Arnold School were in February 2010 and December 2010 respectively. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was inspected by Ofsted in April 2013. The school met all of the regulations at that time.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the EYFS, which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features;
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures;
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for children aged under two), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, the chair and another member of the local governing body, and a representative of the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Dr Stephen Grounds	Reporting Inspector
Mr Peter Hamilton	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Alasdair McBay	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr David Morgan	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Laura Turner	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Frances Willacy	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mr Andrew Williams	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Ms Anne McConway	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 AKS Lytham School is the result of the merger in 2013 of two schools, Arnold School at Blackpool and King Edward VII and Queen Mary School at Lytham. Both these schools had histories of change, adaptation and amalgamation going back to the 19th century. The school is a co-educational day school for pupils from the ages of two to eighteen.
- 1.2 The school is part of United Learning, which includes the charitable trust, the United Church Schools Trust (UCST). The UCST Council, which is supported by a local governing body (LGB), is the legal proprietor of the school. The chair of the LGB, appointed in January 2015 is a member of the UCST Council.
- 1.3 The school is located in a coastal position in Lytham, near Blackpool. Its playing fields include an artificial all-weather sports ground. A new junior school opened in September 2013, and a new sports hall for the senior school was completed in 2014. Other recent improvements to the school's facilities include: refurbished sixth-form accommodation; new staff and administrative facilities; a new library; new computer facilities; new technology facilities, including for design technology (DT); upgraded and new science laboratories; a new drama studio; upgraded music facilities and improvements to internal accessibility. A new headmaster was appointed in 2014.
- 1.4 The school's aim is to educate its pupils within a caring school community, guiding each individual to develop and grow into a knowledgeable and successful young adult with the skills, character and personality both to lead and to serve. It welcomes pupils of all faiths or none, and shares United Learning's core values of ambition, confidence, determination, creativity, respect and enthusiasm, as well as the objective of bringing out the best in everyone.
- 1.5 The school has 373 boys and 339 girls, including 662 full-time pupils and 50 part-time children under the age of 5. There are 79 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 148 in Years 1 to 6, 346 in Years 7 to 11 and 139 in the sixth form. The ability profile of the junior school is slightly above the national average. For the senior school, the ability profile is above the national average. The ability profile of the sixth form is slightly above the national average.
- 1.6 The majority of pupils come from professional or trading families from the immediate and wider school area. Very few pupils are from ethnic minorities. There are 96 pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and of these none has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. There are eight pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), and of these three require special support.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement is good. All pupils, from the Nursery through to the sixth form, attain well and make good progress. In public examinations their success is good compared with pupils of similar ability. Pupils develop skills in mathematics and English which support their acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects. Creative skills are well developed, with excellent outcomes in art, drama and music. Throughout the school pupils achieve well in a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including a broad selection of sporting pursuits. The curriculum is excellent. It is broad, balanced and enriching. In the sixth form a strong range of subjects is offered, including the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Learning support is good and strongly appreciated by the parents of pupils who receive it. Teaching is good. Typically, it is well planned and taught by knowledgeable teachers who have a good repertoire of methodologies and resources. In the senior school, some lessons provide insufficient challenge.
- 2.2 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils take full advantage of the school's many opportunities for personal development. In all parts of the school, the pupils' behaviour and staff-pupil relationships are excellent. At all levels, pupils benefit from the excellent systems of pastoral support and from good procedures for welfare, health and safety, and safeguarding.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent, as shown by its work since the amalgamation. All those with responsibilities for governance are strongly supportive of the school and positively concerned to ensure the success of its core activities of teaching and learning. Leadership and management are good. The drive to redefine the school's aims and strategic objectives is strong, promoting a collective responsibility within the delegated leadership structures across the whole school. The leadership and management of the school are successful in recruiting and retaining high quality and highly committed staff. The monitoring of performance is good but with some weaknesses in this regard in the EYFS. The school has the requisite induction and guidance programmes in place for new staff, and staff speak positively about the support and guidance available to them. Links with parents are very strong and in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed overwhelming support for, and appreciation of, the school's care and provision.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that there is a greater consistency of challenge in lessons, especially for more able pupils.
2. Improve the monitoring of planning and teaching in the EYFS.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in line with the aims of the school. In the EYFS children achieve well. They enjoy being active and creative; they can explore and investigate, and are able to concentrate well whatever their ability, including those with SEND or EAL and the more able children. In the Nursery, children can count and recognise numerals to ten, and know the names of shapes and phonic sounds. Reception class children form letters and numbers correctly, and read and write sentences. They can think critically and enjoy working independently as well as with each other.
- 3.3 As they progress in the junior school, pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are above average, and their capability in art is well developed. Pupils display good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the subjects they study. They have good problem-solving skills, as was demonstrated in a computing lesson when pupils had to move a snail around a track and then write the corresponding algorithm. They participate in physical activity with skill and enthusiasm. This pattern continues into the senior school and in the sixth form. Attentive listeners, they contribute fluently to discussions. They bring a good level of understanding and prior learning to bear on a range of texts. They can think logically and construct coherent arguments. Creative skills are well developed, with excellent outcomes in art, drama and music. Pupils have well-developed mathematical skills that they readily apply, as in a science lesson where they were able to identify the base units from complex formulas. In 2015 almost all leavers went on to university, with over two-thirds securing places at their first choice, including, for half of them, places at selective universities.
- 3.4 Throughout the school, pupils achieve well in a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. In sports, a high proportion of participants have gained representative honours at national level. Success in instrumental examinations is reflected in recent award-winning musicals performed in local theatres involving pupils from both the junior and senior schools. Many individuals and ensembles participate successfully in competitions. In The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, the majority of senior pupils are involved to at least bronze level and the completion rate for all awards is high.
- 3.5 Attainment in the junior school cannot be measured against national norms, but results of other standardised tests, together with a scrutiny of work and lesson observations, indicate that pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is judged to be above age-related expectations. In the senior school, the following analysis uses the national data for the years 2013, when the school amalgamated, and 2014. These are the only two years since the amalgamation for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been above the national average for maintained schools. Boys' results in 2014 were similar to the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. Results in International GCSE (IGCSE) English and mathematics have been above the worldwide average overall. Results in IGCSE separate sciences in 2013 were below worldwide averages, whilst results in double science were similar to the worldwide average. A-level results for 2013 to 2014 were above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. The performance at GCSE in

2015 was similar to that of the previous two years. A-level results for 2015 were a little lower than in 2014.

- 3.6 This level of attainment in the junior school, as judged from the standardised measures of progress that are available, indicates that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils with similar abilities. Senior pupils also make good progress. Girls generally perform better than boys. The range of evidence indicates that pupils make progress in the sixth form that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities.
- 3.7 Because of the support they have, pupils with SEND or EAL in both the junior and senior schools also make good progress. More able pupils in the junior school are set challenges; talented pupils become accomplished in areas of particular skill. Examination results also show that more able pupils in the senior school and sixth form make good progress. In some lessons, progress is not always as good, but they answer questions with sophistication and insight when appropriately challenged.
- 3.8 All pupils display excellent attitudes towards their learning. They listen to each other when they debate with their teachers and one another. When working collaboratively they support each other very well. They have positive attitudes, concentrate well, and are able to work on their own. They are keen to succeed and show perseverance. They take pride in the presentation and organisation of their work, and are able to take responsibility for developing their own learning.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.9 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The curriculum is broad and effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. It covers all the required areas of learning whilst also being sufficiently flexible to meet individual needs, in line with the school's aims. Both parents and pupils commented extremely positively on all aspects of the provision.
- 3.11 The curriculum in the EYFS enables all children to reach or exceed expected levels in all areas of learning, whatever their starting points. Cultural diversity is supported through planned activities such as festivals. There are good facilities for indoor and outdoor learning, but outdoor learning activities have not yet been fully developed.
- 3.12 The junior curriculum is challenging and enriching. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are offered a wide range of subjects, and the curriculum makes use of the school's coastal position, particularly in art, DT and English. In a number of subjects, such as music and French, specialist teaching strengthens learning in the junior school. In the senior school the curriculum is broad and balanced, is well suited to pupils and has been adapted appropriately to reflect changes in the syllabuses of national examinations. The school offers separate sciences and a good choice of languages which currently includes the doubly-certificated Latin language and literature. The options system is structured around individual choices, including modifications for pupils with SEND. The most able mathematicians take additional mathematics in addition to their nine GCSEs.
- 3.13 In the sixth form a wide range of A-level subjects is available. Sixth-form pupils benefit from well-targeted teaching for general studies A level. The EPQ has recently been launched at the school, bringing with it opportunities for independent

learning. Academic study is supported by a range of visiting speakers and involvement in joint initiatives with the community.

- 3.14 Pupils' digital literacy is well supported, with computing being offered in line with new government guidelines. The curriculum receives valuable support from the library, where the excellent provision facilitates individual learning and fosters a creative relationship between the pupils and this resource.
- 3.15 The provision for including British values in the curriculum is securely embedded in the strong personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme; the values are actively promoted and the school monitors the use of external speakers so as to avoid partisan presentation of political issues. The PSHEE programme incorporates the teaching of key life skills such as first aid for Year 9. Older pupils spoke of the excellent support they received when making decisions about life beyond school. The extensive and lively careers programme incorporates psychometric testing and a dedicated social media account.
- 3.16 The curriculum is supported by an extensive extra-curricular programme, including, for example, cookery, ancient Greek and business studies, in addition to drama, debating, music and sport. Charitable activities include work with the Amnesty International group among many others.
- 3.17 A number of extra-curricular initiatives build on the school's aim of involvement with the community. This is seen in charitable service but also in arts events, concerts and a beach-based photographic competition.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.18 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.19 Teaching is effective in meeting the aim of the school to guide each individual to develop and grow into a knowledgeable and successful young adult. In the EYFS most teaching engages the children and motivates them to learn. Teachers make use of open-ended approaches to promote children's critical thinking skills. The assessment and monitoring of children's work and progress are variable in quality. Staff generally have high expectations and are knowledgeable. Where planning and assessment are of a high quality they clearly track the strong progress of children over time and contribute to the exceptional use of good quality indoor resources. Where they are weaker, children's progress slows. Staff know the children very well and promote a friendly, caring, safe and secure environment, and offer appropriate praise.
- 3.20 In the junior and the senior schools, teaching is well planned and is strongly founded on the positive relations and strong rapport which staff have with their pupils and the good understanding that they have of their needs. Lessons are typically well planned and structured and foster pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. Teachers show authoritative subject expertise. Pupils' previous knowledge is frequently consolidated before further work is introduced. Teachers' management and encouragement of positive behaviour are good. Praise is used effectively to encourage pupils. In the junior school in particular, lessons frequently move at a rapid pace and the pupils find this motivational in encouraging them to make good progress.
- 3.21 Teachers make effective use of the wide range of resources available to them, creating interesting and varied lessons, and enhancing the learning experiences of

pupils. The library is used as an effective teaching resource. Strong links with the community provide pupils with the opportunity to be taught by outside experts in a variety of specialisms, from cookery to football. The junior and senior schools collaborate well and share resources. For example, a junior science lesson on the effect of the acidity of drinks on teeth took place in the senior school science laboratories and was taught by teachers from both schools.

- 3.22 Teaching regularly stimulates discussion and actively promotes the values of tolerance and respect. For example, in a sixth-form sociology lesson, pupils were challenged to reassess their preconceptions about marriage as an institution. Political discussions are presented in a balanced way, such as a debate in a sixth-form general studies lesson on the funding of the arts, and in a senior school discussion about refugees.
- 3.23 The marking and assessment of pupils' work are constructive and thorough. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their learning and pupils receive frequent feedback and in turn are highly aware of their progress. Pupils' awareness of progress is assisted by effective target setting and systems of academic monitoring.
- 3.24 In the senior school in particular, teaching is occasionally pitched below the level of which pupils are capable. Planning for different needs is evident but is not always translated into differences in the achievement of different ability groups. Opportunities for pupils to carry out independent learning are not fully developed. Whilst those who are gifted and talented, particularly in music, art, drama and sport, have many outlets to develop their specialisms, the needs of pupils identified as able were not always addressed in the lessons observed.
- 3.25 Teachers are highly aware of the needs of pupils with SEND and they make effective adjustments to their lessons in order for these pupils to maximise their learning opportunities. This is well supported by the expertise of the learning support department, as exemplified by a tutorial for junior pupils on the different sounds associated with 'c' and 'ea'.
- 3.26 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires showed that the overwhelming majority of parents and pupils are highly satisfied with this aspect of provision.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school is successful in achieving its aim of pupils becoming knowledgeable and successful young adults with the skills, character and personality both to lead and to serve. It is active in ensuring that pupils are well prepared for citizenship in contemporary Britain. The school actively promotes the qualities that constitute Britishness, as well as a broad knowledge of England's public institutions and services.
- 4.3 In the EYFS, the traits that make up Britishness are actively promoted. Children show great care and concern for their peers and adults. They think about the needs of others, take initiative to help each other, are co-operative, show respect to adults and their peers, and tolerate each other's differences. They make choices and decisions and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. A range of festivals is celebrated throughout the year to promote learning about other cultures.
- 4.4 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Through the structures the school provides, pupils successfully explore and develop spiritual aspects of their lives. Through PSHEE lessons, regular assemblies and tutor time, pupils develop a sense of identity, self-worth and self-knowledge, which has a significant impact on their personal development. The school's Amnesty group, working in collaboration with a local community group, provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to reflect on human rights and fairness for all.
- 4.5 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They willingly serve the school in positions of responsibility, such as prefects, captains and ambassadors. Year 7 pupils offer support to Year 6 to help the transition from junior to senior school, and sixth-form pupils provide guidance to new entrants in the senior school. All pupils demonstrate a highly developed sense of right and wrong, and the vast majority understand the school's expectations by displaying exemplary behaviour in all areas of the school. Pupils adhere to school rules and recognise in turn the need to respect the civil and criminal law.
- 4.6 Pupils' social development is excellent. As they progress through the school, pupils' confidence and emotional maturity continue to develop well. They are courteous, personable, articulate ambassadors for the school. Pupils show high regard and mutual respect for each other. They contribute whole-heartedly in the school council, where they voice and share their opinions to the benefit of others and the wider world. They develop a social conscience through taking part in charitable activities such as helping in a local soup kitchen. Their contribution has a significant impact on the lives of others. Pupils have a very strong sense of community and enjoy working hard and receiving house points. By voting for the agenda of the Youth Parliament and through elections for the school council, pupils show a strong commitment to upholding the British values of democracy and respect for others.
- 4.7 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. Throughout the school, pupils acquire an excellent appreciation of diversity between cultures; they respond fully to opportunities that deepen their tolerance, respect and understanding for other cultures and histories. For example, pupils gained high levels of cultural awareness through the junior school pupils' celebration of Chinese New Year, the senior pupils'

music expedition to New York and their cricket tour to Sri Lanka, involving voluntary work with local children.

4.8 By the time they leave the school, pupils' personal skills are excellent.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

4.9 The contribution of the arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.

4.10 Pupils are provided with clear guidance as they journey through the school. In the EYFS the key person system enables robust relationships and trust to be developed between staff, children and their families. As a result, children feel safe and have all their needs met, leading to excellent behaviour.

4.11 At each point in school life, pastoral systems and well-considered plans create a structure that ensures that pupils are provided with excellent support and guidance to progress with confidence to the next phase of their school life. The comprehensive PSHEE programme provides guidance and support for pupils to help manage personal or social difficulties and inculcates a strong a sense of aspiration amongst the pupils.

4.12 Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are excellent. Rewards and sanctions provide an effective framework that promotes good behaviour and supports pupils to make the right behavioural and educational choices at school. All school sanctions are appropriately recorded using the school's information management system, allowing individual patterns in behaviour to be identified and monitored, and taking due account of any related difficulty or disability. The school has a robust approach to all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Cases are dealt with fairly and swiftly. Restorative mediation is often a preferred first option before the imposition of sanctions. Lines of communication with parents are always open when behavioural concerns arise.

4.13 Pupils of all ages are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. In the EYFS this is well supported through hand washing, physical exercise, both indoors and out, and healthy food. Food provided is excellent in choice and quality. Pupils enjoy a plethora of games, gym and sporting opportunities.

4.14 The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with SEND, and which builds on the 2013 to 2015 plan.

4.15 In response to the questionnaire a small minority of pupils indicated that they did not agree that the school employs effective methods to seek or respond to their views. Inspectors discussed the comments with groups of pupils, particularly those on the school council. The evidence did not support the concern. A few responses to the questionnaire reported unfairness of teachers in the application of rewards and sanctions. Discussions with groups of pupils elicited very strong views against the questionnaire claims. Inspectors judged that they were unable to find evidence to materially support these claims.

**4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.16 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.17 In the EYFS, the school encourages prompt and regular attendance, and throughout the school, the safeguarding arrangements have regard to the official guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. They reflect the government's strategy on, and make arrangements to prevent, extremism and radicalisation. The school exercises its duty of care in these matters very scrupulously, linking readily with outside agencies as necessary. The school maintains records of its contacts and interventions appropriately.
- 4.18 The school operates safer recruitment procedures. Minor omissions in the recording of details on the centralised register of appointments were very promptly responded to and corrected by school administrative staff during the inspection. At no time was there material risk to pupils.
- 4.19 All staff have been trained in child protection, either at a whole-school event or as part of induction to the school. Records of these training events are kept. The two-yearly training for those with lead responsibility for safeguarding is up to date.
- 4.20 All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards, using internal personnel and outside professionals. Evacuation procedures are regularly practised and efficiently recorded. Other arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective, including for those with SEND. Qualified staff maintain the well-equipped sick bay and keep impeccable records of accidents. More generally, thorough risk assessments are carried out.
- 4.21 The admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained and stored.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The school receives very strong support from UCST, which, as proprietor, exercises its legal responsibility for the oversight and ultimate direction of the school to an excellent degree. It has successfully guided the school through the amalgamation while ensuring the maintenance of standards. The trust is closely involved with the central strategy of the school, as attested in its aims. It provides informed guidance and sets the financial parameters for staffing and accommodation. It offers further support that includes group meetings to discuss training opportunities, the discussion of educational issues and support on professional matters.
- 5.3 Supporting UCST at a local level is the LGB, which maintains an oversight into the school's day-to-day operation. It provides great support for, and engagement with, the management's vision for future development and stimulus for improvement, and has done so since the amalgamation. Members are chosen from a comprehensive range of professional backgrounds. Many are parents. Each member is linked to a policy area such as the EYFS, child protection, or welfare, health and safety, and also a subject. This gives the LGB close insight into the work of the school, to provide support and challenge, and enable highly effective monitoring in almost all respects.
- 5.4 Strong links are maintained between the LGB and UCST. These enable effective discharge of their duties of ensuring compliance with regulations, particularly safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, with diligence and care. However, the governing body's monitoring of the centralised register has been over-reliant on information from the school. New arrangements are in place to remedy this. The UCST board receives reports from the LGB, which enables it to meet its statutory requirements of periodically reviewing policies and their working, including ensuring that the child protection policy is reviewed annually.

## **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 In the EYFS the leadership and management overall are good. The staff provide a welcoming environment in which children are happy, enjoy their learning and feel safe and secure, and all the safeguarding requirements have been met. Diversity is acknowledged and staff actively promote equality and Britishness. Self-evaluation is not fully effective because monitoring of the policies, teaching, learning and development in the EYFS is under developed. There is no co-ordinated record of staff training to improve the quality of staff interaction with the children and facilitate the consistently effective planning of stimulating learning activities, both indoors and outdoors, and so enable children to make the most of their learning. However, staff receive regular supervision, and training is up to date to meet statutory requirements. Transitions are exceptionally well planned throughout the EYFS and to the school.
- 5.7 In the junior and senior schools, including the sixth form, leadership and management are strong and effective at all levels of responsibility. They are reflected in the quality of pupils' achievements and of relationships, and in the high standard of pupil personal development, and as a result the school strongly meets its stated and published aim. The leadership and management of the junior and senior schools work in close harmony, helping to secure continuity of educational experience from Year 1 to the sixth form.
- 5.8 Since the amalgamation, the energised and tight-knit whole-school leadership team (WSLT) has liaised most effectively with governors, parents, pupils and staff to establish a clear educational direction for the future and a set of prudent yet necessary actions integral to the school's ongoing development. The WSLT successfully consulted with all its stakeholders to develop its self-evaluation and ensure that its ethos encourages respect for others and democracy. It has implemented an ambitious, well-articulated and comprehensive development plan designed to prioritise the needs and well-being of pupils and staff. The plan is being rigorously monitored at whole-school and departmental level, illustrating the collective responsibility which is felt by the staff in the delegated leadership structures within the whole school.
- 5.9 In addition to internal training programmes, staff undertake a range of external courses and some, post-degree study. Peer discussion within and across departments, a system of coaching and a robust appraisal system afford staff opportunities to reflect on their teaching and on their pastoral and extra-curricular work, and underline the school's and the staff's commitment to continuous improvement.
- 5.10 The leadership and management of the school are successful in recruiting and retaining high quality staff and in ensuring that they are trained for their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The school has the requisite induction and guidance programmes in place for new staff, and staff speak positively about the support and guidance available to them, and of the cohesiveness and sense of collective responsibility of the WSLT. The requisite vetting checks are made on all staff, governors and volunteers before appointment.

- 5.11 The school is succeeding in its own goal to strengthen, post amalgamation, the links with parents and the larger outside community. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were highly positive about many aspects of the school, particularly the standards of behaviour, the curriculum, and the belief that their children feel happy and safe. They say that they would readily recommend the school to other parents. A minority were concerned about the appropriateness of homework and the handling of concerns. These suggested shortcomings were investigated but inspectors found no evidence to support them.
- 5.12 Parents are closely involved in the life of the school. The partnership with parents in the EYFS is strong, and they appreciate the high quality of care and the daily feedback that involves them in their children's learning. The progress check on children at the age of two indicates any additional support that is required and is discussed with parents. The excellent relationships with parents make children feel secure and confident, and staff work hard and effectively to maintain these relationships.
- 5.13 Parents of both junior and senior pupils enjoy a positive, constructive and trusting relationship with the school. They are encouraged to feel, and do feel, an important part of the whole school community. A strong partnership has developed between pupils, teachers and parents.
- 5.14 Parents are strongly involved in the work and progress of their children. Regular parents' evenings for all year groups complement formally the academic and pastoral information available. They allow parents to speak directly to staff and senior leaders, and this, allied to open informal dialogue between school and home, highlights the fact that the individual holistic development of pupils is a key priority.
- 5.15 The school has a robust and appropriate complaints policy that is available to parents, and thorough records of concerns and complaints provide evidence of its successful implementation.
- 5.16 Parents have ready access to detailed and professionally presented information about the school and its policies, aims and ethos, both in print, for example the highly informative AKS termly newsletter, and in electronic form, detailing events and the achievements of pupils. The school communicates actively through its comprehensive website and has embraced social media to facilitate the sharing of news. The information is available to parents of current and prospective pupils. Formal written reports are regular and detailed.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**