



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
THE DHARMA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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## The Dharma Primary School

Full Name of School	<b>The Dharma Primary School</b>
DfE Number	<b>846/6005</b>
Address	<b>The Dharma Primary School The White House Ladies Mile Road Patcham Brighton East Sussex BN1 8TB</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01273 502055</b>
Email Address	<b>office@dharmaschool.co.uk</b>
Head	<b>Acting Heads Phil Ferguson &amp; Bea Harley</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>David Glendining</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>75</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (45 boys; 29 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>3-5 (EYFS): 28    5-11: 47</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>Total: 75</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Alison Mayo</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>(Mixed)</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>10 to 13 Mar 2015</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. This is the first time the school has been inspected by ISI.

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.

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 Early Years Foundation Stage (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 pupils aged under three), 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 and with the chair of the Board of Trustees, observed a sample of after school activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and pujas. 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**

Ms Juliet Jaggs

Mrs Caroline Goodsman

Ms Susan Rix

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Dharma Primary School was the first Buddhist school for children in the UK. Following on from the family camps at the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in Hertfordshire, a group of parents opened the school for four pupils in Queen's Park, Brighton in September 1994 with the blessing of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama who later became a patron of the school. In June 1995, the school moved with 11 pupils to its current site on the edge of Brighton at the White House, Patcham. The school is a registered charity and operates as a limited company run by the board of trustees. The two acting headteachers have been leading the school since February 2014.
- 1.2 The school ethos is integrated through the curriculum, the core objectives of which include guiding pupils to develop mindfulness, wisdom and compassion through Buddhist teachings and practices, providing a sound academic education which meets the needs of all pupils, fostering self esteem as pupils learn emotional literacy, problem solving skills as well as how to resolve conflict and creating a nurturing environment that fosters pupils' love of learning as well as strong relationships among the school community.
- 1.3 The school does not select pupils on the basis of prior attainment and provides education for 75 pupils, 28 of whom are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and 47 in the primary school. Children in the EYFS learn in separate Nursery and Reception classes and pupils in the primary section learn in three mixed age classes. About one-sixth of all pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and a very small proportion have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. More boys than girls attend the school with 33 boys in the primary school and 14 girls. Numbers are equally divided in the EYFS with 14 boys and 14 girls. The school attracts families from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds. It does not collect information about pupils' ethnicity and there are currently no pupils learning English as an additional language. Pupils at the school move on to maintained and independent secondary schools. The ability profile of the pupils is a wide one but is judged to be in line with the national average overall.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence is shown in the following tables.

### ***Early Years Foundation Stage Setting***

School	NC name
Sunflower	Nursery
Dragonfly	Reception

### ***Pre-preparatory/Preparatory/Junior Department***

School	NC name
Mountain	Years 1 and 2
Ocean	Years 3 and 4
Lotus	Years 5 and 6

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### 2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Achievement is sound. The school is not always successful in meeting some of its core objectives. Children in the EYFS develop well because frequent checks on their progress mean teaching is planned to support them through the next step in their learning. Elsewhere, much of pupils' learning is through a variety of practical experiences but these activities often take too long during lessons and do not develop in pupils a love of learning. Teaching is sound overall. Assessment is not being used to plan accurately for pupils with different levels of prior attainment. As a result, teaching does not challenge them to build on their skills in sufficient depth. The more able in particular do not reach the high standards they are capable of. Guidance for pupils with SEND is effective both in the classroom and when these pupils receive individual support. They grow in confidence to make good progress.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is good because the frequent occasions when they talk about their feelings during pujas (class and whole school assemblies) mean they are emotionally literate. Pupils learn to listen to each other and to consider different perspectives which makes them compassionate and able to resolve conflict. The discipline afforded by meditation practice equips pupils with the techniques required to be patient and to concentrate when they are asked to do so. The shared commitment to Buddhist practices amongst the school community contributes to good pastoral care. Relationships are strong and pupils are well supported in a nurturing environment.
- 2.3 Governance and leadership are sound. They guide the school effectively as a *sangha* (Buddhist community), where all members of the school commit to the Buddhist ethos. The school has still to agree how best to integrate Buddhist principles effectively through the curriculum as well as in teaching and practice is inconsistent. A clear focus on the school's statutory duties ensures it meets the regulatory requirements, although systems are not well co-ordinated and this leads to further inconsistencies. Colleagues support the acting headteachers as they fulfil their temporary roles. Accountability measures are informal and as a result, inconsistencies are not being resolved.

## **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. Agree a common understanding of how to integrate mindfulness in education throughout the school, including in the EYFS, and use this as the basis for a comprehensive teaching, learning and curriculum strategy.
2. Develop a systematic approach for monitoring this strategy, including in the EYFS, holding teachers to account for the impact on raising pupils' achievement in relation to standardised measures of progress and attainment.
3. Improve teaching by ensuring that all teachers plan sequences of learning which challenge pupils to build on their knowledge and skills during lessons, especially the most able.
4. Ensure teachers use various assessment techniques so they adapt the learning sequence quickly for pupils who are ready to move on while securing the understanding of the pupils who learn more slowly.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is sound.
- 3.2 Pupils throughout the school, including children in the EYFS, are educated in accordance with the school's aims. They all develop high levels of emotional literacy relative to their age; they reflect on their experiences and analyse their emotions to understand their feelings. These skills give them empathy for one another. Strong communication skills allow children in the EYFS to express themselves clearly and older pupils use similar techniques to resolve conflict effectively. All pupils are confident and articulate. Children in the EYFS enjoy role-play activities and older pupils create a commanding presence in drama. All pupils throughout the school enjoy learning French. Children in the EYFS understand the French vocabulary in the songs they sing and older pupils are willing conversationalists.
- 3.3 Pupils' academic achievements are not as strong. Children in Reception learn to blend the sounds that letters make and they are beginning to write sentences and stories independently. Older pupils develop some of these skills, decoding new words confidently but they are slower to master spelling rules for accurate writing. Pupils know about various literary devices, such as connectives and clauses, but they do not use these structures consistently well to write convincingly for different audiences. Children in Reception can identify numbers above and below 50. Much of pupils' learning in mathematics continues to be based on number work and they use mathematical methods confidently. They have too little experience of problem solving to fully develop effective reasoning skills. Pupils learn to investigate in science but these activities are not structured enough for them to develop logical habits for predicting and interpreting their findings. Pupils are imaginative, designing colourful artwork. They use their initiative to apply information and communication technology (ICT) skills creatively. Pupils' physical and aesthetic skills are less well developed because there are fewer opportunities for them to be used.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but on the evidence available it is judged to be similar to national age related expectations. Pupils follow an adequate curriculum and, on leaving the school, proceed to a variety of local senior schools. Some pupils are prepared separately for entrance tests for selective independent schools and a few of these pupils are awarded scholarships. Pupils' progress through the school, as assessed in lesson observations, their written work and during curriculum interviews with them, is sound. Children in the EYFS enjoy their learning and concentrate well in adult supported activities. They make sound progress and many of them reach typical age related expectations by the time they leave Reception.
- 3.5 Pupils with SEND, including those in EYFS, make good progress because of the support they receive. Guidance is well suited to their needs and they take increasing responsibility for using the strategies that have been suggested to them. Pupils with EHC plans grow in confidence because the requirements of these plans are comprehensively met. More able pupils do not make the good progress of which they are capable because their learning is unnecessarily repetitive. They are not routinely challenged to achieve the highest standards.
- 3.6 Pupils have positive attitudes to joining in learning activities because they are fun. Pupils use their initiative to organise group activities but these experiences often last

too long without being extended. Pupils are unable to sustain the levels of concentration necessary for good progress on these occasions. Pupils' books indicate that they are not learning a disciplined approach to presenting their work.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is sound.
- 3.8 The school's Buddhist ethos is reflected through the curriculum in several ways. Pupils learn about the teachings of the Buddha to gain knowledge of the Dharma and regular meditation practice means they skilfully consider their inner thoughts and feelings. These aspects of the curriculum contribute to the nurturing environment in which pupils feel safe and happy. In addition, practices actively promote fundamental British values as pupils learn the importance of mutual respect and individual liberty. The focus on mindfulness is less well understood throughout the school and there is a lack of agreement about how this approach should be integrated into the curriculum. At times, it provides pupils with a focus and clarity before they begin to learn. On other occasions, it is applied in such a way that causes learning activities to drift and time is wasted.
- 3.9 The EYFS makes good provision in meeting the needs of the range of the children who attend. The educational programmes cover the seven areas of learning and provide interesting and challenging experiences that follow the children's interests. The Buddhist ethos is integrated effectively into the children's learning and development although opportunities for using technology to support learning and for developing the children's physical development are limited.
- 3.10 In the main school, a new academic curriculum has recently been developed in line with changes to the National Curriculum. Long-term curriculum planning ensures that pupils have access to the required areas of learning. An appropriate emphasis on linguistic and mathematical experiences enables pupils to achieve age-related expectations by the time they leave the school. A new creative writing scheme has been introduced and it is beginning to help some pupils organise their ideas before they commit them to paper. Other learning experiences are delivered through a topic-based approach, which enables pupils to link knowledge and skills in different subjects. This includes pupils' economic education. Other aspects of their personal, social and health education including how to consider opposing views, are addressed through the daily class puja. The school makes additional arrangements for pupils to learn about the different way people live such as same-sex couples. A few pupils indicated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they felt homework was not helpful. Inspectors found that the level of homework was appropriate and gave pupils some useful opportunities to consolidate basic skills. The curriculum is balanced in principle but frequent adjustments to the day-to-day schedules are not monitored to determine the impact on overall coverage.
- 3.11 The curriculum is largely suitable for the ages of the pupils. They are frequently engaged in fun activities but curriculum planning lacks the detail and organisation required to ensure that these tasks are purposeful. The pupils' problem solving skills are not well developed as a result, and they lack the intellectual curiosity indicative of a love of learning. The assessment systems have been reviewed and brought in line with the revised curriculum. Both the curriculum and related assessments are in their infancy. They are not well understood and interpreted to ensure that plans meet the needs of all pupils. In particular, the curriculum lacks the rigour to optimise their gifts and talents of the most able pupils. Pupils with SEND are well supported

with a suitable balance of in-class support and individual guidance. They make good progress as a result.

- 3.12 The curriculum is enriched through various activities, such as regular trips to a dedicated woodland area where children learn and investigate their natural surroundings. Visitors, including those from Buddhist communities in France, enhance pupils' appreciation of Buddhist teachings and practice. There are limited opportunities for children to participate in extra-curricular activities and competitions.

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

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is sound.
- 3.14 Across the school, lessons are well prepared and learning activities engage pupils' interest, at least initially. Teaching gives pupils plenty of opportunities to organise their peers in groups and to talk about tasks as they work. The pupils listen to one another and they make sound progress developing each other's ideas. Occasionally, too much time is allocated to these activities and lessons lack the structure to sustain pupils' development and concentration. Teaching sometimes challenges pupils to think about how they are learning, but it is not always clear at the beginning of the lesson how learning activities are intended to help pupils build on their knowledge and skills to develop greater understanding by the end of it. The pupils' progress slows on these occasions. Too few expectations about the way in which work should be presented means pupils' books are not developing into a useful resource which clearly catalogues learning that has taken place over time.
- 3.15 The teachers' appropriate subject knowledge provides a secure basis for teaching and pupils learn through realistic experiences. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 made good progress improving their ICT skills when they developed an existing website. The school is well resourced and pupils frequently enjoy practical learning opportunities in most subjects. However, teaching in some subjects relies heavily on worksheets. More able pupils often complete repetitive exercises before they undertake the extension work that provides a more suitable level of challenge. The needs of pupils with SEND are met more effectively. Teaching takes account of the strategies identified in their individual education plans (IEPs) and adults take care to support these pupils as they learn. A strong rapport between all pupils and adults means pupils frequently ask questions to check their understanding and to develop their ideas. They complete tasks successfully because of the guidance and feedback they receive. Most pupils who completed the questionnaire agreed that teaching helps them learn because of the individual help they receive.
- 3.16 Marking is in accordance with the policy for using pink and green highlighters but the impact of these annotations is inconsistent. Some teachers add comments which help pupils understand how to improve their work but there are too many instances where marking merely identifies the error. Pupils are not learning how to prevent these mistakes recurring because there are few well-established routines for addressing these points.
- 3.17 Formal assessments are carried out in English and mathematics to check pupils' progress in achieving annual targets. Teaching does not take into full consideration this assessment information. Planned activities are often similar for all pupils irrespective of the range of attainment within each class. More able pupils often quickly complete work that is too easy for them. Assessment during lessons is less effective because questions are too often used to check pupils' factual recall.

Teaching does not incorporate the style of questions which encourage pupils to expand their ideas for greater insight. As a result, teaching is rarely adjusted to take account of developments in pupils' understanding.

- 3.18 Teaching is good in the EYFS because assessment is used more effectively and teaching takes account of the next steps in each child's learning. Well-structured questioning helps children develop their understanding and broaden their vocabulary. Children are given many opportunities to express themselves clearly, confidently and with enjoyment. Children with SEND are identified at an early stage and teaching enables them to make good progress by skilfully adapting tasks during class activities or through highly effective one-to-one support.

## **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 good.
- 4.2 The school fully meets its core objective to guide pupils to develop compassion through the sharing of Buddhist teachings and practice. It takes active steps to promote the pupils' personal development.
- 4.3 Children in the Nursery can identify feelings, share and play co-operatively. They are courteous towards adults and each other. Older children in Reception can reflect and express their feelings well. For example, children recognise the inner strength and energy they feel during yoga class.
- 4.4 The pupils' spiritual development is good. Pupils are self-aware because they are encouraged to think deeply about their feelings; they express them honestly, yet sensitively to become emotionally literate. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 thought carefully about the blessings they bestowed on one another during a visit to the woodland. Daily pujas promote pupils' self-confidence. Pupils are assured that their own opinions will be treated with respect because they learn to show the same consideration for the views of others. The discipline of meditation means pupils learn to control their behaviour to become calm and focused. The school's five precepts help pupils appreciate the non-material aspects of their lives. For example, when asked to talk about the importance of sharing, pupils in Years 3 and 4 referred to the values of love, friendship and responsibility.
- 4.5 The pupils' moral development is good and they behave well. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, and the rule of law. When pupils become over excited, it is often they who recognise that they need to quieten down. Pupils have used the school's five precepts as the basis for agreeing their own class rules. They take responsibility for encouraging one another to adhere to these rules in establishing an orderly and respectful environment. The school actively promotes pupils' understanding of their ethical responsibilities to one another and to their environment. Pupils consider others less fortunate than themselves and commit to the various fundraising activities organised throughout the year.
- 4.6 Pupils' social development is good and those from different year groups play together safely and amicably. Pupils often learn in groups and they know how to fulfil different roles in these situations. In the questionnaire, a very small minority of pupils indicated that they did not think they had many opportunities to take on responsibility. The inspectors found that younger pupils are given appropriate roles as register monitor and for looking after the shrine. Older pupils take on fewer of these roles because the school ethos helps them develop an awareness of personal responsibility. Pupils believe that setting a good example is their most important responsibility. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoy the opportunity of helping children in the EYFS make progress by reading with them. This contributes to the friendly and happy environment the school has created.
- 4.7 The cultural development of pupils is good. The school actively promotes pupils' understanding of Western culture and of fundamental British values such as democracy and individual liberty; pupils vehemently defend the right to one's own beliefs. They respect those with beliefs different from their own. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced through topic-based learning and they take a keen interest

in the cultural features of life in Japan, India and China. These topics enable pupils to gain a greater insight into, and thus tolerance of, other faiths and they have a broad understanding of institutions and services in England. Other projects such as those considering families through history, give pupils a good awareness of their own cultural heritage. Pupils appreciate artistic activities and they sing well.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is good.
- 4.9 The commitment to the school sangha creates a close community with high quality relationships between staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves. Children are well known by their key worker in EYFS. Parents indicated in the questionnaire that they agree their children are safe and well looked after at the school. A high proportion of those who returned the pupil questionnaire agreed that teachers show concern for them as a person. Pupils also indicated that they did not think they had enough opportunities to share their views but inspectors found they took advantage of the daily puja to talk about their opinions. Some teachers create other systems for pupils to share concerns confidentially.
- 4.10 The school is effective in promoting good behaviour. The five precepts for the school community provide a secure framework for pupils to develop positive attitudes to one another which fosters their self esteem. A few pupils indicated in the questionnaire that they did not think teachers gave sanctions fairly. Inspectors found a variety of systems in different classrooms but the teacher who designed them applied them consistently in that classroom. Pupils say that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- 4.11 Systems for recording concerns about pupils' welfare and behaviour provide adults with the information necessary to monitor pupils' well being and to intervene when necessary. 'Roll-on days' at the end of the summer term help pupils familiarise themselves with the move up to the next class including for children in the EYFS. Good links with local secondary schools means pupils in Year 6 receive the support they need to move on with confidence.
- 4.12 Children in the EYFS are provided with healthy snacks to help them understand the importance of healthy eating and staff monitor older pupils' lunch boxes to ensure that they are eating sensibly. Pupils throughout the school understand the need to live in a healthy manner. They are encouraged to take exercise and they play energetically.
- 4.13 The school is implementing a suitable accessibility plan to improve the provision for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare health and safety is sound.
- 4.15 Safeguarding measures now have due regard to official guidance and meet requirements. Vetting procedures for new staff are rigorous, with all required checks being carried out and recorded accurately. Staff with designated responsibilities for safeguarding have received appropriate levels of training. The school makes appropriate use of links with the local authority designated officer to keep staff training up to date.
- 4.16 Suitable systems are in place to maintain and check the reliability of fire detection equipment and alarms. Fire evacuation drills are sufficiently frequent to ensure that all pupils throughout the school are confident about evacuation procedures. Efficient arrangements for implementing the health and safety policy on the school site ensure the welfare of adults and pupils. Supervision rates are high in the EYFS to ensure children's safety.
- 4.17 The school takes due care to ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified, working closely with health care professionals to ensure that these pupils as well as those with medical needs, receive the care and attention they need. Pupils' medical plans are carefully stored and the school now has an efficient system for recording and notifying parents when medication has been administered. A thorough analysis means leadership remain alert to potential risks but there are no recurring patterns in the nature of the incidents at the school. A high priority is given to monitoring the welfare of children in the EYFS. The medical room is comfortable and medicines are now stored securely out of the reach of pupils.
- 4.18 Attendance registers are well maintained but there are no systems in place to review patterns in pupil's attendance so that the school can be alert to trends which might indicate welfare concerns. These documents, as well as admission registers, are appropriately stored.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The trustees discharge their responsibilities adequately, making a clear commitment to the impact of the school's Buddhist teachings on pupils' personal development. They work alongside the school's leadership to develop the links with Buddhist communities and lay followers who enhance the Buddhist practices in school. Trustees fulfil their responsibilities for maintaining the premises, and finances are carefully managed to equip the school with suitable resources. The generous staffing levels in most classrooms, contribute significantly to the nurturing environment of the sangha.
- 5.3 The trustees enlist external consultants to develop their understanding of the features of the sound education of their aims. School managers, including those with responsibility for the EYFS, keep the trustees well informed of the reality in pursuit of these aims. Trustees have yet to assimilate these sources of information for a better understanding of the school's effectiveness; at present, they are not able to provide effective challenge over the quality of education. They are not sufficiently involved in working with school personnel in a monitoring role and they are therefore unable to influence the priorities for improvement.
- 5.4 Members of the board fulfil their statutory responsibilities, particularly those for safeguarding. They are fully involved in training routines and have efficient systems for reviewing policies with leadership, including the annual review by the whole board of the safeguarding and child protection policy.

### **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 and carers is sound.
- 5.6 Leadership and management are effective in discharging some delegated responsibilities such as those for safeguarding the welfare of pupils. Vetting checks are thorough and the school's records of their recruitment practices are complete and up to date. All staff, including those in the EYFS, receive appropriate training in safeguarding and health and safety. Further work is required to tailor this so that it reflects the school's distinctive character. Other training activities make the most of teachers' expertise. For example, colleagues are helping other teachers improve the way they help pupils learn to write.
- 5.7 Leadership is characterised by an emphasis on collaborative working amongst members of the small staff team. Colleagues are well motivated and they are committed to the school sangha. Teams of teachers work closely together to ensure continuity for pupils when part time teachers and teaching assistants hand over to their colleagues. Teachers support the implementation of the new curriculum because they were all involved in the planning phase together. This strong team ethic sometimes restricts other aspects of leadership, for example in ensuring consistent policy implementation. Suitable guidance is available for implementing health and safety policies, as well as plans for pupils with SEND to ensure they meet

regulatory requirements. Teachers create their own documents in response, which adds to the inconsistency. Pupils' needs are met but management is not able to readily identify and promote good practice.

- 5.8 Leadership has established the educational direction of the school and co-ordinated a strategic approach to attracting expertise in Buddhist practices to enhance those being developed within the school. Links with Buddhist communities in Europe enrich the life of the school and pupils' awareness of living in accordance with Buddhist teachings in particular. This has a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Mindfulness has yet to be incorporated into learning in a consistent manner.
- 5.9 Monitoring activities are informal and there are few systematic checks on the integrity of the curriculum. Staff appraisal cycles, including arrangements for supervision in the EYFS, are infrequent so there has not been a sustained approach to improving the quality of teaching. For example, staff have yet to develop a good understanding of the new assessment system in relation to standardised measures of progress. This limits the extent to which the school is able to identify relevant priorities to improve pupils' achievement. Overall school development plans have too many targets; they are not prioritised well enough.
- 5.10 The leadership of the EYFS creates effective team working amongst staff. They meet regularly to evaluate the children's progress and they have identified some useful areas for improvement. Day to day management is effective and the children are well-cared for in a welcoming and stimulating environment. Staff work effectively with external agencies and parents to ensure relevant support is provided for children needing particular support with their learning and development. The setting has also worked effectively with the local authority to gain accreditation on a quality assurance scheme.
- 5.11 The quality of the links with parents is good. Parents feel welcome and part of the community. The school takes care to seek the views of parents through surveys and at community meetings, where topics such as the importance of mindfulness and the recruitment of a new head teacher have been discussed. Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, such as attending weekly school pujas, Festival Days and performances. Parents are involved in fundraising events and the monies raised are used to support both the school and charitable concerns.
- 5.12 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show the vast majority of parents are satisfied with the education and support provided for their children. A very small minority of parents felt that they were not provided with sufficient information about their child's progress. Inspectors found the information provided to parents was good. Annual reports are informative and detailed in addition to the two parents meetings a year. Teachers are available to meet parents on request and they are readily contactable by email. Weekly newsletters contain information about events and children's recent work. Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with all the required information about the school via the school website.
- 5.13 A very small minority of parents did not agree that the school is well led and managed. In this respect inspectors agreed that the school's vision and educational policy is not clearly agreed and articulated by all members of the school community. A few parents felt that the school did not handle parental concerns well. Inspectors found the school handled concerns constructively; published procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints contain all the required information.

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