

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

St Piran's School

Full Name of the School	St Piran's School
DCSF Number	868/6004
Early Years Number	N/A
Registered Charity Number	309094
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Age Range	3 to 13
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	2nd to 5th March 2009

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, May 2007 and February 2009.

The statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage were not inspected as part of this inspection.

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 St Piran's is an old-established school which moved to its present site on the outskirts of Maidenhead in 1872. For the next one hundred years it was a traditional boys' boarding school. An educational trust with a board of governors was formed in 1972 and in 1993 it became a fully co-educational day school. The present head has been in post since 2001. Since the last inspection in 2003, the senior management structure has been strengthened and a new Lower School hall has been opened. The school grounds are extensive and the St Piran's Centre provides sporting and swimming facilities for the pupils as well as the local community.
- 1.2 The school's main aims are to be a warm, friendly family school, bringing out the best in every pupil, and to combine a high standard of academic education with a full range of sports and activities. It regards courtesy and consideration for others, coupled with a sense of responsibility underpinned by Christian principles, as being of high importance; the school also seeks to foster happy and natural relationships between parents, pupils and staff and a pride in the school. Other specific aims include safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils, and addressing the personal development and potential of each. The school's history is seen as an important part of its ethos and heritage and it has a strong alumni association.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 357 pupils in the school, of whom just over one half were boys. Eighty nine children were in the Nursery and Reception years of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 77 in Years 1 and 2 (the Lower School), 82 in Years 3 and 4 (the Middle School) and 109 in Years 5 to 8 (the Upper School). The school has a three-form entry from Year 3.
- 1.4 Approximately one-tenth of pupils are from ethnic minorities. Pupils come mainly from business and professional families and live within a few miles of the school. The ability profile of the school shows a wide range but is above the national average. Very few pupils need support for English as an additional language (EAL). The school has identified 75 pupils as having some form of mild learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD). One pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN).
- 1.5 Pupils leave at the age of eleven or thirteen to enter senior independent schools or maintained grammar schools. The main points of entry are into the EYFS or Year 3.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS is shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage

School	Age of children
Nursery	3 to 4
Transition	4 to 5

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 St Piran's School successfully provides a well-balanced all-round education, meeting its aim to give all pupils a wide range of opportunities combined with social and leadership skills. The key improvement since the last inspection has been its provision of an educational experience which allows pupils of all abilities to succeed, including those in the EYFS.
- 2.2 The EYFS gives children a good start in acquiring early skills and covers all the requirements for the Early Learning Goals. It prepares children well for the next stage in their education. For older pupils, provision for literacy, numeracy, and the development of creative skills is high throughout the school. Planning in literacy and numeracy is much improved since the last inspection. Projects, often linked with visits, help with both extended writing and cross-curricular skills. For example, Year 4 pupils drew on their visit to Mill-on-the-Brue when studying history and geography. Pupils benefit from musical opportunities such as playing in the orchestra and smaller instrumental groups, including a long-established handbell team, as well as singing in a variety of choirs.
- 2.3 Pupils have a wide range of opportunities across all areas of the curriculum. These include dance and drama, French from Reception and Latin and Spanish from Year 6. Art, textiles and cookery contribute much to pupils' education. Information and communication technology (ICT) is well used in some subjects, especially mathematics and science. Enhanced provision for ICT and the creation of the well-used learning resource centre have extended opportunities for learning and study skills. The curriculum is based on the National Curriculum but with extension to allow the 11+ and Common Entrance syllabus to be covered. Adequate time is given to each subject. Pupils' education benefits from specialist teaching; all teaching in Years 5 to 8 is by specialists, and that for younger pupils in French, music, physical education, art and ICT. Setting in mathematics from Year 3 and English and mathematics from Year 5 enables all pupils to access the curriculum whatever their level.
- 2.4 Artistic and creative provision is outstanding and pupils have many opportunities to extend their speaking and listening skills, for example in a Year 8 discussion exploring the responsibility the rich have to the poor. Drama and poetry readings, and circle time when younger pupils listen to each other, give opportunities for both speaking and listening. Dramatic productions and form and tutor group assemblies enable pupils to gain confidence in speaking and acting in public.
- 2.5 The wide variety of physical activities includes high quality competitive sport. All pupils, including those in EYFS, receive professional swimming tuition and all those in Years 3 to 8 play in a school team at some time during the year. The main sports are football, rugby, hockey, cricket, netball and rounders. In addition, cross-country, athletics, swimming, tennis, basketball, trampolining, golf and the climbing wall contribute to an outstanding sports programme and appeal to those less keen on team sports.
- 2.6 Further extra-curricular activities include chess, sports, art, dance, lateral thinking games and archery and provide opportunities for each pupil to achieve. Vegetables from the gardening club were eaten and much enjoyed during the summer term. Pupils feel that activities contribute to their personal development and widen their horizons. They benefit from trips including Nursery's outing to the local farm park, workshops and drama activities, and visits from speakers such as the local services, authors and dramatists.

- 2.7 Residential trips for Years 4 to 8 encourage personal responsibility and introduce pupils to living away from home. Professional leadership skills training for Years 7 and 8, helps older pupils recognise the responsibilities of being at the top of the school. Years 5 and 6 girls have a 'girls' night in' when they discuss growing up. Together with the personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) curriculum these provide valuable preparation for adult life. For younger pupils, PSHCE helps form decisions about living healthy and happy lives as well as providing opportunities to discuss ways to resolve personal and group problems. Study and thinking skills, including the de Bono 'thinking hats', have a positive effect on pupils' methods of learning.
- 2.8 Familiarity with the physical layout of the school enables a natural progression through the school, whether from Nursery or Year 2. Older pupils are well prepared for entrance examinations to their next school; they accept increasing responsibility for themselves as well as for others. Pupils learn about democracy through the School Parliament to which pupils from Year 3 upwards elect MPs and Deputy MPs.
- 2.9 The curriculum is well planned, and shows continuity and clear progression from Year 1 upwards. It supports pupils' learning well. Short-term planning indicates how differing needs are to be met.
- 2.10 An experienced special educational needs coordinator oversees high quality provision for learning support. Different needs are met in a variety of ways including extra sessions for those with LDD or SEN, and the more able. Few pupils need learning support for EAL; those who do are given good targeted support in the classroom or in small groups. Provision for the more able has much improved since the last inspection. Greater use of setting and extension activities allows these pupils to be fully challenged in most subjects.
- 2.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.12 The quality of learning and achievement is good overall, including the EYFS, and some aspects are outstanding. The school aims to have high expectations of its pupils and to bring out the best in all. Since the last inspection, learning skills are much improved. Provision and challenge for the more able has been strengthened particularly by emphasising thinking and study skills.
- 2.13 By the time they leave school, pupils are well educated, can think creatively and critically and have an extremely secure grounding in the skills needed to achieve both academically and socially. Even the youngest Reception pupils form and join letters neatly and correctly, and by Year 2 handwriting is often excellent. Numeracy skills are high throughout the school. ICT skills are proficient and good use is made of interactive whiteboards when pupils can easily experiment with their own ideas. Pupils concentrate and use their skills to think through problems. Many are inquisitive and pose thoughtful questions based on lateral thinking. For example, Year 1 pupils discussed how they would recognise ordinal numbers, Year 6 pupils calculated the amount of blood the heart pumped in a year in mathematics and Year 7 pupils discussed the propagandist element in a portrait of Elizabeth the First. Pupils can draw together ideas across the curriculum, for example when Year 4 pupils combined art and writing based on their visit to the Rowing Museum. Older pupils make their own notes effectively. Presentation is often outstanding and generally good. However in a few lessons pupils are not given enough opportunity for independent learning and rely too much on worksheets or copying from the board.

- 2.14 Achievement in creative, aesthetic and physical activity is outstanding. Extremely competent and interesting stories and poems are written throughout the school. Year 5 pupils wrote long ballads on an historical event or person; the ballad of the Nativity was particularly moving. Art is of an extremely high standard. In sport, pupils have had considerable success in local, county and national events in cross-country and swimming. Pupils represent their county in many of the sports played. Good drama and music examination results show the high standards reached, and some pupils are appearing in a current West End musical. Some pupils are outstanding at chess, and in using their thinking skills and emotional intelligence in competition, the Mind Lab team are not only UK champions but also in the top three in the world. Pupils have gained silver and bronze medals in the primary maths challenge. Achievements at all levels are widely celebrated to support and encourage excellence. A variety of work is very well displayed around the school.
- 2.15 In their questionnaires, pupils showed a positive outlook towards their work, as well as loyalty and pride towards their school. They felt that a happy learning environment helped them achieve. Pupils work independently or co-operatively in lessons in all areas of the school. Different ability groups work well together, and are happy to help each other. Nursery children play together happily and await their turn patiently. Reception children work co-operatively at the computer. The learning resource centre which incorporates a library and computers, but is separate from the main ICT suite, is very well used by class groups and by pairs of pupils working on their own research. Pupils quickly settle to work and appreciate the encouragement of their teachers. They show enthusiasm, and are clearly happy to enjoy the wide range of learning opportunities offered by the school.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.16 Spiritual and moral development is good, and social and cultural development is outstanding, both in the EYFS and in the rest of the school. Social and cultural development is much improved since the last inspection. The school successfully meets its aim to provide a foundation for pupils' spiritual development and an understanding of right and wrong, within a clear Christian ethos.
- 2.17 Pupils' good spiritual awareness is strengthened through opportunities to explore the Christian faith in religious education (RE) and through learning about other faiths in PSHCE, art, music and literature. Religious values are fostered through hymns, prayers and grace before and after lunch in the Lower School. Pupils learn about and celebrate Jewish, Hindu and Chinese festivals. Year 5 learnt much from a talk on Hinduism. Assemblies in each part of the school are faith based and promote spiritual awareness. An Upper School assembly emphasised perseverance, and recognition of others' achievements. The St Piran's Day assembly helped foster the spiritual values inherent in the school's pride in its long history. A parents' prayer group meets weekly in the chapel to pray for those in the school. Pupils see their work and achievements are valued and celebrated in displays and assemblies. This helps them acquire self-belief and gives them confidence in their own abilities.
- 2.18 Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and the Christian values underpinning school life give a strong sense of moral direction. From the earliest age in EYFS, children share, play well together and are considerate towards each other. The Lower School 'Thought of the Week' provides good opportunities for discussion and a greater understanding of right and wrong. Pupils appreciate the consequences of inappropriate behaviour and understand the systems of rewards and sanctions. Moral dilemmas are discussed and the importance of making wise moral decisions is emphasised in assemblies and in PSHCE lessons. Pupils' understanding of moral issues and respect for the law are carefully nurtured throughout the school. Fire safety officers visit to give talks to younger

children about their responsibilities in the wider world. Staff provide good role models in their relationships with each other and with pupils, who felt that school rules were fair and were for the benefit of the school community.

- 2.19 Pupils' social development is outstanding. The school encourages a very strong sense of community and a willingness to contribute. Pupils relate very well to each other and to adults around them, think of others and are well mannered and helpful. Year 7 discussed different ways of showing respect to others in a PSHCE lesson and, in an informal lunchtime concert, performers were encouraged to accept applause with a smile. All pupils have opportunities to take responsibility from an early age. In Nursery and Reception they act as helpers, then progress through the school to positions of head of school, prefects, monitors and team captains. The clan (house) system promotes good social interaction and gives further opportunity for pupils to take responsibility. The wide range of games and activities enables different ages to mix in informal situations. Pupils learn from their charitable activities how they can contribute to a wider world. Harvest and Christmas gifts are donated to those who are less fortunate, enabling greater understanding and awareness of others.
- 2.20 Pupils' social development is supported by their developing understanding of the role of institutions. A local MP talks to pupils about democracy; they then vote for their own MPs who meet twice a term in the School Parliament to discuss and debate ways the school can be improved. One way has been to participate in re-cycling schemes. A successful leadership programme for Years 7 and 8 helps develop co-operation whilst teaching pupils life skills such as first aid and self defence, and how to manage younger pupils, as well as helping to prepare them for their next school.
- 2.21 Pupils' cultural awareness is outstanding and much improved since the last inspection. They learn about their own culture in lessons such as English and history, including learning about the history of their school. They sing national songs and are inspired by British artists. Other cultures are also included. At the start of the day, Reception sing action songs using greeting words from a variety of languages. Younger pupils, including the EYFS, broaden their knowledge of, and sensitivity towards, different cultures through their International Day. The cookery club has produced a variety of tasty international dishes from Italy, China, Morocco and Turkey. Attractive displays of art and design technology around the school stimulate pupils' cultural perspective. In a Year 3 English lesson on traditional stories, pupils discussed cultural differences and one dressed up in a kimono. Year 5 looked at Nigerian symbols when undertaking a textiles project.
- 2.22 The school is particularly proud of its past and traditions. St Piran's Day is celebrated with a special assembly and the running of the Millstone race, when gym mats replace the original millstone carried by St Piran across the Irish Sea to Cornwall.
- 2.23 School trips are also made to museums and theatres in order to enhance pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils are aware of the needs of people from other countries by fundraising for charities including a school in Kenya. All these experiences, including the opportunity for overseas travel, help pupils accept and understand other faiths and cultures, as well as their own.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.25 The quality of teaching is good overall, with many outstanding features. Since the last inspection, planning and assessment have particularly improved. The widespread teaching of thinking skills has helped the school to meet its aims of addressing the educational needs and potential of every pupil including those with LDD, SEN or EAL. In the EYFS, effective teaching enables almost all pupils to reach the Early Learning Goals.
- 2.26 The best teaching is brisk and challenges pupils of all abilities. In many lessons, high quality questioning allows pupils to think for themselves. In Year 2, rapid questioning on multiplication bonds enabled all to make quick progress. In an outstanding Year 8 French lesson, the fast pace and precisely targeted questioning ensured that all pupils significantly raised their attainment, and also thoroughly enjoyed the session. Less satisfactory lessons lacked pace and a suitable variety of activities for different abilities, or relied too much on worksheets which prevented all pupils making good progress and using their thinking skills.
- 2.27 Teachers' subject knowledge is good and in some cases exceptional. Subject specialists challenge pupils' intellectual, physical and creative talents. High expectations, by almost all teachers, ensure that pupils strive to reach their potential. They behave well and enjoy their lessons. In a Year 4 music lesson pupils played a pentatonic scale with skill and enthusiasm. Good use is made of resources to enrich teaching such as in a Year 5 geography lesson when contour lines were explained with the help of an internet visual mapping programme. Good independent learning habits are developed by investigative work in the learning resource centre. One pupil explained that "our teacher nearly always knows the answer but sometimes she sends us to look it up on the internet or in a book".
- 2.28 Teaching is well planned and lessons carefully structured, although planning across the EYFS lacks cohesion. In most lessons, learning objectives are clear and planning includes different activities which take account of the wide range of abilities. A Year 6 swimming lesson enabled pupils to swim front crawl with increasing efficiency, because instructions were clear and purposeful. Subject planning is now much better monitored by subject heads and managers who work together to ensure progress and continuity. In the Upper School curriculum planning across the years is less well monitored.
- 2.29 Teachers know their pupils well and show good understanding of their abilities, which enables them to respond well to their needs. This was strongly borne out by the parents' questionnaire. Pupils are encouraged to apply thinking and study skills which are now incorporated into most lessons. This has particularly helped those with LDD and SEN. Provision for these pupils, and for the most able, has improved considerably throughout the school and enables all to make good progress. Lesson planning caters well for those with differing abilities, and individual education plans are used well for those who need learning support. Small booster groups give valuable support to those who need extra time to understand concepts in literacy and numeracy.
- 2.30 A good range of resources including interactive whiteboards, are well used and support teaching throughout the school. Year 6 gained an insight into Victorian art and life by using interactive programs based on the work of Ford Madox Brown, linking art with history.
- 2.31 Assessment is now almost always of high quality. Individual pupils' progress is tracked using a wide range of data which informs planning. However, limited coordination of assessment data prevents information being shared easily to track pupil progress as thoroughly as the school would like. Marking is detailed and often a comprehensive range of targets enables pupils to strive towards even more improvement.

2.32 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, welfare, health and safety is outstanding throughout the school, including the EYFS. Since the last inspection, it has considerably improved. Pastoral care supports the school's aim to be a warm and friendly family school, and to safeguard the welfare of every pupil. This is underpinned by the Christian values inherent within the school's ethos.
- 3.2 Staff know their pupils well and offer high quality support and guidance in a friendly and relaxed manner, through a well thought-out pastoral structure. Children in the EYFS are well looked after by their teachers and nursery nurses. Lower and Middle School pupils stress the importance of their form teacher, who monitors behaviour and offers advice and encouragement. Pupils in the Upper School appreciate their form teachers, and are also part of a smaller vertically streamed tutor group who meet weekly for academic guidance. Both pupils and parents value the support of form teachers and tutors. The two school matrons also play a large part in pastoral care, often being the first port of call for pupils and parents as they enter the school, as well as being available throughout the day. These highly effective pastoral arrangements are supported by the deputy head, the heads of Middle and Lower Schools and ultimately the head. All staff, including catering and grounds staff, receive training and feel involved in pastoral care. Staff are familiar with school policies and procedures which are implemented successfully.
- 3.3 Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and friendly. During a Year 6 girls' inter-school hockey match, the umpiring set a superb example by encouraging both teams in an enthusiastic and caring way. Pupils are generally kind and helpful to each other and keen to celebrate and recognise each other's achievements. Pupils and teachers, together with other adults on the staff, greet each other as they move around. Pupils and parents appreciate the visible presence of the head in the school.
- 3.4 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour, including procedures to guard against bullying, are effective and focus on the positive. Pupils say there is little bullying, but that if it did occur it would be dealt with quickly. They understand the school's expectations; each class has its own code of conduct and specific concerns over behaviour are discussed in PSHCE lessons when necessary. Behaviour in and around the school is usually good helped by friendly relationships with teachers who are quick to stop unsuitable actions. Pupils negotiate narrow corridors sensibly.
- 3.5 Rewards and sanctions are clear; pupils value the award of plus and minus points for positive or negative behaviour and feel that the system is fair. Clan (house) points and the names of individuals with high totals of plus points are announced weekly in assemblies.
- 3.6 Measures to safeguard and promote pupils' health and safety are successful and welfare is given a high priority. Child protection procedures are clear and thorough and staff have received recent training. The head is the designated child protection officer. All staff receive relevant checks, including those from Criminal Records Bureau. Safe internet use is discussed with pupils, and a responsible computer use contract is in preparation. A thorough policy, including fire and other hazard requirements, is frequently reviewed and updated by the health and safety committee and governors. The maintenance officer checks the school site daily. These measures ensure pupils feel safe and secure and if they are in difficulty they know how to approach an adult. Good records are kept of any incidents. Attendance and

admission registers are correctly and accurately maintained and effective procedures are established to follow up any unexplained absences.

- 3.7 A comfortable room is provided for unwell pupils. The first aid policy specifies those with first aid qualifications as well as the school matrons, and includes EYFS staff. Comprehensive risk assessments are made for journeys outside school and trips are well planned. Safety on site is taken seriously and Year 7 and 8 pupils play their part in patrolling corners and the driveway during times when pupils move about.
- 3.8 Healthy eating is actively encouraged. All food is freshly cooked on the premises using local ingredients where possible. Pupils feel that the new caterers are “doing a good job only we don't get ice cream as much”. Pupils' physical well being is taken seriously and all, including the EYFS, benefit from many opportunities for games, swimming and outside play.
- 3.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.10 Links between the school, parents and the community are outstanding and have improved since the last inspection. The school achieves its aim to be a warm, friendly school in which families can be fully involved. This was borne out by the large response to the parents' questionnaire which reflected their overwhelming support for the school. Parents were very satisfied with their child's education, care and the information provided by the school.
- 3.11 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the school and in the work and progress of their children. Some parents assist on trips, give talks to the pupils about their jobs and faiths and run extra-curricular activities such as the gardening club. The school operates an open-door policy giving parents easy access to teachers before or after school, which they appreciate. Parents also value the breakfast club and extended day care. The St Piran's Society organises fundraising and social events such as a firework evening and a ball.
- 3.12 E-mail is widely used to communicate with parents, and notice boards around the school enable parents to keep abreast of events. Curriculum booklets giving information about topics being taught, and events calendars are sent home termly. Homework diaries for home/school communications are used, most effectively with younger pupils.
- 3.13 Parents are very well informed of their child's progress although a small number felt they would like more information. Inspection evidence showed that the school provided extremely adequate coverage including parents' meetings, frequent written reports, and informal contacts. Older pupils receive weekly industry grades. Full written reports include information on what has been learnt, attainment and ways to improve. New pupils who join the school from Year 3 also receive a settling-in report during their first half term. Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have any concerns about any aspect of their child's work or welfare and the great majority felt their concerns were listened to and dealt with well. Parents are made aware of the procedures to be followed in case of concerns and the school deals appropriately with any complaints.
- 3.14 Links with the local community are outstanding. The St. Piran's Centre containing the sports hall, dance studio, large meeting hall, music centre and swimming pool, is extensively used by many local community groups for activities including chess competitions, swimming clubs, music societies and faith groups. The grounds are used for inter-school sport competitions as well as by local sports clubs. The physical education department have plans to forge better links with local primary schools by running sports coaching sessions. Pupils

from local secondary schools are welcomed into school for work experience. Residents from local care homes are invited to concerts and productions, and gifts from the harvest festival are donated to the local hospital. The School Parliament involves the pupils in raising funds for charities and a considerable amount was recently raised for the British Heart Foundation as well as for local charities. Resources are borrowed from Reading Museum and are well used. Links with the wider world have included fundraising and communication with a school in Kenya and other international charities.

- 3.15 These, together with trips and residential visits, have a highly beneficial impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world as well as their local area. They link with the school's aims of educating its pupils to be considerate of others and to live by Christian principles.
- 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 The school is very well governed. Governors, some of whom have a link with the school, use their varied financial, educational and development expertise to ensure that the school's aims are met. They are aware of the next steps for the future of the school and make full contributions to the development plan. Governors are well informed about the school. Active sub-committees ensure that the available expertise is well used. Meetings are minuted and well structured, and indicate wide-ranging consideration of the topics discussed.
- 4.2 Governors carry out their responsibilities particularly with regard to health and safety, child protection and finance. Policies are regularly discussed and reviewed. Good financial management and planning has provided the school with an excellent range of facilities, the latest addition being the ingenious conversion of an old swimming pool to the Lower School hall.
- 4.3 Staff feel they know most of the governors and welcome opportunities to meet them. Governors enjoy hearing from staff about the work of the school which enables them to become more involved in the school development plan. Staff and leadership feel well supported by governors and welcome their presence in school.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The school is extremely well led. It benefits from an experienced head whose dynamic leadership is well supported by the senior management team, enabling the school's aims to be very successfully met, in particular those of making the school a warm, friendly place and promoting the academic and pastoral welfare of every pupil. Management has worked extremely hard to implement recommendations from the last inspection into present plans.
- 4.5 Since the last inspection, the posts of deputy head and director of studies have been combined giving an overview of the whole school. Line management has been strengthened to give increasing responsibility to heads of subject departments, and subject managers in the Lower and Middle Schools. The director of studies oversees the curriculum of the whole school, assisted extremely well by the heads of Middle and Lower School who actively oversee their departments. At present there is no similar co-ordination of the curriculum for the Upper School resulting in less cohesion between subjects and years.
- 4.6 Heads of subject departments oversee their subject effectively throughout the school and teach in the lower years, enabling them to get to know teachers and pupils in other areas of the school. This has helped raise standards in all years particularly in mathematics and English. Subject managers in the Middle and Lower Schools act as liaison between heads of subject departments and their part of the school. As a result, work is generally well monitored and evaluated. Much data is collected from assessments but is not yet used to full advantage in all subjects. Lesson observation takes place as part of staff appraisal and sometimes on other occasions, but the best ideas and most positive teaching are not yet fully shared across all subjects and years. Teaching assistants contribute to planning in the Lower School and are often, but not always, well deployed. Where they are used well, they enhance pupils' learning and also learning support.

- 4.7 The development plan sets out priorities for the next three years, and annual reviews by governors and staff strengthen its effectiveness. Department heads have their own budgets, and finances are well managed to provide good resources for teaching and learning.
- 4.8 Staff are dedicated, passionate and committed to the academic and pastoral care of the pupils. Parents and pupils alike commented on their caring attitude and the time they willingly devote to helping individual pupils, as well as the time they give to extra-curricular activities, many of which are at the weekend. Parents acknowledged and appreciated the open-door policy of the school.
- 4.9 The day-to-day management of the school is efficient and strongly supported by the helpful administrative and finance team. Both teaching and non-teaching staff are enthusiastic and hard working. School matrons, teaching assistants, nursery nurses, gap students and lunchtime supervisors together with grounds, catering, and maintenance staff, many of whom have been at the school for a number of years, are proud of their school and contribute to the pastoral care of the pupils. This dedication contributes to the strong sense of community making it a truly family school, something which was commented upon by parents.
- 4.10 Well-qualified staff receive appropriate checks upon appointment, with effective induction for both experienced and newly qualified staff. Staff professional development is a high priority, and is carefully linked to the school improvement plan, as well as to the outcome of staff appraisal. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection and first aid.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 St Piran's very successfully achieves its aims to provide a happy learning environment for its pupils enabling them to become reflective learners who are sociable and responsible, and responsive to the needs of others. Pupils' academic guidance and pastoral care are outstanding allowing pupils to feel secure, knowing they will be helped by their teachers. The high quality of pupils' social development and their excellent relationships with the staff and each other result in well-adjusted boys and girls throughout the school. Pupils settle to work quickly and generally behave well. Provision for different academic needs, particularly the most able is extremely successful. Links with parents and the community, particularly the local use of the St Piran's Centre are outstanding. These strengths are made possible by the commitment of the leadership and management team and the hard work and dedication of all staff. St Piran's is a truly happy school where pupils can learn and be cared for.
- 5.2 Much progress has been made since the last inspection in 2003. Management responsibility, personal development and pastoral care are now much improved. The school is aware that, whilst its assessment procedures are robust, full use is not made of analysis of this data, and that academic coordination of Years 5 to 8 is not fully developed.

- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. In order to progress even further forward it should:
1. develop academic co-ordination in Years 5 to 8;
 2. make fuller use of assessment data to enable more accurate tracking of pupils' progress.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 2nd to 5th March 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Margaret Smallwood	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Victoria Hall	Head of Junior School, GSA school
Mrs Madhu McChrystal	Head of Department, IAPS school
Mr Ian McIntyre	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Jennifer Morris	Head of Lower School, IAPS school