



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**COPTHILL SCHOOL**

**EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Copthill School

Full Name of School	<b>Copthill School</b>
DfE Number	<b>925/6035</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY307379</b>
Address	<b>Copthill School Barnack Road Uffington Stamford Lincolnshire PE9 3AD</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01780 757506</b>
Fax Number	<b>01780 766643</b>
Email Address	<b>mail@copthill.com</b>
Head	<b>Mr Jonathan Teesdale</b>
Proprietor	<b>Copthill School Ltd</b>
Age Range	<b>2 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>326</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (171 boys; 155 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>0-2 (EYFS): 39    5-11: 210 3-5 (EYFS): 77</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Judy Dimbleby</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>10 to 11 Jun 2014</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspection occurs over a period of two continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in June 2011.

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) (England) Regulations 2010. 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.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted informal discussions with children and examined samples of work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, directors and with a member of the advisory panel. They attended registration sessions, assemblies, snack and lunch times and the before- and after-school provision. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Mary Hughes

Early Years Lead Inspector

Mrs Cheryl Macnair

Team Inspector for Early Years (Head Teacher, ISA school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Cophill School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from two to eleven years. The school was founded as a nursery school in 1969. It is located in purpose-built accommodation near to Stamford in Lincolnshire. The school is owned by Cophill School Limited, whose board of directors are members of the family who founded the school. An advisory panel is also in place consisting of local people with a broad range of expertise. The panel works very closely with the board of directors and assists them in their responsibilities for governance. The headteacher and bursar are also directors of the school.
- 1.2 The school's key aim is to provide a welcoming, stimulating and happy environment which is friendly, caring and well disciplined, in which every pupil is encouraged to achieve and motivated to succeed. Other aims centre on the provision of an open-door policy for parents, a broad curriculum, an emphasis on using the outdoor environment and providing excellent preparation for entry to a wide range of secondary schools.
- 1.3 The EYFS comprises 116 children between the ages of 2 and 5, of whom 39 are under the age of 3. The youngest children are based in the Nursery class and attend for a minimum of two mornings a week. Children from age three to four are based in the older Nursery class. These children also attend on a sessional basis, with the expectation of a minimum of three mornings and one full day's attendance per week. The final year of the EYFS has 36 children, based in two classes, all of whom attend full-time. A breakfast club and before-school crèche operate from 7.45am, with an after-school crèche available until 6pm. Outside term time a holiday club operates.
- 1.4 Children in the EYFS share the facilities of the main school, including the hall, dining room, some of the outdoor areas and the school's extensive grounds. The school's woodland areas are regularly used by the children. Classrooms in the EYFS are situated in close proximity. Both Nursery classes have access to the enclosed quad and play areas.
- 1.5 The setting currently supports two children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and four with English as an additional language (EAL). Most children live in local villages and are from a white British background. Since the previous inspection the school's creative suite has been built, which houses the extended care provision and is used by the children for dance lessons. 'Forest School' areas have been further developed and specialist staff have been appointed to lead sessions. Outdoor provision has also been developed through the creation of an artificial pitch and a herb garden.
- 1.6 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 for the EYFS and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

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

School	NC name
Nursery Class	Nursery (2-3 years)
Pre-School class	Nursery (3-4 years)
Reception	Reception (4-5 years)

## **2. SUMMARY**

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

- 2.1 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

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

- 2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Introduce a daily diary sheet for Nursery children in order to give parents more information about their child's day.

### **3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

#### **3.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend**

- 3.1 The school is outstanding in meeting the needs of those children who attend. Provision for children aged under three is good and often outstanding, and enables children to make excellent progress in the prime areas of learning. Every opportunity is taken to engage children in conversation and introduce new vocabulary. Imaginative outdoor activities underpin rapid development in children's gross and fine motor skills. A wide range of practical activities and very good open questioning contributes to the good, and often outstanding, progress of children in the older Nursery and Reception classes.
- 3.2 Throughout the EYFS, staff have high expectations and constantly challenge children. Children's own ideas, suggestions and interests are incorporated into the provision. Teaching is always good and often outstanding. Sessions are well planned and assessments show a detailed knowledge of children's individual needs, with next steps clearly identified. Adults make learning fun and the children respond by being highly motivated and curious learners. For example, a note left by a caterpillar led to Reception children enthusiastically participating in a 'bug hunt' for the lost caterpillar and his friends.
- 3.3 A richly resourced environment, both indoors and outside, encourages independent learning, problem solving and critical thinking. The school's 'Forest School' provision is a significant strength. The older Nursery children made excellent progress in working cooperatively as they used logs to make their own form of transport. Specialist staff make a significant contribution to the provision of a wide curriculum. The introduction of daily focused phonics sessions helps children develop proficiency in their literacy, particularly in writing. Clearly structured educational programmes enable children to be ready for the next stage of their learning, to gain a wide variety of skills and to develop positive attitudes to learning.
- 3.4 Staff quickly identify children with additional needs. Those with SEND are well supported through targeted plans and staff use effective strategies, such as visual timetables, to support children with EAL. Staff engage well with parents to support children's learning. The open-door policy enables daily contact with staff and formal structures, such as website blogs, open evenings, workshops and reports, keep parents regularly informed of their child's progress. A very small number of parents of the youngest children, who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and spoke informally with inspectors, felt that they do not get sufficient information about what has occurred during that day at school. Inspection findings agree with this view. Almost all parents were unanimous in their praise of the school, particularly in regard to their child's happiness, levels of care and the range of experiences offered.



### **3.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being**

- 3.5 Provision for children's well-being is outstanding. Committed key workers provide excellent support to enable children aged under three to form strong bonds and feel extremely secure. Strong relationships between staff and children are evident throughout the EYFS. The welfare needs and happiness of the children are central to the provision. Adults are in tune with children's emotional development and quickly reassure them if they become upset. They are fully aware if younger children need to sleep, rest or have 'quiet time'. The high staff-to-child ratio ensures that children receive much individual attention, from which they greatly benefit. Staff are excellent role models as they promote high standards of behaviour, courtesy and respect. Gentle reminders of the simple Golden Rules, the sensitive promoting of sharing and cooperation and the modelling of skills such as turn-taking, all result in children's exemplary behaviour.
- 3.6 Independence is promoted well throughout the day. Nursery children tidy away their cups after snack time and older children ably put on their own wellingtons and clear away all their utensils after lunch. Role play is very well used throughout to develop children's imagination. Reception children used music and movement to act out the life cycle of a butterfly and the older Nursery children used boxes to develop their own car journeys. Safe risk taking is encouraged in 'Forest School', for example, children know how to avoid the stinging nettles and know not to go near the fire square.
- 3.7 Key people manage the personal needs of the youngest children in a caring and sensitive manner. Older children are well supported in developing independent hygiene routines. Through growing and harvesting their own fruit and vegetables, and through the home-cooked lunches, children are well aware of the importance of eating healthily. The strong focus on outdoor learning ensures that children understand the importance of being outside in the fresh air. Excellent systems are in place to prepare children for transition into school and for transitions between classes.

### **3.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision**

- 3.8 Leadership and management in the EYFS are outstanding. The directors and advisory panel execute their governance responsibilities with rigour and provide effective oversight of safeguarding and welfare. Recruitment procedures are robust and the suitability of staff is carefully checked prior to the commencement of employment. Robust risk assessments, detailed policies and procedures and regular staff training ensure that children are well safeguarded. A well-organised management structure allows close links between all parts of the EYFS and with other areas of the school.
- 3.9 Very effective staff deployment, an excellent team spirit and excellent resourcing contributes successfully to children's welfare and learning needs. Effective systems are in place to monitor teaching and evaluate the provision. Staff are appreciative of the termly supervision meetings that support their needs. The staff performance management system is well developed to identify training and development needs. Staff are encouraged to attend training courses and gain further qualifications. Recent training on a structured phonics programme has had a significant impact on teaching in this area. There is a clear commitment to improving the provision.

- 3.10 The school has well-developed links with the local authority to gain additional support and with external agencies, such as speech therapists and other professionals, to access valuable guidance. Strong partnerships with parents have a positive impact on children's learning and development.

### **3.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision**

- 3.11 The overall quality and standards are outstanding. All children, including those with SEND or EAL, make good, and often outstanding, progress in relation to their starting points. Many exceed the expected levels of development in all areas of learning by the end of the EYFS.
- 3.12 Outcomes are outstanding for children aged under three in the prime areas of learning. They hold a simple conversation, ride their hobby horse in a race on Sports Day and can match the number of cups needed to the number of children. They rapidly grow in confidence to become happy and relaxed learners, interacting during group activities, such as when mark making in 'gloop'. Older children in the Nursery accurately count to ten, recognise some initial sounds and can match these to objects. They work cooperatively as they wash cars and make number plates for them.
- 3.13 Older children demonstrate excellent mathematical awareness. They know addition bonds to ten, can add two numbers together and many can subtract numbers. They are able to reason and give explanations. Reception children use their phonic knowledge to read simple and complex words and many are able to write sentences independently. Children's progress in understanding the world and the expressive arts are strengths of the school. Reception children talk knowledgeably about the natural world and can use scientific vocabulary, such as 'prey' and 'predator'. Nursery (3-4 years) children produce detailed observational drawings and Nursery (2-3 years) children draw the tadpoles they have observed with magnifiers. Excellent progress is made by all children in information and communication technology.
- 3.14 Adults are diligent in ensuring that children are always well supervised and kept safe. This ensures that children feel secure and exceptionally well looked after. This contributes to children's excellent personal development and their high levels of confidence. Since the previous inspection the school has strengthened and improved its previous good provision. Improvements have been made both to indoor and outdoor provision and there has been an increase in the use of specialist staff. There are more opportunities for children to learn outdoors. A new phonics scheme has improved results in reading and writing. Effective systems are in place to identify areas for improvement and the capacity is very strong for the school to build on its current high standards.