



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

SAINT CHRISTINA'S SCHOOL

MAY 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Saint Christina's School			
DfE number	213/6225			
Registered charity number	2211319			
Address	Saint Christina's School 25 St Edmund's Terrace St John's Wood London NW8 7PY			
Telephone number	020 7722 8784			
Email address	headteacherspa@saintchristinas.org.uk			
Headteacher	Miss Jenny Finlayson			
Chair of governors	Mrs Joan McConnell			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	182			
	Boys	25	Girls	157
	EYFS	60	Years 1 to 6	122
Inspection dates	10 to 11 May 2017			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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 specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support area. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Bridget Windley	Reporting inspector
Mrs Frances Mwale	Team inspector (Head of prep, IAPS school)
Mrs Clare Turnbull	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Saint Christina's School is an independent Roman Catholic day school for girls aged 3 to 11 and boys aged 3 to 7. It was founded in 1949 by the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as an independent Catholic preparatory school in the diocese of Westminster. The school forms part of a worldwide family founded by St Raphaela Mary in the late 19th century. It is administered by a governing body which includes the Provincial of the Order as an ex officio member, the superior, chair and 4 foundation governors. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2016.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to enable children to enjoy the excitement of becoming independent learners and to feel safe and happy in a school where discrimination of any kind is unacceptable. It strives to recognise each child's unique value and gifts, ensuring that children feel appreciated for themselves and not just their achievements.

About the pupils

- 1.3 The school draws pupils from the surrounding area of west London and has many pupils from varied minority ethnic backgrounds. It has identified 45 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 31 of whom receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 108 pupils, 8 of these receive specialist support and the rest have their needs supported by their classroom teacher. The school provides a programme of challenging activities in mathematics and English for 23 pupils who are identified as more able.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils are articulate communicators, capable of high levels of eloquence.
- Pupils with SEND or EAL make good progress as a result of the targeted support they receive.
- Pupils have strong study skills and from an early age they are confident to work independently.
- A minority of pupils, including the more able, sometimes lack motivation in lessons when the teaching fails to include sufficient pace and challenge.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate a mature and deep understanding of spirituality, valuing highly the school's ethos to share, care and forgive.
- Pupils display excellent moral understanding. They have exemplary manners and are friendly and outgoing.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent collaborative skills and enjoy supporting one another.
- Pupils show an outstanding approach to serving their school community.

Recommendation

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Ensure that teaching in all lessons fully motivates all pupils so enabling them to maximise their potential.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 Pupils have good and often mature attitudes to their learning, which is a significant factor in achieving their good levels of attainment. Their approach to verbal, written and practical work is marked by enjoyment, concentration and persistence, which is promoted by the range of interesting and exciting activities they are offered. Pupils demonstrate energy and enthusiasm as a result of their encouragement by supportive staff. They come to lessons with an eagerness to learn, and they settle quickly and happily to their work.
- 3.3 Pupils develop a strong breadth of knowledge and good creativity in response to the school's broad and exciting curriculum which includes art, design technology (DT), computing, music, sport, Spanish from Reception upwards and French in Year 6. As pupils progress through the school they benefit from the expertise of specialist teachers. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are excellent in religious education (RE) as a result of the strong Catholic ethos of the school. Exciting work in DT such as the older pupils' Victorian bonnets, pneumatic butterflies and vibrating electric bugs exemplifies their considerable competency in this area. Pupils' understanding is deepened in most subjects by challenging questioning techniques which are used by many teachers, who demonstrate expertise and extensive subject knowledge. In science, some pupils' levels of understanding are less secure.
- 3.4 Pupils develop secure numeracy skills, strongly supported by effective teaching in mathematics. In a small minority of lessons observed, a few pupils lacked motivation and became inattentive as a result of over-directed teaching. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) use numbers confidently, most ordering up to 20 and some able to double. Older pupils display a strong knowledge of mathematical principles which they can apply well in problem solving. They also use their good mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum as evidenced by their hugely successful initiative to design mathematical games for the younger pupils.
- 3.5 Pupils are confident communicators, demonstrating high levels of literacy. Pupils throughout the school are articulate and eloquent. Children in the EYFS are beginning to write simple sentences. As they move through the school, pupils develop a secure understanding of different types of text. Older pupils' creative writing is imaginative, demonstrating accurate use of punctuation and grammar. Pupils write at length and the presentation of their work is excellent. They almost always listen to each other and to their teachers with interest and respect.
- 3.6 Pupils' good achievement in information, communication and technology (ICT) is supported through computing lessons. They use these skills effectively in some areas of the wider curriculum, although the opportunities for using them are not yet embedded fully in all areas of teaching and learning. Pupils know how to use coding; create, store and organise digital content; use the internet; and design spreadsheets and databases. Children in the EYFS develop their ICT skills using the interactive table, and older pupils can skilfully use tablet applications to create animated stories and carry out independent and group research.

- 3.7 Pupils' performance in physical education is developing rapidly as a result of the school's increased focus on competitive sports. The girls' netball and rounders teams have enjoyed recent successes in inter-school competitions and individuals have achieved highly in gymnastics and swimming. Pupils excel in ballet and Irish dance, gaining high-level awards for their achievements. School leaders ensure that music is afforded high priority to enable pupils to achieve well. In addition to membership of the flourishing choirs and orchestra, pupils can take part in numerous musical productions, assemblies, weekly mass and liturgies. Pupils benefit strongly from the individual tuition which is available on a wide range of instruments. They also achieve considerable success in the UK Maths Challenge, United Kingdom Linguistics Olympiad, CISC Poetry Competition and in the Primary National Quiz Competition.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate strong study skills, and from the EYFS onwards independence is promoted by supportive teaching. The youngest children acquire skills in knowledge and understanding of the world through a range of stimulating activities which encourage independent investigation. Reception pupils can explain confidently that caterpillars change into cocoons, then butterflies and then fly away. Slightly older pupils are adept at using their spelling dictionaries to self-edit their work. The scrutiny of pupils' RE books revealed highly effective independent research skills, where older pupils were tasked to use gospel references to explore why Jesus was an inspirational leader. By the end of their time in school, pupils take considerable responsibility for their success. They are confident to raise questions and draw upon a range of sources to enhance their learning.
- 3.9 From evidence available from standardised tests, the pupils' attainment is judged to be above average. This is supported by lesson observations and scrutiny of their work, which indicate that pupils' overall achievement is good. These good levels of attainment, including for the more able and pupils with SEND or EAL, are linked strongly to the school's detailed tracking systems which clearly identify pupils' individual needs. The outcomes for children within the EYFS are good, and pupils in Year 6 consistently gain their first choice of senior schools, with many awarded scholarships.
- 3.10 Progress for pupils throughout the school is good in relation to those of similar ability. In interview, pupils with SEND or EAL spoke highly of the strong support they receive which has enabled them to make noticeable progress. Class teaching makes adjustments for their needs, and the SEND department prepares appropriate individual plans to support their learning. More able pupils benefit considerably when teaching offers challenge, but progress is slower, as observed in a minority of lessons, when the tasks set do not motivate them to achieve. They benefit considerably from the linguistic, mathematical and technological challenges which necessitate higher-order thinking. This was evidenced by the oldest pupils in mathematics, who were tasked to use different computations to make as many numbers as possible from three given digits. The recommendation from the previous inspection to increase the pace in some lessons so that all teaching challenges the more able is partially met, but this will remain as a target for the future.
- 3.11 Pupils' good standard of achievement is supported most effectively by strong governance and leadership which ensure that a broad curriculum and range of activities are available. Since the previous inspection the leadership along with the newly formed management team has introduced more robust systems and structures. More regular lesson observations, a scrutiny of pupils' work and a wider range of extra-curricular clubs are contributing significantly to raising standards of achievement. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a minority of parents reported that they do not consider the choice of clubs to be good. Inspection evidence does not support this view; pupils can now enjoy many exciting activities which include debating, girls' football, African drumming and multi-sports.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' excellent standard of spiritual development is a result of the school's ethos to follow Christ's teaching by caring, sharing and learning to forgive. These values are woven into regular assemblies and daily prayer which enable pupils to foster a deep sense of spirituality. This is further developed through their access to music, through stimulating RE lessons and opportunities to take part in weekly mass. In interview, pupils reported that they look forward to this time for reflection at the end of a busy week. Pupils are encouraged to be the best that they can be in all regards and are wholly at ease with themselves.
- 4.3 Pupils display a strong sense of personal integrity and have high moral values as modelled by the staff. Throughout the school, pupils' manners are exemplary and they are friendly and outgoing. Pupils demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong. They understand the need for rules in any society and respect the way in which laws of the country are made and applied. Pupils of all ages create their own classroom charter; rules which they collectively agree and adopt. Individual pupils' significant acts of kindness are celebrated through the whole-school initiative, 'Caught being Kind'. Pupils are able to debate robustly and consider issues such as the morality of fox hunting and the use of animals for medical research. Those in Years 1 to 6 develop a good understanding of the workings of democracy through election of school councillors.
- 4.4 Throughout the school, pupils live together harmoniously. This is evident as a result of the pervading spirit of co-operation and the high value placed on encouraging excellent relationships amongst all members of the school community. Older pupils support the younger ones with their reading and ensure that they move safely around the school. The younger pupils are keen to share and are extremely considerate towards each other. Older pupils relish opportunities to work together, as was observed in music where they made invaluable suggestions to each other about how to develop musical harmonies. Pupils further develop their excellent collaborative skills through the extra-curricular programme offered.
- 4.5 Pupils are very proud of their school and they display an outstanding approach to serving their community. Eco-warriors from the youngest classes are keen to recycle paper and collect litter. Pupils benefit from strong links with the local neighbourhood, as evidenced by the invitation to two local Catholic junior schools to share a special Candlemas celebration in the school's chapel. The pupils integrated with other pupils most successfully as they explored the theme of light through creative activities and worship. Pupils develop a strong awareness of those less fortunate than themselves by willingly raising funds through a variety of self-initiated activities for local charitable causes, including care homes and hospices. They are deeply committed to supporting a school in Equatorial Guinea and are currently devising ways to fund the purchase of a new roof. The school musical groups are currently selling a compact disc featuring a collection of their songs and instrumental pieces to support this cause.

- 4.6 Pupils' excellent appreciation and deepening understanding of cultural traditions different to their own are gained as a result of their work in personal, social and health education and RE lessons, cultural events at the school and visiting speakers. In interview, pupils enthused about what they learned through their International week which involved exciting celebrations of different cultures. Pupils' excellent knowledge is furthered by visits to mosques and synagogues. They display considerable respect for one another and they value the diversity of the school community. New pupils are warmly welcomed and successful strategies for those who are unable to speak English ensure that they settle quickly and happily. In their questionnaire responses, both pupils and parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the school's promotion of the values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 4.7 Pupils' decision-making skills are well developed and they relish the opportunities they are offered to use their initiative. Children in the EYFS are confident to select their own activities, skilfully supported by staff who listen, inspire and challenge. Older pupils understand how their decisions can impact upon themselves and others. In interview, they spoke eloquently about their ambitions for the future and displayed an excellent understanding of striking an appropriate balance between work and leisure activities.
- 4.8 Pupils are aware of how to keep safe when using computers, and they are confident that a member of staff is always available to approach if they need support or advice. Pupils of all ages understand why they should eat healthily as this topic has a significant focus in science and in PHSE. Younger children explained that it would be sensible to eat the cucumber and carrot crudités at lunchtime as they are a healthy option.
- 4.9 Pupils throughout the school demonstrate excellent self-awareness and the school is successful in its aim to instil in pupils a sense of personal responsibility and self-discipline, encouraging them to always try their best. Pupils gain considerable self-confidence through the many productions they perform during the year, all of which are highlighted in the outstanding interactive display work across the school. They are mature for their ages and have well-developed personalities. Pupils report that they are encouraged to be themselves and as they trust their teachers they have no fear of failure. They are actively encouraged through the pastoral system to be resilient, and to display kindness and respect for others. Older pupils successfully improve their own learning and performance on their residential week away as a result of the challenging outdoor activities they undertake. By the time they leave the school, pupils have an excellent standard of personal development. The school meets its aim to recognise each child's unique value and gifts, and it prepares them most successfully for their future.