



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**SAINT CHRISTINA'S SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Saint Christina's School

Full Name of School	<b>Saint Christina's School</b>
DfE Number	<b>213/6225</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>221319</b>
Address	<b>Saint Christina's School 25 St Edmund's Terrace St John's Wood London NW8 7PY</b>
Telephone Number	<b>020 7722 8784</b>
Fax Number	<b>020 7586 4961</b>
Email Address	<b>secretary@saintchristinas.org.uk</b>
Head Teacher	<b>Miss Nathalie Clyne-Wilson</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Joan McConnell</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>211</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (46 boys; 165 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>3-5 (EYFS): 67    5-11:    144</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>Total:    211</b>
Head of EYFS setting	<b>Miss Elisabeth White</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>14 June 2011 to 15 June 2011</b>

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in June 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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<sup>st</sup> 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 Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 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, though inspectors will 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.

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Saint Christina's is a day school for boys from the ages of three to seven and girls from the ages of three to eleven. It was established in 1949 by the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as an independent Catholic Montessori school in the Archdiocese of Westminster. It welcomes pupils of all nationalities, currently 34 in number, and from all religions and cultures. The school is situated in St John's Wood in London and consists of purpose-built classrooms with some outside space for recreation. It adjoins the convent accommodation and chapel. The school uses facilities in Primrose Hill and Regent's Park as well as local leisure centres for part of its sports' and activities' programmes. The school is run as a charitable trust, administered by a governing body, which includes the Provincial of the Order/Superior as an ex-officio member, three trustees and six governors. Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant change in the personnel on the senior management team and, in March 2011, a new Provincial/Superior was appointed to the board of trustees. The current head teacher was appointed in 2002.
- 1.2 The pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, including professional and business families. At the time of the inspection there were 211 pupils on the roll, of whom 67 were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and attending school full-time. Just under one-quarter of the pupils are boys. The school has identified nineteen pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom seven are in the EYFS, and one pupil in the EYFS has a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Ninety-six pupils use English as an additional language (EAL) and thirty-eight of these need support with their acquisition of the language, of whom nineteen are in the EYFS. From the results of standardised tests, the ability profile of the school is above the national average.
- 1.3 The school aims to offer all who come into contact with it a welcoming environment which finds its inspiration in Christ and His Gospel whilst recognising and respecting the freedom of individuals to worship God according to the practices of their own religion. It strives to encourage and support spiritual, physical, personal, moral and intellectual development by providing a wide and rich range of educational and cultural experiences which enable each pupil to develop and use their talents and abilities to the full. It also aims to establish close links between home and school, and to develop an atmosphere where pupils enjoy the excitement of becoming independent learners and always try their best, whilst feeling safe and happy in the knowledge that discrimination of any kind is unacceptable.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 Pupils achieve well, in line with the school's aims to encourage and support intellectual development, enabling pupils to develop and use their talents and abilities to the full and enjoy the excitement of becoming independent learners, and always try their best. Pupils' successes in academic work, art, sport and music, both individually and in groups, are underpinned by their excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils are confident as individuals; they are articulate and develop effective numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively in their work. Their skills in reading and writing are strong and creativity is evident in high-quality displays which celebrate pupils' achievements. The presentation of the pupils' work is excellent. In most lessons seen, pupils have good opportunities to think for themselves. In a few, however, pupils' independent learning skills were more restricted because of the style of teaching or a lack of urgency in the pace of the lesson, resulting in less rapid progress. Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed well in many different subject areas and in their extra-curricular activities. Pupils' achievements in extra-curricular activities make a strong contribution to their personal development. All pupils who enter instrumental music and speech and drama examinations pass, with a significant proportion achieving merits or distinctions. Pupils are consistently very successful in Irish dancing and achieve individual success in area gymnastics and swimming, and team success in inter-school sports matches. Two pupils reached the national finals in the primary mathematics challenge.
- 2.2 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. The pupils follow a wide curriculum and, on leaving the school, they transfer to independent day and boarding schools, many of which have high standards of entry; a significant majority of pupils are awarded places at their first choice schools. Over the last three years, twelve pupils have gained academic, art and English scholarships and exhibitions to their senior schools. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability, as assessed in lesson observations and pupils' written work. Those pupils with LDD and EAL also make good progress in their learning, as seen when younger pupils were forming their joined-up handwriting correctly. Gifted and talented pupils are provided with extension and enrichment activities but on occasion are not sufficiently challenged in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are given opportunities to work co-operatively in pairs and groups, which they do very well. They are quick to settle, sustain concentration and take pleasure in their work, showing outstanding application and perseverance.
- 2.3 The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum which supports its aims and ethos and covers the requisite areas of learning, including a comprehensive programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Since the previous inspection, the provision for physical education and design and technology has been significantly enhanced. Curriculum organisation allows for a combination of class teaching and some specialist taught subjects, providing the pupils with expertise across many areas. The provision for pupils with LDD and EAL is effective in promoting their progress. Most, but not all, curriculum planning

indicates the learning objectives and how the different needs of pupils will be met. The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities available to the pupils, extending their experience of sport, music, dance and the creative arts. In some cases, this is through the participation of parents who visit the school. An outstanding programme of visits to places of academic interest and the pupil enrichment week further enhance the curriculum. Good examples of cross-curricular themes are seen in the excellent displays throughout the school; an exceptional feature is the stairwell mural project representing the Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

- 2.4 Good teaching enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress in their studies overall, encouraging them to put maximum effort into their work and to behave very well. In the small sample of lessons seen, teachers had a good knowledge of their subjects and, in the best lessons, provided well-planned, challenging tasks. They know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses well and they use this knowledge to help move pupils' learning forwards, particularly for those with LDD and EAL. The classroom is often seen as a lively place for learning, although occasionally teaching is over-directed and pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to demonstrate what they already know. This results in a lower level of challenge, particularly for the more able pupils. Praise and encouragement are widely used in marking, which adds to pupils' enjoyment and self-confidence, but the use of comments on how work can be improved is inconsistent. Assessment procedures are strong; data from standardised and subject tests are collated and used to help inform staff of what the next steps in learning should be as well as identifying those pupils who may need extra support.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.5 Pupils' personal development is excellent and the school achieves its aim to instil in pupils a sense of personal responsibility and self-discipline. Pupils have a genuine understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and demonstrate respect for each other and their teachers. The pupils are articulate in their personal belief and, in this harmonious multi-cultural community, demonstrate a strong acceptance of the beliefs and culture of others, celebrating their traditions and festivals. A significant contribution to maintaining the strong school ethos is through the daily prayers and weekly worship in the Mass. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent and the pupils understand why rules are appropriate and show a clear awareness of right from wrong. They use their initiative and enjoy taking on roles of responsibility, for example on the school council. Pupils' concern for others is evident in their enthusiasm for fund-raising for local and international charities. Pupils acquire a clear understanding of institutions in England. The responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of school life.
- 2.6 Supporting the pupils' excellent personal development is the outstanding quality of pastoral care and the effective arrangements for their welfare, health and safety. Pupils enjoy very positive relationships amongst themselves and with staff, trusting that staff, who are very good role models, will care for them. Pupils believe that, on the rare occasions when bullying happens, staff constructively deal with the issue; they say they have an adult to turn to when needed. Pupils causing concern are high on the agenda in staff meetings and in informal discussion. Suitable policies safeguard pupils and all staff have undertaken the safeguarding and health and safety training. Risk assessments have been completed, a suitable medical room is available and all appropriate measures have been taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Attendance and admission registers are maintained accurately

and stored correctly. The accessibility plan for those with special educational needs or a disability details the planned improvements. Pupils understand the need for healthy eating and physical exercise, and school meals are nutritious.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.7 The school is governed effectively, fulfilling the aims of the school of offering all who come into contact with it a welcoming environment which finds its inspiration in Christ and His Gospel. Governors are committed to ensuring a high level of educational achievement and pastoral care for the pupils. Their financial and business planning is strong. They are less involved in the planning for the educational development of the school. Governors have undertaken training to keep abreast of their roles and carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and welfare, health and safety. They maintain good contact with the school through regular visits to observe lessons, reports from the head teacher and the bursar, and termly presentations by staff about their subject areas at governors' meetings.
- 2.8 The school is strongly led and managed. A clear vision is strongly promoted by the senior leadership in professional development reviews and curriculum action plans. Current priorities for development in the school improvement plan are, as yet, insufficiently focused. This makes it difficult for staff to contribute productively to its fulfilment.
- 2.9 Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has been significantly increased. Senior managers and subject leaders undertake the monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observation and the examination of pupils' work regularly and effectively. The professional development review system is suitably linked to in-service training and the overall vision for the school. Staff share information on academic and pastoral matters efficiently. A centralised register records the recruitment checks undertaken on the appointment of staff, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau. The premises are well maintained and space is used to best advantage, including outdoors.
- 2.10 The school actively and effectively promotes excellent links with parents, carers and guardians, fulfilling its aim to establish close links between home and school. Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. Communication with parents is extremely strong. Since the previous inspection, the school has implemented a new website which provides parents of pupils and prospective pupils with all relevant information. There are regular parents' evenings, twice-yearly written reports and informal discussions with parents. Parents are aware of the complaints procedure and are encouraged to discuss any concerns, which are handled with care. The high number of responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire shows that the vast majority of parents are exceptionally positive about the quality of education and care provided and are very supportive of the school and its ethos. Inspectors agree with these positive views. There were no issues raised by a significant number of parents.



### **3. ACTION POINTS**

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

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

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

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that planning in all subjects consistently indicates the learning objectives and how individual pupils' needs will be met.
2. Increase the pace in some lessons so that all teaching challenges more able pupils.
3. Revise the school improvement plan so that it is focused on the key priorities over the next three years.
4. Allow timetabled non-contact time for the EYFS phase leader to carry out her extensive responsibilities.

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

##### **4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding and fulfils its aim of acknowledging and celebrating the individual gifts and talents of children so that the needs of each are very well met. Parents are very positive about the educational foundations laid for their children. The curriculum is carefully planned in a caring and stimulating environment with some specialist teachers providing enrichment. A shared culture of reflection, review and self-evaluation is identifying ways of sustaining improvement and, since the last ISI inspection, the outdoor learning environment has developed significantly.

##### **4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.2 Leadership and management are outstanding, with the effective adoption of the EYFS framework and the development of strong links with local authority advisers. The school has a comprehensive range of appropriate and up-to-date policies and procedures, regularly reviewed and monitored, which eliminate discrimination and ensure that each child has an equal opportunity to succeed. Staff are deployed very effectively and they are vigilant about safeguarding, risk assessments and daily checking of the premises. Outstanding teamwork and productive meetings ensure that systems for review result in improvement. Whilst significant progress has been made during the past two years, the phase leader has limited non-contact time in which to implement her management responsibilities. An extensive range of readily available resources is effectively deployed in both adult-led and child-initiated learning. The school has an open door policy for parents, who are strongly supportive, with questionnaire responses highlighting the quality of teaching, the outstanding care and the warmth shown by the staff.

##### **4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. The classroom and outdoor learning environments are attractive, stimulating and welcoming. The curriculum is very well planned and includes rich, varied and imaginative experiences. Children in Reception were learning about weighing and used the correct vocabulary to explain why a smaller object weighed more than a larger, lighter object. In the Nursery, children became concerned about a ladybird which was appeared too wet to fly away and discussed responsibly its possible future options. Comprehensive, detailed recording of observations and assessment enables teachers to fully meet the needs of the children and parents are kept informed of progress. The children's welfare and well-being are seen as priorities. Staff demonstrate models of safe practice; for example, they explain about taking care on the outside steps and actively encourage the children to take turns and to know right from wrong. The behaviour policy is very well implemented leading to a calm and happy atmosphere.

#### **4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.4 All children, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well. They make outstanding progress towards the Early Learning Goals in all areas from the moment they start school, so that, by the end of the EYFS, many have met or exceeded them. Children write extended sentences of simple description in Reception and can calculate numbers beyond twenty, using doubles to help them. All become independent learners and readily initiate their own play. They have excellent relationships with each other and with adults. They appreciate the need for exercise and healthy eating, are aware of the importance of good hygiene and understand about keeping safe. They make excellent progress towards developing skills for the future and are ready for the next stage in their education.

**Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

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

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Elizabeth Coley

Miss Finola Stack

Mrs Penny Oates

Reporting Inspector

Head, IAPS school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector