



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL**

**12 TO 13 OCTOBER 2016**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	St Catherine's School			
<b>DfE number</b>	318/6008			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1014651			
<b>Address</b>	St Catherine's School Cross Deep Twickenham Middlesex TW1 4QJ England			
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 88912898			
<b>Email address</b>	admissions@stcatherineschool.co.uk			
<b>Headmistress</b>	Sister Paula Thomas			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Edward Sparrow			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils</b>	408			
	Boys	0	Girls	408
	Day pupils	408	Boarders	0
	EYFS	20	Prep	128
	Seniors	228	Sixth Form	32
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12 to 13 October 2016			

## 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 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 grade descriptors 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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they 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 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 form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. 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 Gwen Caddock	Reporting inspector
Mrs Paula Hobbs	Team inspector (Head Teacher, ISA school)
Mr David Forster	Team inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr Richard Milner-Smith	Team inspector (Headmaster, ISA school)

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## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 St Catherine's is a Catholic day school for girls aged 3 to 18, founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1914 in Twickenham. In 1919 the school moved to its current site, which has been continuously developed to provide facilities for all aspects of the education of girls. In 1992, the school was transferred to the management of a lay governing body and the school became a charitable trust with a board of nine governors acting as trustees. The most recent development is the rebuilding of the science block, which came into use in September 2016.
- 1.2 The school is divided into a prep department, with provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the senior school. The first sixth form pupils were admitted in 2010.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.3 The school aims to promote the dignity of every individual pupil and aspires to excellence within a thriving and happy community. The school seeks to give every pupil a wide range of opportunities to develop her talents, to prepare all for the challenges of adult life and to understand and fulfil her responsibilities to herself, her family and society.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.4 The results of standardised tests show that the ability profile of pupils throughout the school is above the national average, with a wide ability range and few pupils below the national average. The school has identified 86 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These have a range of educational difficulties including dyslexia and dyscalculia, and autistic spectrum disorder. Twenty-five pupils currently require support; others are monitored and intervention is put in place when needed. One pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan. Eleven pupils have been identified as having English as an additional Language (EAL); 6 of these receive support, the others have been assessed as fully fluent users of English. The school has identified 84 pupils as being more able academically, and 25 as talented in one or more of a number of areas such as sport and music. The school has developed a programme of extension work and activities for the more able and talented, but all pupils can participate in these activities should they wish. Pupils are drawn from a range of professional and business backgrounds and varied cultural and ethnic groups, including Catholic and other Christian denominations, a number of other faiths and some of no faith at all. The majority live in Twickenham and the surrounding area of South London.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in December 2010 and January 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
  - Ensure that the school continues to develop and embed into the curriculum provision to challenge the more able and talented pupils.
  - Develop further the good quality of provision in the EYFS by improving the outside learning environment.

- 1.7 The school has successfully met the recommendation to develop and embed into the curriculum provision to challenge the more able and talented pupils.

## KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils are highly articulate, they listen, read and write well and acquire strong number skills. They use these confidently in many contexts and become competent users of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Pupils have excellent study skills; they are able to reflect, analyse and question.
- Pupils have excelled in many areas, including the national mathematics challenges, music and drama awards and achieved success in a wide range of sporting competitions at all levels.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent

- Pupils of all ages show excellent self-confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem. They learn to think for themselves, make their own choices and decisions and to persevere.
- The pupils have strong spiritual development, they work hard for many charitable causes and understand their responsibilities. They know right from wrong and are respectful of the law. Pupils appreciate the importance of a healthy life style.
- Pupils all contribute to the life of the school and have a sense of their place in society. As they move through the school pupils are prepared well for their future life.

## Recommendations

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Developing the use of the assessment data in the prep department, in particular to further inform lesson planning.
- Developing further the use of tracking data in the sixth form to monitor progress and support the highest levels of achievement.

## THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 From the EYFS onwards, pupils make rapid progress; in the Early Years most pupils exceed expectations for their age, including those children with a summer birth date. Pupils do not take the national curriculum tests at Key Stage 2 but, from the evidence of work seen in the work scrutiny, in lessons and from the school's assessments, the achievement of pupils is at least good and often excellent. In the senior school, results at GCSE for the last three years for which comparative data is available are above the national average for maintained schools. Results in IGCSE for the same period are above worldwide norms. Inspection evidence, based upon lesson observations and work scrutiny and the analysis of standardised data compiled by the school shows that pupils usually make excellent progress.
- 3.3 Results at A level for the last three years for which comparative data is available are above national averages for pupils in sixth form education. Discussions during the inspection and an analysis of these results and standardised data show that pupils are making progress at least in line, and for many above, their ability. Detailed analysis by the school also shows that pupils with SEND and EAL usually make comparable progress to their peers and that the more able achieve particularly strong results, in line with their ability.
- 3.4 Across the school, pupils are highly successful across the wider areas of the broad, well-planned curriculum; they develop strong understanding and skills in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative aspects of their education. For example, the art work displayed in many areas of the school is of an exceptional quality. The more able and talented pupils display high levels of knowledge and skills as a result of the substantial challenge provided. Other pupils benefit greatly from involvement in the challenging work and activities offered. Children in the EYFS demonstrate strong learning skills in activities in their outside play areas, such as investigating with a magnifying glass and making observations. In the prep department, pupils confidently challenge each other using advanced vocabulary in a French lesson. In the senior school, high levels of knowledge and skills were particularly evident in the sixth form extended project qualification (EPQ) and Year 11 mini-EPQ projects. Pupils of all ages are highly articulate, they speak eloquently and positively about their school and their education in many different interviews. They write fluently and effectively in varied contexts, they listen and respond thoughtfully and read with confidence and pleasure. For example, an outstanding class discussion took place in a GCSE English class, working on *An Inspector Calls* and the theme of responsibility in the play; pupils debated the question 'Who are we responsible for and accountable to?', showing both their understanding and their personal responses to the play.
- 3.5 Pupils develop strong numeracy skills which they are able to transfer to other subjects, for example prep pupils spoke confidently about using their mathematics skills in science. Pupils are competent users of ICT and computing skills, demonstrated by younger pupils using advanced coding software. Older pupils had been doing excellent work in preparing a newspaper article using a range of ICT skills. Pupils develop effective research skills, confidently using ICT and accessing the library. As pupils progress through the school they learn valuable study skills, building on the ability to research information for themselves, and becoming confident independent learners. Junior pupils in the senior school learn the basic skills of analysis and were able to identify how language was being used by an author; older pupils were using this same skill highly competently in preparation for a GCSE question. Excellent planning by teachers supports the development of high level skills, and pupils are constantly challenged to think for themselves, to reflect and analyse; in a sixth form politics lesson pupils

confidently analysed the effectiveness of democracy in the UK. In A-level psychology pupils were able to apply standard models to real-life situations and identify potential sources of bias in the method. Pupils understand that they are expected not to give up and rely on someone else, this was a theme which ran through the discussions with pupils.

- 3.6 Pupils are successful in national events such as mathematics challenges, and in a wide range of cultural and sporting events. There are notable individual successes in music grade exams and in speech and drama awards. Pupils won a number of first places in both drama and music classes in a local arts festival. There have been successes in both team and individual events at local, regional and national sporting events, including a team first place at the regional athletics competition, and then medals for individuals at the national finals. Similar levels of success have recently been recorded in swimming at national level, with six pupils winning medals, and first places at a number of levels in regional and national cross country competitions. The school team gained first place in a schools' biathlon and a number of individual successes were recorded. Pupils with individual abilities are supported to compete, with both time to travel and academic support, to ensure that they do not fall behind and pupils currently compete in water-skiing and speed-skating at a national level. Pupils have a notable record of success and recognition in art and photography, with success in regional and national competitions, with their work exhibited in a London gallery.
- 3.7 Pupils develop exemplary attitudes to their learning. Pupils in the Nursery approach teacher-led and independent activities with confidence and are happy to direct their own learning when choosing to move on to a new activity. Pupils throughout the school know how to collaborate with their teachers and how to work independently. They are enthusiastic about their work and learning. Pupils of all ages mentioned that they have excellent relationships with both other pupils and the staff; they know their teachers will help them but they relish working on their own and are proud of the results. They feel that being a pupil in a small school is a great help, as this provides them with the necessary support to expand and exceed their own expectations, which they often do. Exceptionally high levels of both engagement and enjoyment were seen in lessons during the inspection.

## THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages show excellent self-confidence, self-awareness, self-esteem and resilience. They speak very coherently about their experiences at St Catherine's, sometimes after being at other schools, and appreciate the commitment of the teachers, the careful planning and the strong pastoral structures. At the same time, they understand and value the independence they develop through the many different opportunities they enjoy. This was expressed by one pupil as 'we are all in it together', showing her understanding that the staff are there to support the pupils, but also that pupils must make their own contribution and help each other. Another comment backed this view, 'it's not pressurized, we are comfortable here'. The themes of high expectations, strong support and an appreciation of independence ran through pupil responses in the questionnaire and many of the conversations about personal development. Almost all parents appreciate the comprehensive structure of support and the secure environment where pupils can thrive both emotionally and physically.
- 4.3 Pupils in the senior school understand that there are carefully planned opportunities for them to make increasingly important decisions. For example, pupils mentioned that they had made a choice about which languages they would study at GCSE, and they were very clear that they were making decisions which would affect their future careers. They saw this progression as an important step towards self-responsibility and were happy that they were being prepared for the more serious decisions, as they understood how important such decisions will be for their own well-being.
- 4.4 Perseverance is a key quality of pupils at this school, pupils of all ages said 'we don't give up' and that their teachers expect and encourage them to keep working until they succeed. This quality is supported by the many and varied opportunities to take on a challenge and do something new, both in their school work and in extra-curricular activities on offer. Pupils are encouraged to be both ambitious and aspirational.
- 4.5 The pupils have a strong spiritual awareness, recognising with appreciation and respect this quality in their friends and forming strong relationships across the faiths represented in the school. Many of the pupils who took part in the discussions spoke with appreciation of their surroundings and the school community. In discussions and in the questionnaire responses many said that they feel safe, and that this allows them to be themselves, to make friends and to get on really well together. All pupils take part in the varied assemblies and chapel services and this participation adds to the sense of community. Pupils see that the staff set a clear example to them and they understand the value of non-material things such as friendship and security. In return, the pupils work hard for themselves, their school and for other communities near and far away. This summer, a group of senior school pupils went to Peru and worked in a remote village to finish a community room; they understood that having such a room would make a big difference to the lives of the villagers as it could then be used by other aid workers. Pupils aspire to live the school motto, "Deeds not words". There is an outstanding awareness of their place in the world, of their surroundings and of respect for the views or faith of others, including those with no faith.
- 4.6 There is strong sense of mutual respect which pervades the life of the school. Pupils work extremely well together. Through both the prep and senior school pupils aspire to posts of responsibility and they take great pride in their roles, such as form captain, junior safety officer, school councillor, library monitor or head girl. Prep pupils spoke very enthusiastically about their work on the food committee, where they felt they were able to contribute to changes in

the food service and menus. All these opportunities add to the pupils' development and in interviews the pupil leaders talked of the confidence such roles give them.

- 4.7 From the EYFS onwards, pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and are able to make moral decisions. In story time in the Nursery class a child demonstrated a strong sense of justice when she responded to the tale she had heard by saying 'that's not nice, he should say he is sorry' when the farm animal had rudely called the mouse 'small'. When discussing diversity in the school, prep pupils stated that they have British values and they want everyone to feel welcome. In personal, social and health education (PSHE) they discuss news items and teachers explain contemporary issues. Pupils say that if they do not understand why something they have done is wrong the teachers always explain. Pupils of all ages stated they liked watching the news and spoke knowledgeably about the European referendum and the US elections. In this way pupils develop and express a sense of the law, or rules and express a sense of their own place in society and their responsibilities.
- 4.8 Pupils of all ages demonstrate an understanding of how to stay safe, including in their use of computers and other devices. They learn about a healthy lifestyle in PSHE and science for all ages; in food technology lessons for older pupils; in the menus on offer in the dining room and the regular games, swimming, PE lessons and sporting clubs they are encouraged to take part in. Pupils said that they appreciate the wide range of activities available to them, and understand the importance of a healthy diet and plenty of exercise.
- 4.9 Pupils speak very confidently about the tolerance and understanding of people who come from different backgrounds, cultures and faiths; several pupils said that others were very interested in where they had come from and their languages. Pupils of different ages expressed the view that it was a crucial British quality to be kind and welcoming to people from other countries and they felt that the school is a kind and welcoming place. This sense of values is underpinned by the high expectations of staff and their modelling of tolerance. Older pupils set a fine example to the younger children in the school. There is a sense of collective responsibility and a desire to make the school a place where children want to be, and judging from pupils' behaviour, their responses to the questionnaire and the views expressed during the meetings along with the highly positive response of parents in the questionnaire, this aim is realised.
- 4.10 The curriculum and activities give strong support for all pupils to develop skills needed for the next stage of their lives. The well-structured PSHE and careers programme, and the general studies programme in the sixth form ensure that pupils are well-prepared for the future. During the inspection, a pupil skilfully led a general studies lesson for the sixth form on the political system of the UK, showing her understanding and leadership.
- 4.11 The school meets its aims to promote the dignity of every individual and for pupils to achieve excellence, within a thriving and happy community.