



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST CHRISTOPHER'S SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Christophers School

Full Name of School	St Christophers School
DfE Number	878/6050
Address	St Christophers School Mount Barton Staverton Totnes Devon TQ9 6PF
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Email Address	office@stchristophers.devon.sch.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Victoria Kennington
Proprietors	Mrs Jane Kenyon; Mr Gregory Kenyon
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	89
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (48 boys; 41 girls;)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 77 3-5 (EYFS): 12
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 89
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Amanda Stone
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	07 Dec 2010 to 08 Dec 2010 17 Jan 2011 to 19 Jan 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. This is the first inspection of the school by ISI. The school was accredited to ISA in June 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government 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*. 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 Standards 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 31st 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 St Christopher's school was established in 1991 in a church hall in Berry Pomeroy by Mrs Jane Kenyon. It moved to its present site in Staverton, Devon in 1993. It occupies 19th century stables and a barn converted for educational use, and is surrounded by countryside. It offers day school places for boys and girls aged three to eleven. The school is owned and run by the proprietors who have set up an Advisory Body with eleven members representing the school community, and a wide range of expertise, who meet regularly. The headmistress has been in post since September 2010.
- 1.2 At the time of inspection there were 89 pupils on roll, aged three to eleven. Twelve children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school does not administer national or other standardised tests but, from other data available, the overall ability of pupils is judged to be above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Most pupils live within ten kilometres of the school. Twenty-two pupils have been identified by the school to receive support for minor learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) to enable them to access the curriculum. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. There are no pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL). Almost all are from a white British home background.
- 1.3 The school aims to treat each child as an individual, striving to discover the needs and abilities of each child while giving them security and a sense of belonging to the community of the school family. In preparing children not only for the next stage of education, but for the wider world, the school aims to provide solid foundations based on a clear Christian ethos, resulting in sound values and the ability to make clear judgements.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Prep Nursery	Nursery
Prep Reception	Reception

Junior School

School	NC name
Prep 1	Year 1
Prep 2	Year 2
Prep 3	Year 3
Prep 4	Year 4
Prep 5	Year 5
Prep 6	Year 6

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The overall quality of the pupils' educational experience is excellent. High standards are evident in both academic work and a wide range of other activities. Pupils are successful in all aspects of their learning and this is reflected in their considerable success at age eleven in scholarships awarded to independent schools and 11+ entrance examinations to grammar schools. The pupils' outstanding development is strongly supported by the broad and interesting curriculum. Extremely well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) contribute to the pupils' excellent progress over time. An extensive range of opportunities is provided by the extra-curricular programme, available to all pupils and includes cookery, offered to a different year group each evening, country dancing, design technology (DT), music and board games. Teaching is good, though some lessons do not involve pupils sufficiently well. In the best lessons pupils' achievements are strongly supported by challenging and interesting teaching. However, where there is a lack of pace and expectation, the pupils' learning and achievement is more limited. Standardised scores from testing are not used consistently well to track the progress of pupils against national norms; the school is aware of this need. Pupils say they really love their learning. They are attentive and interested, and from the earliest age they concentrate well, can work independently, and reason and think for themselves.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is outstanding, being well supported by excellent pastoral care, welfare, health and safety arrangements. From the EYFS onwards pupils are articulate and confident. From entering the school in the morning, being greeted by headmistress and her staff, until leaving in the afternoon, pupils are excited about what they will be doing during the day. They are proud to be pupils at the school. They show a strong sense of responsibility and actively involve themselves in all aspects of school life, contributing to its ethos.
- 2.3 The overall quality of governance is excellent. Well-informed and highly responsible governance ensures that the school's aims are met. Their arrangements successfully oversee the work of the school providing the management and staff with strong support and challenge. Buildings and grounds are well-maintained. Leadership and management are excellent at all levels, providing clear policies and procedures which contribute to the pupils' good achievement and ensure the smooth running of the school. The school promotes highly successful links with parents, who responded extremely positively to the pre-inspection questionnaire and in interview. They particularly mentioned the quality of teaching, the pastoral care, the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and values and the building of individual confidence.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

1. Make greater and more effective use of standardised scores to ensure tracking of pupils is more uniform and against the national norms.
2. Develop a more systematic and regular approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning from the EYFS onward.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 Throughout the school the pupils' overall achievement is good with good standards in academic work and excellent standards in extra-curricular activities. This fulfils the school's aim in striving to discover the needs and abilities of each child.
- 3.2 Pupils demonstrate an excellent level of knowledge and understanding. For example, in a drama lesson on play scripts and characterisation, pupils took responsibility for their own learning and progress by working co-operatively in pairs to produce scenarios based on a simple play script. Pupils are extremely articulate and use this skill confidently in discussion and written work. They demonstrate good standards of logical thinking and numeracy. In interview, Year 6 pupils showed very good knowledge of such scientific concepts as variables, the three states of matter, life cycles and fair testing. They were able to give the properties for a range of mathematical shapes and showed an extensive range of mathematical formulae. Their work shows that they use mathematics appropriately in other subjects.
- 3.3 Individual and team achievements include success at the Independent Schools Association (ISA) Athletic South West championships where three pupils qualified for the national competition. In the last twelve months there have been twenty successful entries for music examinations with four distinctions and five merits in a range of instruments. For the last two years the choir has won the Exeter music cup, and two pupils gained individual instrumental cups,
- 3.4 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national or other standardised tests, but on the evidence available it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations from the EYFS upwards. At the age of eleven, a large number of pupils gain entrance to grammar schools, and others with some awards to selective senior schools. This level of attainment as judged indicates that pupils make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Excellent progress is also seen across the EYFS, where Nursery children and those in Reception have a broad, balanced approach, and most achieve the expected standards well before they leave Reception. The school has an excellent record of 11+ results for both sexes and there is outstanding support for a range of learning needs, both those with LDD and those who are gifted and talented.
- 3.5 The pupils' good achievement and progress is supported by their positive attitudes to learning and their intellectual curiosity, as well as their creative and enquiring minds, evident in many lessons and activities. They always do their best and this is reflected in effort grades and house points internally and by consistently good performance in public exams. Overall, the children have an excellent work ethic and access to a very varied curriculum.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.6 The wide and demanding curriculum is excellent; together with the excellent extra-curricular activities, it supports the work of the school in meeting its aims and makes a highly positive contribution to the quality of the pupils' achievement and personal development. The challenging curriculum offers opportunities for all ages according to their differing needs and abilities. It prepares pupils well for their grammar school places and selective independent schools, and covers all the required areas of learning. As well as the National Curriculum subjects, it includes French, Latin, drama and religious education, and has a strong emphasis on citizenship and preparing for the next stage of education. Music, drama and sport are well provided for and support the pupils' personal development. Specialist teaching in some subjects starts in the EYFS and is gradually increased until, in Years 3 to 6, almost all teaching is by knowledgeable subject teachers. An extensive range of visits out of school and visitors to school takes place for all year groups. These range from Totnes Castle, Bigbury beach to study conservation, a Tudor workshop held at school and residential trips for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Parents' skills and professions are utilised fully, along with regular visits from the school chaplain as well as local people of interest; for example the chairwoman of the bee-keepers' association visited to explain the significance of the diminishing bee population..

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.7 The quality of teaching is good and fully supports the aims of the school, particularly in enabling pupils to recognise their own strengths and capabilities. This was seen in a Year 1 maths lesson where the pupils were applying knowledge and skills for writing number sentences for subtraction and addition and in a Year 5 DT lesson where children were designing and making book ends. Teachers have excellent classroom relationships with pupils, who are confident to seek help when they need it, reflecting the school's view that effective learning is strengthened by the school's caring ethos. This level of support is appreciated by both pupils and their parents.
- 3.8 Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils who say they are enthused by their learning. Teaching from the EYFS onwards enables all pupils to acquire a secure foundation in basic skills as well as increasing their understanding and challenging their thinking. However they are not always encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, unlike the many well-planned lessons where pupils are enabled to make good use of the opportunities provided. The best lessons are conducted at a good pace and include a variety of different approaches. This was observed in a Year 6 geography lesson where the pupils were learning how to plot areas of living against facilities. Support for those with LDD as well as for those with particular talents is of a good quality.
- 3.9 Teachers are well-qualified and have a love of their subject which they share with their pupils. Good resources are used effectively to support teaching and learning. Information and communication technology is well used in lessons and the pupils are confident in the use of it. The pupils benefit from excellent teaching and coaching in the performing arts and games.
- 3.10 The quality of marking is regular and helpful. The best marking shows clear targets for improvement as well as being encouraging and supportive. More structured use of assessment is being developed to enable a clear tracking system to effectively

monitor each pupil's progress. However, at present, not enough use is made of standardised scores to do this.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, including in the EYFS, and helps the school to meet most successfully the aim for pupils to develop high esteem and strong moral values. The pupils are confident, articulate and well-adjusted and display a sense of responsibility. They are clearly happy and secure within the school environment.
- 4.2 The spirituality of the pupils is well developed within the Christian community and ethos of the school. For the earliest years they display a sense of personal worth and that of others and this is shown in the way their behaviour is exemplary in the classroom and elsewhere. Religious education is the focus for the pupils' spiritual development, but the whole ethos of the school contributes. Pupils are enabled to develop an appreciation and understanding of aspects of the major religions. School assemblies are a time for sharing and reflecting, the pupils playing a core role in them. The choir and orchestra were outstanding in their support for the infant nativity.
- 4.3 The quality of the pupils' moral development is excellent. They distinguish between right and wrong and know that fairness is important. Pupils are courteous and respectful towards each other and to adults. The good manners of the children are an outstanding feature of the school. The whole school took part in a week of 'Acts of Random Kindness', and staff and pupils enjoyed this. Older pupils look after younger ones in their roles of prefects and house captains. The head boy and girl are clearly proud of their roles and assume the responsibility given to them with dignity and diligence.
- 4.4 The pupils' social development is outstanding. Relationships amongst pupils and between staff and pupils are warm, with a healthy balance between the formal and the relaxed, leading to a degree of trust and mutual understanding that underpins the special atmosphere of the school. The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme provides pupils with an understanding of public institutions and services in England and involves Year 6 pupils in a strong programme of preparation for the next stage of their education.
- 4.5 Pupils also show a very mature awareness of a variety of cultures, faiths and backgrounds. Their understanding of cultures other than their own is enhanced by a range of trips and visitors to the school. The creative arts contribute well to cultural development across the school. Last year the children were instrumental in raising £1000 for Haiti through their 'hats for Haiti' day and £2000 through a sponsored spell to equip the medical dispensary in a school in Uganda with which there are strong links.
- 4.6 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires pupils showed total support for what the school does and the way in which they are treated. All pupils say they are happy at the school and are making excellent progress.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.7 Excellent pastoral care and rigorously implemented arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety helps the school to achieve its aim to give children security and a sense of belonging to the school family. The caring and friendly staff create an atmosphere in which pupils flourish and grow up to be confident and responsible young people ready for the next stage of their education.
- 4.8 The school nurse delivers a high quality programme linked to the whole school PSHCE programme whilst in addition offering support for children with learning needs. She also plans and implements the care programme for pupils with specific health needs. Worthwhile and appreciated drop in clinics are offered on a weekly basis to all the adults involved in the school community.
- 4.9 Pupils are well known to all staff. Form teachers provide sympathetic and strong support and guidance, both academically and pastorally. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are excellent. In their questionnaire responses and in interviews, pupils praised the help they were given by staff in and out of the classroom, 'I am encouraged to do things for myself and to work independently' and 'I love my school so much'. The school has proper arrangements to promote good behaviour and to combat bullying. No parent or pupil raised concerns about bullying and all said that if unacceptable behaviour does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils understand the anti-bullying policy and the school sanctions and rewards policy and feel that they are fair and work well.
- 4.10 Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective. All staff have appropriate child protection training and the school's policy is well understood and implemented. All necessary measures, including fire drills and staff training, have been taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Risk assessments cover all aspects of school life, and health and safety procedures are thorough. The school has suitable arrangements for pupils who are unwell, and an appropriate number of staff have first aid training. Accidents are properly recorded, as is the administration of medicines. The school is accessible for those who have disabilities. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and appreciate the guidance and training given by the school nurse. They particularly appreciated their cookery sessions which enhance their learning and understanding. Physical exercise is taken regularly by all pupils. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Excellent governance successfully ensures that the school's aims are met, and it supports the pupils' high standards of achievement and personal development. The Advisory Board, which meets termly, consists of eleven professionals, including parents of former pupils, with a suitable range of expertise. There is a strong strategic vision for the future development of the school, and for financial planning. The Advisory Board effectively oversees the work of the school and carries through the responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety highly effectively, ensuring that practice in the school reflects policy. Members of the Board have attended a range of relevant courses to extend their knowledge and expertise. They are well informed about the work of the school through visits and reports from the head.
- 5.2 The Advisory Board are closely involved with financial and strategic planning. They have been instrumental in ensuring the accommodation and the resources necessary to meet the needs of the curriculum are of the highest standard.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 The quality of leadership and management is excellent throughout the school. It enables the school to fully achieve its aims.
- 5.4 The wise leadership of the head and the strong support of the principal and senior management team (SMT) help to provide clear goals and a strong sense of direction to ensure all pupils receive the highest quality of education to equip them for their next schools and future lives. The SMT have started a programme of monitoring the teaching and learning throughout the school.
- 5.5 The school development plan sets out areas for development and improvement whilst at the same time showing clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. All the hard-working staff are involved in planning, and the school's clear vision is reflected in the high quality of the pupils' achievement and personal development. Whole school policies have been reviewed regularly.
- 5.6 The school has effective systems for securing, inducting and supporting high quality staff who have a range of expertise and experience. The school's recruitment procedures are secure, and all staff and governors are suitably checked. Good appraisal and in-service training ensures progressive staff development and all staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The central register of appointments is properly maintained.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.7 Links between the school and parents are excellent and strongly support the education of the pupils. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and informal meetings with parents during the inspection, indicated exceptionally strong support for the school, with very high degrees of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision. To some of the questions, all responses were positive. Parents appreciate the help and guidance afforded their children and the attitudes and values promoted by the school, and comment on the high standards of behaviour of the pupils. No items of concern were raised by a significant number of parents.
- 5.8 Parents greatly value the high quality of communication, and the education and support provided for their children. Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with all the required information. An informative website provides easy access to school policies, developments, news and other useful and relevant information. Parents have frequent and regular opportunities to meet staff in order to discuss their children's achievement and progress. The school's clear open-door policy ensures that parents have prompt access to a member of staff. The school office is a warm and welcoming part of the school run by the school secretary whose competence and capabilities assist in the smooth running of the school. Parents are provided with regular helpful written reports about their children's progress.
- 5.9 Parents are provided with many opportunities to be involved in the school. The school handles the concerns of parents with care and follows its published procedures.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding. A good system of review and self-evaluation ensures the achievement of creating high standards of learning experiences for the children, in a stimulating environment. However, the school is aware that a more systematic approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning leading into the main school is needed. Evaluation also ensures the setting continues to provide experiences that broaden, enrich and extend the skills, talents and values of each member of the school community. A particularly close focus on safeguarding and promoting personal and social skills underpins development in all areas. Consequently children make excellent progress in their learning. Staff sustain existing high standards by regularly identifying areas for improvement, creating a stimulating, colourful environment, where children feel valued and safe.

6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding with a clear vision and understanding of high standards. Excellent and carefully monitored policies and practice ensure that all children are well safeguarded. All adults have been suitably checked, and are well qualified and appropriately trained. Records, policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting are in place and well implemented. The capacity for sustained improvement is excellent, and is reflected in the perceptive and detailed self-evaluation that identifies priorities and development. An excellent framework for risk assessments has been established to ensure safety, and this is effectively implemented enabling children to develop in a very secure environment. Staff know the children well and take great care over their welfare. Measures to deal with illness, accidents and medication, overseen by a qualified nurse, are extremely thorough. Every opportunity is taken to inform parents of their child's progress, through, for example, informal meetings to discuss the curriculum and to outline routines. These are supplemented by termly and half termly reports and by individual parent teacher meetings held in the autumn and summer terms. In the recent questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and expressed a strong appreciation of their children's progress and the standard of their care. Regular newsletters and up-to-date notice boards keep parents fully informed. An extensive range of resources is extremely well used to promote learning and development.

6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. All children learn and develop extremely well through stimulating play and valuable first-hand experiences. A well-judged balance is maintained between adult led and child initiated activities, which involve choosing, exploring and discovering. Planning takes good account of individual preferences and needs. Assessment is thorough, the planned programme to track children's progress is intended to enhance assessment further. Provision for the welfare, health and safety is excellent. The school nurse plays a large role in emphasising

good health and well-being and the children are encouraged to eat healthy snacks and packed lunches.

6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. They make rapid progress and are on course to meet all the Early Learning Goals including communication, language and literacy and mathematical development by the end of their Reception year, with many likely to exceed them. Children's reading skills are well developed and by the end of the Reception year children achieve good reading ages, the most able well in advance of their chronological age. In communication and literacy, all children were able to recognise and read their names with confidence and were beginning to construct simple sentences. In their nativity play, children demonstrated the ability to memorise speaking parts and were confident in both speaking and acting in front of a large audience of parents and staff. Children are inquisitive, enthusiastic and self-motivated, relating well to one another and adults. They co-operate well in their learning and begin to make choices and decisions. They feel safe when choosing indoor and outdoor play. They enjoyed their snacks and packed lunches and understand about staying healthy. Children are provided with secure foundations for their future well-being in all aspects of their learning.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietors, 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 Karin Kelly

Mr Paul Easterbrook

Mrs Naomi Fowke

Miss Mary Regan

Reporting Inspector

Headmaster IAPS/ISA School

Deputy Head IAPS/ISA School

EYFS Co-ordinating Inspector