

School inspection report

28 to 30 November 2023

St Christopher's School

Mount Barton

Staverton

Totnes

Devon

TQ9 6PF

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. School leaders understand their responsibilities and actively support pupils' wellbeing. The proprietor and board of directors ensure that all elements of school life are reviewed and evaluated. As a result, the school achieves its aims. Pupils are happy and make good progress in their learning and personal development.
2. Pupils' skills and knowledge are developed well. The curriculum is delivered effectively by class teachers and subject specialist staff who encourage pupils to be self-motivated and apply effort to their learning. Leaders provide bespoke opportunities to address the needs of pupils so that they make good progress. Staff work well with pupils, some of whom may have found their previous experiences of school challenging. They ensure these pupils settle quickly and promote their progress by identifying their individual strengths and particular needs.
3. Leaders promote an environment in which positive behaviour is praised through an effective reward system. This is implemented fairly and consistently. The school's approach to dealing with bullying is highly effective. The anti-bullying policy, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme and a well implemented form tutor system provide pupils with a secure understanding of what constitutes bullying. Parents and pupils rightly praise this aspect of the school's work. Bullying is an exceptional occurrence. A suitable system is in place to record incidents should they arise.
4. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to engage in a wide range of local and international projects. These enable pupils to develop a mature understanding of communities outside of their school and the role they can play in fundraising for good causes.
5. Leaders ensure that appropriate systems for the safeguarding of pupils are in place. Leaders make sure that children are safe and well cared for. Leaders and proprietors have an appropriate awareness of risk and effective risk assessments are in place. The proprietors oversee the work of the safeguarding team effectively.
6. Safeguarding is effective. However, the school has little contact with local safeguarding partners and this limits their knowledge and understanding of local procedures, such as about the 'Prevent' duty.
7. Leaders and proprietors have an appropriate awareness of risk. There is a suitable risk assessment policy and effective risk assessments are in place. Staff are vigilant about the supervision of pupils in the playground and at the beginning and end of the day. The pupils are accompanied by staff when moving around the school's buildings. However, the risk assessments of the school's site are not fully developed.
8. Leaders ensure a suitable record of pre-appointment safeguarding checks is maintained. The number of senior staff trained in safer recruitment is limited. This reduces the number of suitable staff available for recruitment panels.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders and managers should:

- review assessments of the potential risks of the school site
- strengthen the relationships the school has with local children's services to develop the school's knowledge and understanding of local safeguarding procedures, including the 'Prevent' Duty
- ensure that sufficient senior staff are trained in safer recruitment processes so that someone with the necessary skills is always available for interviews with prospective members of staff.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The close working relationships between the proprietor, the chair of the board and the headteacher result in effective collective strategic planning. For example, the appointment of an additional teacher and mental health leads has had a positive impact on pupils who require extra support, as has the provision of a wellbeing space in the school.
10. Leaders monitor academic standards regularly and closely. They engage with staff to check that pupils are making good progress. The proprietor and members of the board monitor leaders' work through regular attendance at the school and in board meetings. Leaders ensure that policies are understood by staff and implemented effectively.
11. Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is highly effective. The personalised approach leaders have put in place is successful in meeting pupils' individual needs.
12. The proprietor and directors actively support school leaders to provide a happy, safe environment in which pupils' physical, social, emotional and educational needs are met. This is evident in pupils' behaviour and the pride they have for their school.
13. Leaders provide appropriate information for parents and prospective parents, on the school's website. Parents receive regular reports on their child's progress complemented by ongoing informal discussions with teaching staff.
14. The proprietor and board ensure health and safety arrangements are robust. Leaders' management of risk to the harm of pupils' wellbeing, through a strategic and inclusive approach, is appropriate. Staff carry out regular risk assessments and there is an active approach to ensuring that pupils are well supervised and monitored in the playground and elsewhere. However, the management of risk regarding the school site is underdeveloped.
15. Leaders promote mutual respect between all groups of pupils. There is an effective house system, and the care of skilled pastoral staff supports pupils well. Older pupils behave with care and kindness towards younger pupils. Pupils of all ages show respect and tolerance towards each other. There is a suitable accessibility plan, which is regularly reviewed, and the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
16. The school manages complaints following the appropriate policy which is available to parents.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The curriculum includes a suitable range of subjects and enables pupils to acquire knowledge and learn a wide range of skills. Some subjects, such as French, drama and physical education, are taught by specialist staff, including in the early years, and this impacts pupils' learning in a positive way. Teaching is planned to take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of pupils, including those in the early years. Careful planning of teaching promotes pupils' good progress. For example, a planned sequence of English lessons in Year 6 resulted in some high-quality creative writing.
18. Leaders monitor teaching and learning regularly, working closely with teaching staff. Pupils who have SEND follow individual programmes, which are highly effective and the support pupils receive is regularly reviewed to ensure it is having the desired outcomes. Pupils who have SEND grow in confidence as a result of the support they receive. They are helped to access the curriculum and take a full part in lessons. School leaders successfully provide a caring and positive learning environment for pupils, some of whom have struggled in their former schools.
19. Teachers use a wide range of appropriate resources to support the delivery of the curriculum, including a revised scheme of work for mathematics, and the input from visiting speakers to enhance learning. For example, an explorer spent time talking to pupils as part of their work in geography. Pupils develop their creative skills in music, art and drama. For instance, regular poetry performances enable pupils to develop oracy skills so that they become articulate, confident communicators.
20. In technology, pupils learn a range of skills as they apply their knowledge across the curriculum. Subject leaders and teachers make links between subjects and areas of learning, whenever possible and meaningful, so that pupils can see the relevance of their learning. For example, pupils explored the issue of bullying in their drama improvisations. Teachers encourage pupils to take ownership of their learning. They provide support and model tasks so that pupils are confident to take on challenges.
21. Children in the early years are well supported and develop positive relationships with the adults who work with them. Staff use questions effectively to help children describe what they are doing. This helps children to develop their vocabulary and their communication skills. Staff take a structured and well-planned approach to teaching children how to read. Children systematically learn the sounds letters make and then begin to apply this knowledge to their reading and writing.
22. Older pupils are also actively engaged in their learning. They are given many opportunities to express their views. This supports pupils to become self-motivated and to apply effort in their learning. Teachers encourage them to make choices about their work. For example, pupils use different methods to present their work in geography and choose their own projects in design and technology. Pupils take pride in their work.
23. Pupils attain well and make good progress. Pupils in Year 6 are successful in 11+ examinations. Close attention is paid to the analysis of attainment and progress data to identify pupils who may need additional support or extension activities so that pupils' needs are met.
24. The curriculum is enriched with a range of clubs, such as construction and origami, which are led by staff. These encourage successful collaborative work and pupils demonstrate high levels of effort

and creativity. For older pupils, clubs introduce them to subjects such as Spanish, which they may wish to study at senior school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

25. Pupils understand the importance of respecting others. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. For example, in a lesson about creation pupils showed strong understanding of the importance of respecting the beliefs of others. Pupils demonstrate their respect for one another including in house assemblies, which older pupils lead. Links with the local church and community enhance pupils' spiritual and moral understanding. Pupils understand the value of good manners and they listen to each other's views respectfully.
26. Leaders promote physical activity in lessons on and off site, as well as in clubs such as table tennis. Pupils are enthusiastic about the sporting opportunities they have. Pupils were very proud to win a tag rugby tournament competing against other schools. Pupils enjoy the range of equipment available at breaktimes and their sense of community is developed at whole school playtimes. The range of clubs available, such as chamber choir, origami and construction, helps pupils to develop self-confidence and a positive attitude to learning new skills.
27. Pupils' well-developed understanding of the importance of mental health is supported by the provision of a wellbeing room. Staff show genuine care for pupils and know them all well. The range of opportunities for pupils to express their feelings and their positive relationships with staff, mean that pupils are confident about speaking to an adult if they have any concerns. Pupils value spending time with their form tutors on reflective activities, which help them to feel confident to speak about their mental health and wellbeing.
28. Leaders provide an age appropriate PSHE programme which helps pupils to understand the many ways people can be different. Pupils talk positively about and celebrate these differences. The school is welcoming and inclusive. Children in the early years play co-operatively with each other. The emphasis on encouraging positive relationships between older and younger pupils enhances the wellbeing of all.
29. Pupils behave well. Opportunities to reward good behaviour through the school's house system are used effectively. On occasions when pupils do not behave as they should, staff address this effectively with immediate discussion with the pupils involved. Pupils and staff understand the school's behaviour policy. Pupils are supervised appropriately.
30. The school's anti-bullying policy and procedures are robust and effective. Staff are vigilant to the possibility of bullying. It happens very rarely and any signs of bullying are instantly addressed. Events about anti-bullying form a regular part of the school's calendar.
31. Leaders ensure that the premises are adequately maintained and are safe for the pupils. The school's evacuation procedures are understood well and practised regularly. The fire risk assessment is reviewed annually by the school.
32. There is a first aid room and handwashing is possible through the provision of a bowl and water, with handbasins close by. Staff are trained adequately and provide first aid care when needed.
33. Leaders ensure that the admission and attendance register is maintained fully. Staff understand the need to follow up on school leavers to ensure that they are safe.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

34. The school supports pupils to acquire an appreciation of their own and other cultures, which promotes tolerance and respect between different cultural traditions. Pupils understand that it is wrong to discriminate against those who are different from themselves, including when those differences are not visible. School leaders have facilitated a strong connection with a school in Uganda which has helped pupils to develop a better understanding of a different culture. Opportunities for pupils, including in the early years, to learn about cultural differences, such as the food in France, help pupils to have a wider view of the world.
35. School leaders and teachers create opportunities for pupils to learn about public institutions, such as the police and the fire service, and to understand the importance of British values including democracy and the rule of law. Pupils extend their knowledge of public institutions, such as the House of Lords, by discussing the attributes required to be a member. They learn the value of listening, negotiation and compromise by developing their debating skills. A Parliament project, in which older pupils created their own parties and voted, increased their understanding of the democratic process. Pupils create their own class rules and understand the difference between right and wrong.
36. Older pupils take pride in assuming leadership roles of responsibility, which help them to prepare for life beyond school. The older pupils' support of, and behaviour towards, younger pupils is a positive feature and fosters strong relationships between pupils of all ages. The house system provides an opportunity for pupils to express their views about aspects of the school. Changes have been implemented in response to issues raised through the house system, such as the introduction of packed lunches as an option.
37. Pupils are well prepared for the move to senior school and are supported effectively in preparation for the 11+ examinations. Older pupils write job descriptions and are encouraged to think about possible future careers.
38. The school provides opportunities for pupils to engage in local events such as the Dartmouth Food Festival and to visit the local area. For example, a trip to Ivybridge enabled pupils to develop their knowledge of the work of the national lifeboat charity. Pupils engage enthusiastically in a range of fundraising activities both for local causes, and to support the school in Uganda with which they have a long-standing relationship. The pupils understand that the economic needs of the school in Uganda are different from that of a school in the UK. Pupils raise funds for specific projects such as the provision of a water supply to the school and see the outcomes of their fundraising in photographs sent from the school.
39. Leaders ensure that children in the early years develop their social skills and learn to play co-operatively with each other. The Nursery and Reception classes combine for some lessons, such as music and movement, and children work well together.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

40. Leaders ensure suitable arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils, including those in the early years. Leaders strongly promote the fact that 'it could happen here' and this is well understood by staff, who demonstrate a strong commitment to placing pupils' needs first.
41. A local authority safeguarding audit has been undertaken and its findings reviewed by the board. A newly appointed safeguarding governor, with relevant experience, visits the school regularly and provides feedback to the board.
42. Staff understand that any safeguarding concerns must be referred to the appropriate person in a timely manner. Staff know what they should do if they have a concern about another adult, including the headteacher. Staff are confident about speaking to the safeguarding team and do so when required. Records about safeguarding concerns are centralised, confidential and secure.
43. Staff, including those in positions of responsibility, are trained regularly. Induction procedures for new staff are in place and are effective. Staff understand their roles in keeping pupils safe. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has received appropriate training for the role.
44. Pupils are confident about reporting any concerns they have to adults in the school. The pupils are listened to and any concerns they raise receive a prompt and effective response. Pupils understand about keeping themselves and others safe, including online. Leaders have ensured that appropriate filtering and monitoring of the use of technology is in place and appropriate.
45. Staff recruitment procedures follow relevant guidance. A suitable record of pre-appointment checks is in place. The chair of the board has undertaken safer recruitment training and is involved in recruitment processes. However, no other leaders or members of the board have had such training, though the Deputy Head undertook this training during the inspection. This means that the school sometimes struggles to have an appropriately trained person present on interview panels.
46. At the beginning of the inspection, the school's safeguarding policies did not fully meet requirements. This was addressed during the inspection to reflect current guidance and the school's own processes.
47. The school works with external agencies, as necessary, to support individual pupils. Some links with local safeguarding partners have been established but these are underdeveloped. As a result, although adequate, leaders have limited knowledge and understanding of local issues and procedures relating to the 'Prevent' duty.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	St Christopher's School
Department for Education number	878/6050
Address	St Christopher's School Mount Barton Staverton Totnes Devon TQ9 6PF
Phone number	01803 762202
Email address	head@st-christophers.devon.sch.uk
Website	www.st-christophers.devon.sch.uk
Proprietor	Mrs Jane Kenyon
Chair	Mrs Victoria Kennington
Headteacher	Mrs Alexandra Cottell
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	65
Date of previous inspection	24 to 26 September 2019

Information about the school

48. St Christopher's is a co-educational day school situated in a rural location close to the town of Totnes in Devon. The school has been owned and governed by the same family since 1991. The school is a limited company. There is a board of directors and three new directors have joined the board. Nursery provision has recently been extended to provide care in the school holidays.
49. There are 11 pupils in the early years comprising Nursery and Reception.
50. The school has identified 11 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
51. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
52. The school states its aims are to provide a happy, secure and safe environment in which the child's physical, emotional, social and educational needs are met within a high-quality, broad and well-balanced programme based on sound Christian principles.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 to 30 November 2023

53. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

54. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of the board
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work with senior staff
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

55. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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