

Saint-Pierre Prep School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Saint-Pierre is an independent day preparatory school for boys and girls aged between two and a half and 11 years of age. The school opened in 1952 as an independent day and boarding school for boys aged four to 18 years. It first took girls in 1985. The school was registered to provide for up to 30 children under three years old in 2008, and this provision was separately inspected in July 2009. There are currently four children under three years old in the registered childcare. They attend the Nursery class along with the rest of the pre-Reception children. Twenty eight are entitled to free education for three- and four-year-olds.

The school is located in a large, detached, Victorian house in Leigh-on-Sea. There are currently 103 children aged three years and above on roll, 21 of whom attend part-time. The number on roll has increased by approximately one third since the school was last inspected in July 2008. The school's primary aim is: 'to work in effective collaboration with parents and pupils to ensure that each individual child is enabled to develop their true potential to the full in all areas of the curriculum.'

Evaluation of the school

Saint-Pierre School provides a good quality education throughout the main school and also for those in the registered Early Years Foundation Stage provision, and pupils make good progress. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding due to the family-like atmosphere and the good curriculum with its excellent opportunities for enrichment. Provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory because some requirements are not met. Safeguarding arrangements have improved since the previous inspection and are effective. Teaching is good, but the assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory as the information gained from assessment is not used to the full. The school meets most but not all of the regulations.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The school has a very clear idea of what it should provide in order to give pupils a rounded education and prepare them for entry to the selective schools of their choice. However, this is not outlined in an overall curriculum policy as required. All subjects except physical education have a suitable policy and scheme of work. Care is taken not to duplicate work, and to ensure that pupils' skills are built up systematically. Helpful curriculum information is provided termly for all parents and carers.

Planning for children aged three to five, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is good. It includes a rich variety of activities that interest children and help them to learn and develop in all areas. Building limitations prevent free-flow access to the outdoors, but plenty of opportunities are given for planned learning and playing outside. A good range of visits support children's learning and breadth of experience. During the inspection, for example, both Nursery and Reception children visited 'Two Tree Island' to look for birds in support of their current topic.

Excellent provision is made for personal, social and health education. This supports pupils' outstanding personal development. The provision starts very well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and extends to a full programme of personal social and health education in the main school, supplemented by additional lessons such as current affairs and life skills.

Curriculum enrichment is outstanding. The school plans an exceptionally wide range of special events and foci for the academic year. These are notified to parents and carers and many of them are family events. Examples include: local history month, national limerick day, giant sleep-over, bring your dad to school morning, and a family bike ride. A good range of well-attended after-school clubs is also provided including: bowling, disco, puppet making and pet protection.

The quality of teaching and learning is good in both the main school and the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, assessment is satisfactory and is a weaker element. Classes are small and staff know each pupil very well. Consequently, work and questioning are usually well-tailored to their individual needs. Lessons are adequately planned. Additional support for pupils who find learning more difficult is effectively provided by adults, or by the provision of alternative tasks. Very good attention is given to supporting children aged three to five years old with particular difficulties. For example, the nursery staff have provided numerous photographs and a very simple visual timetable for a child who has difficulties in communication and understanding. In the occasional instances of less effective teaching, staff do not encourage a sufficiently deep level of discussion or promote more complex thinking. Learning objectives are not always shared with the pupils, so that they do not always know why they are completing a given task.

Pupils' work in the main school is assessed using National Curriculum criteria. This information is used in the annual progress reports for parents and carers; for curriculum planning and for planning to meet individuals' needs. However, this progress information is not tracked over the course of a year, nor is it documented from year to year. Consequently, it is not used sufficiently well to inform

interventions and provide greater challenge. Marking is variable. The school operates a grading system to inform pupils about their presentation, effort and attainment. A target or comment is given for each piece of marked work but the targets are minimal and are not always followed up by either the teacher or the pupil. The skills of individual children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are closely tracked to inform planning for their progress. However, a bigger picture of cohorts' progress is not made to identify adjustments to the provision or 'hidden' weaknesses in children's learning and development.

All pupils make good progress. They enter school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. Children make good progress in the Nursery class and throughout Reception. By the time children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, almost all have achieved all of the early learning goals and one third are working securely above this level. Attainment is above average across the school and there is an improving trend in the number of pupils attaining above-average levels for their age in the national tests at age 11.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Parents' and carers' questionnaire returns confirm that their children, from the Nursery upwards, greatly enjoy school. A number of pupils wrote comments on their questionnaires such as 'I love my school.' The pupils are confident, articulate young people who enter wholeheartedly into all that the school offers. They are self-motivated, independent in their work, and keen to succeed and do well. Pupils are encouraged to develop confidence from an early age, for example by coming to the front of the class or the whole school to give an explanation. Their good relationships with staff and the inclusive, family-like atmosphere help pupils to develop very positive self-esteem, personal insights into life and the ability to reflect. The younger children are supported to enjoy the wonders of nature, for example in the way ice melts and the beauty of birds. Older pupils consider the immediate and deeper implications of events, such as the sinking of the cruise ship that took place during the inspection week.

Pupils take great pride in winning house points for their behaviour and effort, and in carrying out various responsibilities such as being school 'guardians' and devising ways to make the school 'greener'. They develop a very good understanding of right and wrong, morals and the democratic processes, services and public institutions in England. Pupils develop the personal skills necessary for living harmoniously in society. The youngest pupils make friends, share resources and play and learn happily together. Pupils learn to be respectful of all people, regardless of gender, religion or ethnic origin and the school is a harmonious close-knit community. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are very polite and respectful, and anti-social incidents such as bullying are extremely rare. Behaviour management is based almost exclusively on reinforcement of the school's rules and implementation of the reward system. In all, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes a very strong contribution to their academic progress and future well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. All pupils are suitably safeguarded. Recruitment and child protection procedures are adequate and child protection training is at an appropriate level and up to date. Suitable risk assessments are made in relation to on-site and off-site activities. Most, but not all, of the required policies and practices are in place. Fire safety and first aid procedures are satisfactory but there are some shortcomings in the implementation of procedures that result in two regulations not being met. The weaknesses do not impact adversely on pupils' safety or welfare. For example, some required staff training in fire safety and first aid for children under five has lapsed and has not been renewed within the recommended timescale. The first aid policy does not include all of the relevant information and there is no fire risk policy to provide staff with guidance on minimising fire risks. Although fire drills are held each term, and the required checks on appliances are made, these are not systematically recorded. The school does not have an appropriate disability access policy, as required by the Equality Act 2010.

The staff show considerable care and concern for the well-being of each individual. This is underpinned by good relationships and the staff's caring approach. The overwhelming majority of parents' and carers' inspection questionnaires indicate that they are happy with all aspects of the school, and often comment very favourably on the 'family feel.' Pupils' views are similar to those of their parents and carers. These positive relationships are established very successfully from pupils' first days at school. Overall, this warm and supportive atmosphere helps pupils to thrive, enjoy school and make good progress.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required checks are made to ensure the suitability of adults to work with children and are recorded as required in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation enable pupils of all ages to learn safely and effectively. Improvement to the premises has been ongoing year-on-year. The most recent large-scale improvements have been: refurbishment of the playground, the installation of electronic gates on both sides of the property, additional toilet facilities and the enlargement and refurbishment of the school hall. The hall is used very well to supplement the space available for practical curriculum activities, and while adequate, most classrooms have little room to spare. The Nursery has spacious accommodation. While the Reception classroom is smaller, both classrooms provide adequately for children's learning and development. There are sufficient washrooms for pupils but there are no facilities for those who are ill.

Provision of information

The school has an innovative website that is attractive to pupils but is not up-to-date in some respects, and there is no school prospectus. Consequently, some of the required information is not provided, or made available, to parents, carers and others and three regulations are not met in this respect. Frequent, vibrant and informative newsletters are produced for parents and carers, and a text-messaging system ensures up-to-the-minute correspondence with them. Annual reports on pupils' progress, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are clear, detailed and well-written.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy contains all of the required information but it is not readily made available to parents and carers so a regulation is not met.

Registered provision for children aged from birth to three years

The registered provision provides for children aged two and half to three years and does not apply to the provision made for those aged three to five years. The overall effectiveness of the provision for those under three years of age is good. Children attend the Nursery class with three year olds and soon settle due to the warm, supportive atmosphere, the small size of the school, and the excellent relationships with parents and carers. Consequently, children feel safe and secure and are happy in school. The quality of provision is good. Children enter the Nursery class with skills that are typical for their age. A wide range of interesting adult-led and child-initiated activities is provided which children enjoy and which support their learning and development in all areas. These take full regard of the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines. Adults are attentive and vigilant. Children are supported and extended through joint play and good questioning. Staff recognise the need for plenty of physical activity, and good arrangements are made for children to play and learn outside, despite the building's limitations which prevents free-flow access to the outdoors.

Children's outcomes are good. They make good progress in all areas of learning. Careful ongoing observation enables staff to identify children's skills and adjust their planning to meet individual needs. Significant events are immediately noted and contribute to well-presented 'learning journeys' which demonstrate children's learning and development over time. Activities are adapted well to meet the needs of these youngest children, and those with particular difficulties.

Leadership and management are good and the Nursery and Reception classes form a good Early Years Foundation Stage department with common approaches and practices. Children are safeguarded effectively by the school's procedures. However, an insufficient number of staff has up-to-date first aid training for young children. The provision's leader effectively promotes an ethos where every child is cherished and supported, and in which staff are encouraged to be reflective, self-evaluate and strive for improvement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁵

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- produce a written curriculum policy which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement it effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- provide appropriate plans and schemes of work for the physical area of learning (paragraph 2(2)(a)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13)
- prepare and implement a written policy on first aid (paragraph 14).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that parents and prospective parents, and on request, the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or an independent inspectorate are provided with the address and telephone number of the proprietors' registered or principal office and where they may be contacted at all times (paragraph 24(1)(a))
- ensure that the following information is made available to parents and carers and parents of prospective pupils, and on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of state, or an independent inspectorate:

⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

- particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions
 - particulars of the curriculum policy of the school as required under part 1, paragraph 2
 - particulars of policies relating to bullying, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving
 - particulars of the arrangements for tackling bullying, and for promoting pupils' health and safety on the school premises and on educational visits as required under part 3 paragraphs 10, 11 and 12
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations
 - details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year
 - the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b))
- publish the school's safeguarding children policy on the school's website, or make a copy otherwise available to parents and carers of pupils and of prospective pupils on request (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- make the complaints policy available to parents and carers (paragraph 25(b)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.⁶

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- ensure that sufficient staff are suitably trained in first aid and that first aid training is carried out within the recommended timescale.

In order to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006, those who provide the registered provision for children under the age of three must:

- ensure that sufficient staff are suitably trained in first aid and that first aid training is carried out within the recommended timescale.

⁶ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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The quality of the registered provision for children aged from birth to three years

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Date school opened	1952		
Age range of pupils	2–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 47	Girls: 35	Total: 82
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 12	Girls: 9	Total: 21
Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4725-£6656		
Annual fees (childcare)	£4725 (full time) £17.85 (per session)		
Address of school	16 Leigh Road Leigh-on-Sea SS9 1LE		
Telephone number	01702 474164		
Email address	info@saintpierreschool.com		
Headteacher	Christopher Perkins		
Proprietor	Kurt Davies and Christopher Perkins		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint-Pierre Prep School, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 1LE

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, observing your lessons and practical activities, and seeing how well you are all doing. My colleague and I both found you to be exceptionally polite and friendly, and good fun to be with – especially when you sang in the hall after lunch. I am pleased to tell you that Saint-Pierre provides you with good quality education. It has many impressive aspects. These include:

- your outstanding personal development and behaviour
- the good start children get in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- your good academic progress
- the excellent partnerships with your parents and carers
- the warm, family-like atmosphere that helps you feel safe and learn well
- the excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities, and the way that so many of these involve your families.

I have asked the school to do some things to become even better. These are to:

- outline the school's curriculum in a single, simple document that can be given to your parents and carers, and to any other interested people
- write and implement proper plans for physical education
- make sure that parents, carers and others have access to all the information about the school's policies and practices that is required
- ensure that all the written policies and practices relating to your welfare, health and safety are properly written and fully and systematically implemented
- ensure there are enough trained first aiders to look after the youngest children.

I wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth
Lead inspector

