

St Faith's at Ash School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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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

St Faith's at Ash School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged from two to 11 years. Admission to the school is non-selective. The school opened in January 1987 on the site of a former independent school, close to the town of Sandwich. The present owners purchased the school in 1997 and one of the proprietors is also the headteacher. There are currently 193 pupils on roll. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs but the school supports a number of pupils with learning difficulties.

In response to parental demand, the school has recently extended its early years provision to admit children from the age of two to three years. Consequently, it has restructured its early years provision so that it now comprises a nursery unit, Sandcastles Nursery, and two Reception classes. The school is registered to accommodate up to 50 children aged from two to four years but there are currently 45 of whom 25 receive free nursery education. The school is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The school provides childcare for pupils of any age daily from 8.00 to 8.30am (including a breakfast club for Sandcastles Nursery children) and from 3.15 to 5.30pm during term time only. The school had its last full inspection in November 2008.

The school aims to prepare pupils for entry to grammar schools in Kent. In addition, it endeavours 'to give all our children every possible opportunity to flourish and achieve their full potential' and it believes 'in helping children to discover more about the world outside the classroom'.

Evaluation of the school

St Faith's at Ash School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. Pupils make good progress in their learning and in their personal development. Their

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.

behaviour is good. Robust safeguarding arrangements contribute to the good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The overall effectiveness and leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The school has made good progress in rectifying all the shortcomings reported in the last inspection and now meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good overall throughout the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have good opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills through an appropriate balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities. However, the outdoor provision does not fully support children's learning in all areas of the curriculum in any weather. Reading and communication skills are taught well from the nursery onwards. In the primary school, the curriculum is broad and well balanced between academic, artistic and sporting activities, and is extremely well enhanced by a wide range of clubs and educational visits. Consequently, it supports the all-round development of all pupils well. It includes all the National Curriculum subjects, along with French, taught by a specialist from Year 1 onwards, and private music tuition from the Reception onwards. The provision for basic skills is strong and prepares pupils well for their future economic well-being. In Key Stage 2, pupils are prepared for the entrance examinations for grammar schools. Since the last inspection, the school's focus on further improving its mathematical provision has resulted in pupils making outstanding progress in mathematics.

Although provision for English is good overall, pupils make relatively less progress in writing than in reading, which has been identified by the school. A strong emphasis on developing pupils' listening and speaking skills gives a solid foundation for developing pupils' writing skills. Opportunities for writing in other subjects are limited; there is an excessive use of worksheets. The school has increased its resources for information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection. However, as recognised by the school and noted by some pupils, parents and carers, access to computers remains restricted for some year groups and the provision for ICT is only satisfactory.

The planning of the curriculum is successfully based on commercial schemes of work, and clearly indicating how pupils will progress in their learning. It is monitored termly. Good provision for pupils who have special educational needs ensures that they make good progress in their learning. It includes early identification of needs, appropriate modifications to the curriculum and liaison with appropriate agencies.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good throughout the school. The staff are well qualified for the age group they teach and their good subject knowledge is supported by continuous professional development. Small classes ensure that teachers know their pupils well, have a good understanding of their capabilities and establish good working relationships. Teachers generally plan activities that challenge pupils well through very effective use of resources, probing questioning and paired and independent work. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace that sustains pupils'

attention and interest. Occasionally, the teaching is only satisfactory when it does not match pupils' needs sufficiently closely. Pupils gain a good understanding of how to improve their work through constructive verbal feedback, marking and informative progress reports. While the best marking deepens pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve, this practice is not consistent throughout Key Stage 2 and, in a few classes, pupils are not always given specific success criteria to help them achieve their targets. Consequently, they do not always progress at the rate of which they are capable, particularly in writing. The school has improved its method for tracking pupils' progress since the last inspection and uses the information from frequent assessments to identify which pupils need support or stretching further.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, planned activities are based on secure assessments of children's learning and development. Children learn most effectively when they are involved in practical life activities, for example making soup with fresh vegetables. However, on occasion, Reception children are not fully encouraged to use their creativity and imagination.

As a result of the overall good curriculum and good teaching, pupils make good progress over time throughout the school. By their fifth birthday, most children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have achieved a good level of development. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve very well in English and science and exceptionally well in mathematics, and most gain entry to their chosen secondary schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good throughout the school, enabling them to make good progress in their personal development. Pupils' enjoyment of school life is reflected in their good attendance, good behaviour and high level of participation in lessons and in after-school clubs. Pupils generally respond well to the school ethos based on 'respect for ourselves, others and our surroundings'. A small minority of pupils find it difficult to maintain the high levels of self-control displayed by their peers. Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong and think that sanctions are fair. From the Early Years Foundation Stage, they form positive relationships and work and play in harmony with others. They gain a strong sense of community and responsibility through assemblies and through opportunities to care for each other. For example, through the 'buddy system', they support those who need it, especially new pupils. The childcare provision makes a strong contribution to pupils' well-being and learning development. Pupils have daily opportunities to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence, for example, through paired and independent work and oral presentations. Although most pupils say that staff treat them equally, a few feel that individuals are not always selected fairly to represent their school or to fulfil additional responsibilities.

Through the programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education, pupils develop a good awareness of British institutions and of how to make sensible health and relationship choices. Since the last inspection, pupils' opportunities to express their views about school life have increased through surveys and the formation of a

pupil council but this is underdeveloped. Nevertheless, pupils contribute to school life by being house and sports captains, playing matches against other schools, participating in drama and music performances, reading to younger pupils and being 'buddies.' They contribute to the wider community by raising funds for the Great Ormond Street hospital and sponsoring a child in Senegal. Pupils' cultural development and life skills are extremely well supported by a wealth of clubs and educational visits, including a Year 6 residential trip to North Devon and a Year 5 journey to France. Pupils gain an awareness of diversity mainly through religious education, which includes learning about the major world faiths, and through presentations made by visitors.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has remedied deficiencies in safeguarding arrangements reported in the last inspection. Procedures for appointing staff and volunteers pay due regard to the latest guidance. The child protection policy is sufficiently detailed to support staff should a concern arise and staff are trained in child protection at appropriate levels and intervals. The vast majority of pupils, parents and carers have full confidence in the school's ability to deal with the few incidents of bullying that occur, and the anti-bullying policy reflects latest guidance. However, this area of the school's work is not always sufficiently well coordinated, as noted by a few parents and carers. The staff promote consistently high standards of behaviour. There are suitable risk assessments of the premises and activities and a satisfactory level of fire safety. The school meets all the requirements of the Childcare Register. A sufficient number of staff have received first aid training that is appropriate for the age range. Accidents and dispensation of medication are suitably recorded. All adults are deployed well to support pupils' learning and welfare and, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the key person system ensures that each child is well cared for.

Sensible arrangements regulate the flow of traffic at the start and end of the school day. Pupils demonstrate that they know how to keep safe when moving around the school buildings and by acting appropriately during a fire drill. Pupils are encouraged to eat and drink healthily and the school provides well-balanced meals and daily fruit options. Some pupils would like to have more choice. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are encouraged to develop good hygiene routines. Throughout the school, pupils have many opportunities to exercise vigorously. The school has a three-year plan that meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The required checks on the staff and proprietors to ascertain their suitability to work with children before confirming their employment are carried out rigorously. These checks are recorded in a detailed single central register that follows a good practice model.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises provide compact indoor teaching accommodation that enables effective and safe learning. Facilities for pupils who are ill, previously judged to be inadequate, now meet requirements fully. The extensive grounds and the swimming pool provide scope for a wide range of outdoor learning opportunities. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the outdoor area does not enable all-weather use.

Provision of information

The school has rectified the shortcomings identified in the last inspection and now provides the required range of accurate and up-to-date information for parents, carers and others. The school operates an open door policy, and nearly all parents and carers feel well informed about their children's welfare and progress, and are satisfied with the education provided by the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has appropriate procedures for dealing with complaints promptly and fairly. Nearly all parents and carers who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire are aware of them.

Registered provision for children aged from birth to three years

The 'registered provision' covers provision for children aged two to three years of age in the Early Years Foundation Stage and does not apply to the provision made for those in the Early Years Foundation Stage aged three to five years.

The overall effectiveness of this provision is good and secures good outcomes for the children. Children enjoy being at the nursery. Well-established induction procedures and transition arrangements ensure that children settle well into school life. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and children are well cared for. Children trust the staff and readily approach them for support whenever required. The staff manage children's behaviour well and children feel safe. Personal hygiene is promoted routinely to prevent the spread of infection.

The provision, including the curriculum and teaching, is good, supported by good leadership and management. Stimulating activities are planned across the six areas of learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage, based on careful observations of each child's development. Children learn through practical experiences that help them to explore resources and tools using all their senses. For example, after reading the story of *Oliver's Vegetables*, children investigated different types of fresh vegetables and helped to prepare and cook a soup to share with peers and adults. Outdoor play develops children's physical skills well but the outdoor provision does not fully support their development in the other required areas of learning. This is because there is no sheltered area to enable all-weather use. The staff work as a close team and share a good understanding of how to improve the provision further.

The school meets all the requirements of the Early Years Register and of the Childcare Register.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop the use of ICT throughout the main school
- use a broader range of strategies to deepen pupils' understanding of how they can improve their work so that they can make even better progress, especially in writing
- widen the range of opportunities which pupils have to express their views and make decisions to improve their school life
- develop opportunities for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing a sheltered area.

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	Day primary and nursery		
Date school opened	1987		
Age range of pupils	2–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 86	Girls: 82	Total: 168
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 15	Total: 25
Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 4	Girls: 7	Total: 11
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)	£5,835.00 - £7,227.00		
Annual fees (childcare)	£735.00 (1 half day)	£5,994.00 (5 full days)	
Address of school	5 The Street Ash Canterbury Kent CT3 2HH		
Telephone number	01304 813409		
Email address	info@stfaithsatash.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Kerruish		
Proprietors	Mr and Mrs SGI Kerruish		

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.



27 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Faith's at Ash School, Canterbury CT3 2HH

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team so warmly when we visited your school recently. We greatly enjoyed meeting you, seeing you learn and talking to you. You go to a good school where adults work hard to prepare an enjoyable learning environment and to help you develop all the skills you need to move on to secondary school.

You make good progress in your subject areas and exceptional progress in mathematics. You enjoy school a good deal and your attendance is good. Your teachers and teaching assistants care for you well. We were really impressed by your enthusiasm, your high level of participation in class and your ability to work well independently or in pairs. Your teachers know you well as individuals and teach you well. You are well behaved, get on very well with each other and make a good contribution to school life. You feel safe and understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and taking exercise.

In order to make your good school even better, we have asked the school to:

- further develop the use of ICT throughout the school
- help you to make even better progress, especially in your writing, by showing you more systematically how to improve your work
- widen the range of opportunities for you to express your views and make decisions to improve your school life
- provide a sheltered area for the children in the Nursery and Reception classes so that they can enjoy outdoor learning in any weather.

You will help your teachers to achieve this if you continue to work as hard as we saw during the inspection and maintain the highest standards of behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Michèle Messaoudi
Lead inspector