

# St Christopher's School

48 New Dover Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3DT

## Inspection dates

23 June 2015

## Overall outcome

**Unmet independent school standards identified**

## Reason for the inspection

- This was an emergency inspection and commissioned by the Department for Education because of concerns relating to the leadership and management of safeguarding arrangements at the school.
- As an emergency inspection, it was unannounced.
- The inspector was asked to review section 3 and section 8 of the independent school standards, which concern welfare, health and safety of pupils and the quality of leadership in and management of schools, to judge whether these standards are still being met.

## Main findings

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- As identified in the progress monitoring inspection in March 2015, the school now has a number of policies in place that were missing at the time of the full inspection in October 2014. However, these policies are not being consistently applied by staff to ensure that pupils' welfare, health and safety are sufficiently protected.
- School leaders have ensured that staff have received child protection training. However, this training has not been sufficient to ensure that staff possess the knowledge and skills needed to follow the school's policies effectively. Leaders do not monitor how staff apply child protection training well enough to ensure that weaknesses in practice are properly tackled. This means staff practice is inconsistent and does not reliably protect pupils from potential harm.
- The current designated safeguarding lead does not hold a suitably senior post. This demonstrates that school leaders have not given due regard to guidance contained within the Department for Education's publication, *Keeping children safe in education*. The weaknesses in these arrangements mean that staff do not consistently follow school policy. Safeguarding arrangements are not sufficient. The ability of the designated safeguarding lead to robustly challenge the poor practice of some staff is inhibited by her lack of seniority and authority.
- Safeguarding training provided for staff is insufficient. The external training provided on child protection was not wide-ranging or deep enough to ensure that staff are suitably knowledgeable about safeguarding issues and how to act on their concerns. Staff freely admit they act on concerns in different ways, few of which reflect the school's policies or the guidance in *Keeping children safe in education*. Not all staff take the time to read safeguarding material they are sent by leaders. This means they are not sufficiently up to date regarding implementation of the school policies that have been developed. Leaders do not hold staff to account when this is the case. This has contributed to the inconsistency in practice at the school.
- School leaders have ensured that all relevant paperwork is now in place. This includes the management and organisation of the single central register. Health and safety policies are implemented with greater effectiveness. For example, this means that there are now appropriate routine checks on fire protection equipment. The anti-bullying policy remains effective. Pupils now have a much stronger understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. The admissions register continues to be appropriately managed. These elements have been maintained since the time of the progress monitoring inspection.

- There remain some deficiencies in safeguarding policies at the school. For example, it is not always clear how staff are expected to conduct themselves. There is a lack of clarity about what constitutes the appropriate use of technology by staff, including the use of mobile phones, the internet and social media. This leads to ambiguity of understanding about what constitutes acceptable behaviour for staff.

### Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- Leadership at the school is weak. Leaders have not been able to pull the school community together for the common good of the pupils. Serious and significant divisions between staff have led to difficulties in securing a consistent approach to tackling the management of safeguarding at the school. The 'family ethos' of the school has blurred the professional boundaries that are needed to maintain effective working relationships. This causes a culture of mistrust, claim and counter claim; all of which means there is too little focus on the welfare of pupils.
- The deputy headteacher has left the school and not been replaced. As a result, the only senior leader at the school with appropriate educational experience is the headteacher. This means there is poor capacity for the school to maintain and improve standards in their educational provision.
- The headteacher does not always demonstrate appropriate professional conduct. Consequently, neither do the staff. In particular, he has not given due regard to guidance within the *Keeping pupils safe in education* document in the policies and practices at the school. This means that leaders do not actively promote the well-being of pupils.
- The monitoring of safeguarding practice at the school is weak. Since the previous inspection, attempts have been made to tighten safeguarding systems. However, leaders have not been able to ensure these are effectively and consistently implemented. Decisions about the role of the designated safeguarding lead demonstrate significant weaknesses in leadership and management. The role of designated safeguarding lead is being carried out by a teaching assistant who is not of a senior enough post to carry out monitoring effectively or to hold staff to account for not following the school's safeguarding policies and processes. This demonstrates the lack of priority given to safeguarding by senior leaders.
- The headteacher has taken no action to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for himself. The policies that have been developed by leaders to safeguard pupils are not robust. Leaders have failed to establish clear and defined processes that can be consistently followed by staff to record concerns, for example. This means that when staff do not follow policy or stay up to date with policy changes, they are not being held to account and so the welfare of pupils is not appropriately assured. This demonstrates significant weaknesses in leadership and management at the school.
- Performance management procedures are not formal or professional enough to be effective. Staff are not held to account for the quality of their work well enough. They are not, therefore, sufficiently rewarded or sanctioned for the quality of their work. In turn, not enough is done to provide staff with the training and development they need. Leaders do not always convey consistent messages. As a result, staff are not always clear what is expected of them.
- The recently formed governing body is ineffective. There are no formal terms of reference or authority delegated to the governing body. This means governors are unable to hold the headteacher to account effectively. They have rightly identified the weaknesses in the governance arrangements, but have been unable to convince the proprietors to act on the advice they have given to improve aspects of leadership and management, particularly around safeguarding.

**Compliance with regulatory requirements****The school requires improvement and must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements**

In order to meet the requirements in full, the school should:

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

<p>Make suitable arrangements to ensure the designated safeguarding lead holds an appropriately senior role within the school</p> <p>Ensure the designated safeguarding lead effectively manages the consistent implementation of safeguarding and child protection policy</p> <p>Ensure all staff act in a manner that safeguards and promotes the welfare of pupils at all times</p> <p>Strengthen staff induction and training in safeguarding so that all staff are clear about what the school policies require and are consistently applied</p> <p>Ensure that safeguarding policies make clear reference to acceptable behaviour of staff, in particular in connection to their use of technology and communicating with pupils</p>	7(a)
<p>Ensure all the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and arrangements reflect the guidance contained within <i>Keeping children safe in education</i>.</p>	7(b)
<p>Ensure that the school's risk assessment policy makes direct reference to <i>Keeping children safe in education</i> so that the welfare of pupils at the school is fully safeguarded and promoted</p> <p>Ensure the school's risk assessment policy is effectively and consistently implemented by staff at all levels</p>	16(a)
<p>Ensure that risks that have been identified through assessment result in appropriate action being taken so that the welfare of pupils is safeguarded and promoted at all times</p>	16(b)

**Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

<p>Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate skills and attitudes appropriate to their role</p> <p>Ensure that the role of designated safeguarding lead is undertaken by someone in an appropriately senior role at the school</p>	34(1)(a)
<p>Ensure that leaders demonstrate high standards of professionalism</p> <p>Establish appropriately professional relationships between all staff at the school</p> <p>Effectively ensure that safeguarding policies and practices are consistently applied by all staff</p> <p>Establish effective governance at the school</p>	34(1)(b)
<p>Ensure leaders at all levels actively promote the well-being of pupils in all of their actions, policies and procedures</p>	34(1)(c)

## Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janet Pearce

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Information about this school

- St Christopher's School was founded in 1923 and provides non-selective education for up to 125 pupils aged from three to 11 years of age.
- The school is located close to the centre of Canterbury in a large Victorian semi-detached house.
- There are currently 107 boys and girls on roll, 19 of whom are in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- No pupils have a statement of special educational needs, and none are in the care of the local authority. A small number of pupils regularly speak a language other than English at home.
- In their final year, most pupils take external tests and, if they are successful, this would enable them to transfer to local grammar schools.
- The school makes use of a range of local facilities to deliver its sports and physical education curriculum.
- The school was last inspected in October 2014.
- The school's aims are 'to give the pupils a broad, balanced and liberal education in order that they develop enquiring minds and confidence in themselves, so that they appreciate the importance of language, number, the aesthetic and physical areas of learning and develop competence in them'.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118997
<b>Inspection number</b>	464629
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/6049

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary School
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	107
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	5
<b>Proprietor</b>	David and Alison Evans
<b>Chair</b>	Carla Lorna
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14–16 October 2014
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,595
<b>Telephone number</b>	01227 462960
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@stchristopherscanterbury.org.uk

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