

St Christopher's School

48 New Dover Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3DT

Inspection dates

26 January 2016

Overall outcome

Independent school standards not met

Context of the inspection

- This inspection was undertaken at the request of the registration authority for independent schools to monitor the progress that the school has made in implementing its action plan.
- This inspection of St Christopher's School was unannounced.
- The Department for Education (DfE) served a notice on this school on 23 July 2015, following the last inspection which took place on 23 June 2015. There were seven failures to meet the independent school standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils and the quality of leadership and management of schools. The school submitted an action plan to the DfE in September 2015 and this was rejected.
- The inspector was asked to monitor the progress that the school has made in amending and implementing its action plan and to check if the independent school standards are now met.
- This is the first monitoring inspection since the school was last inspected in June 2015.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, a group of pupils and two members of the school advisory board. The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation relating to leadership, and the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The school improvement plan and the revised action plan were also evaluated.

Main findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- At the last inspection, the leader of safeguarding did not hold a suitably senior post within the school. The new designated safeguarding leader is a member of the leadership team and has completed the necessary training for the role. Two other leaders act as deputy designated safeguarding leaders. However, they have not received appropriate training to carry out these duties effectively.
- The designated safeguarding leader lacks confidence and is not working effectively to safeguard pupils. The leader can explain the steps to take when a concern is raised, yet has not followed them with sufficient rigour. Records of concerns are kept that include the action taken but it is not clear who took action and when. Therefore, arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are not effective.
- In the revised action plan and the school's improvement plans, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils is a priority. Staff know that safeguarding needs to improve. All members of staff have read the guidance contained within the DfE's publication, 'Keeping children safe in education'. In addition to this, staff have received safeguarding training from a suitable source. In meetings, staff revisit this training on a regular basis. Consequently, staff can explain what they need to do if they are concerned about a pupil.
- There are still some gaps in training. Most staff are not correctly trained in the use of physical restraint. This means that should staff need to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from harming themselves or others, they may not be able to do so safely.
- Leaders have improved induction procedures so that new members of staff are required to read the child protection and safeguarding policy, along with the guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education'. The school's child protection and safeguarding policy sets out acceptable behaviour of staff in relation to the use of technology and communicating with pupils. However, the policy

does not provide clear enough guidance for staff to follow if they have a concern about a pupil. The policy does not advise staff that they can report any safeguarding concern to the relevant authority as set out in 'Keeping children safe in education'. Furthermore, the school's whistleblowing policy does not make it clear that staff can report any concerns to a relevant authority. This means that it is not clear what is required of staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at all times.

- Risk assessments are inconsistent and lack rigour. Staff identify some risks and consider what action needs to be taken to address them. The leader responsible for health and safety recognises that further improvements can be made to the risk assessment process. The risk assessment policy does not set out clearly the steps to be taken when carrying out checks or provide any timescales for completion. The policy does not make reference to the guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education'. Therefore, not enough attention is given to safeguarding pupils when assessing risks.

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The headteacher has not ensured that arrangements are in place to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead is not yet demonstrating the skills and attitudes appropriate to the role. Policies do not provide staff with guidance that is consistent with their training. The deputy designated safeguarding leaders have not completed appropriate training. Consequently, not all leaders are actively promoting the well-being of pupils in actions, policies and procedures. However, the headteacher has ensured that the designated safeguarding leader and the deputies have senior roles within the school, that safeguarding is understood to be a priority and that staff have received safeguarding training.
- A new school advisory board is in place but has not yet had any impact on the leadership of the school. Members of the board have some relevant expertise and are keen to use this to challenge and support the work of school leaders. For example, each member has taken responsibility for an aspect of school improvement and has met with a leader to find out more about it. However, the school advisory board has only recently been set up and only one meeting has taken place. The headteacher is seeking to find a way to delegate authority to the board. As a result, there are currently no terms of reference in place and it is not yet clear how members will hold leaders to account.
- The headteacher has reflected on his leadership and recognised the need to set high expectations for the behaviour of staff. There is a new leadership team in place to provide staff with clearer guidance and support. Leaders are more visible and make clear what is expected of staff through regular meetings. There is a staff code of conduct in the new school handbook. Staff value the increased leadership and feel that working relationships have improved since the previous inspection. Leaders are currently meeting with staff to discuss and review their performance. Some staff have had relevant training to support their work. However, systems to hold staff to account are new and it is too early to consider the impact of these changes.
- Leaders have made some improvements to the action plan. There is more detail about how they will address each of the aspects, and timescales are clear. Leaders have set out how they will measure the impact of their work. However, not all actions have been successful. The plan is not based on a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in safeguarding practice.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

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

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Ensure that the designated safeguarding lead effectively manages the consistent implementation of the child protection and safeguarding policy Ensure that all staff act in a manner that safeguards and promotes the welfare of pupils at all times Strengthen staff training in safeguarding so that staff are clear about how to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at all times	7(a)
Ensure that all of the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and arrangements accurately reflect the guidance contained within 'Keeping children safe in education'	7(b)
Ensure that the school's risk assessment policy makes direct reference to 'Keeping children safe in education' so that the welfare of all pupils at the school is fully safeguarded and promoted Ensure the school's risk assessment policy is effectively and consistently implemented by staff at all levels	16(a)
Ensure that risks that have been identified through assessment result in appropriate action being taken so that the welfare of pupils is safeguarded and appropriate at all times	16(b)

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

Inspection team

Caroline Dulon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

- St Christopher's School provides non-selective education for up to 111 pupils, aged from three to 11.
- There are currently 101 boys and girls on roll, 19 of whom are in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- No pupils have an education, health and care plan. None are in the care of the local authority. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- In their final year, most pupils take external tests. If they are successful, this would enable them to transfer to local grammar schools.
- The school uses local facilities to deliver its sports and physical education curriculum.
- The school was last inspected in June 2015.
- St Christopher's School is located close to the centre of Canterbury in a large Victorian semi-detached house.
- The school's aims are: 'To give pupils a broad, balanced and liberal education in order that they develop enquiring minds and confidence in themselves, so they appreciate the importance of language, number, the aesthetic and physical areas of learning and develop competence in them'.

School details

Unique reference number	118997
Inspection number	10009908
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	Primary School
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	three to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Number of part-time pupils	seven
Proprietor	David and Alison Evans
Chair	Tony Easter
Headteacher	David Evans
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2015
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,595
Telephone number	01227 462960
Email address	enquiries@stchristopherscanterbury.org.uk

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