

# St Joseph's Convent Independent Preparatory School

46 Old Road East, Gravesend, Kent DA12 1NR

## Inspection dates

25–27 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Leaders do not make sure that pupils are kept safe at all times. A number of the independent school standards are not met.
- Leaders, including those in the early years, do not carry out the necessary checks on the suitability of staff. They do not check whether teachers have been prohibited from teaching or whether they are disqualified by association with adults who may pose a threat to children. The single central record and the school's safeguarding policy are missing key information.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders do not have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. The performance of teachers is not closely overseen. As a result the quality of teaching is too variable and requires improvement.
- Measurements of pupils' progress, including in the early years, are infrequent and inaccurate. As a result the school is unsure which pupils need additional help.
- The school does not actively promote British values; this is because pupils are not adequately informed about other cultures and religions.
- Pupils' achievements require improvement. They make inconsistent progress in the different year groups because they are not always challenged.
- The early years provision is inadequate. The 'Footprints' provision for early years children is not effectively managed.
- Pupils' personal development is inadequate because leaders have not ensured that all bullying is eradicated.
- Governance is ineffective. Leaders are not held to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. They have not ensured that the admissions register clearly identifies those pupils who are on roll.
- There are some unmet independent school standards relating to the premises, particularly with regard to toilet facilities and the labelling of drinking water.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils have a good understanding of Christianity.
- In most lessons pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their learning and behave well.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their moral and social skills through a large range of extra-curricular activities. These include residential trips abroad and sports events.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly address the issues regarding the arrangements for safeguarding pupils by ensuring that:
  - checks are made to ascertain whether any member of staff is disqualified because of association with adults who may pose a threat to children
  - the school checks whether any members of staff are prohibited from teaching
  - leadership of the early years fulfils their role in checking that staff have the appropriate safeguarding checks
  - the designated safeguarding lead has up-to-date training and is aware of key changes in legislation
  - leaders maintain a single central record of recruitment checks on staff that fully complies with the independent school standards
  - the school's safeguarding policy complies with requirements.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - all the independent school standards are met
  - leaders ensure that bullying is eradicated, particularly prejudice-based bullying
  - leaders monitor the quality of teaching effectively to drive forward improvements
  - senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and draw up realistic plans for improvement
  - there is effective oversight of the early years 'Footprints' provision
  - pupils are better prepared for life in modern Britain by giving them a greater appreciation of other faiths and cultures
  - governors hold school leaders effectively to account and receive sufficient information from the school in order to fulfil their roles effectively
  - the admissions register clearly shows those pupils who are on roll and those who have left.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that pupils, including the most able, are fully challenged
  - making regular and accurate assessments of progress, including in the early years, to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Improve the following issues regarding the school premises to comply with the independent school standards by ensuring:
  - children in the Reception class do not have to use a full-size lavatory
  - staff and pupils do not share toilet facilities
  - drinking water in the playground is clearly labelled.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
  - The proprietor must demonstrate that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3, 3(g)).
  - The proprietor must ensure that they actively promote fundamental British values and that pupils acquire a greater understanding of different cultural traditions by enabling them to acquire an appreciation of and respect for other cultures (paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(v)).
  - The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary

of State (paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).

- The proprietor must ensure that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy (paragraph 10).
- The proprietor must ensure that there is an admissions register which is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
- The proprietor must carry out appropriate checks to confirm the person's right to work in the United Kingdom and record this on the register (paragraphs (18)(2)(c), (18)(2)(c)(iii), 21(3)(a)(vii)).
- The proprietor must ensure that no person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act. The proprietor must ensure that an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction. In relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed (paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(b), 20(6), 20(6)(a)(ii), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor must keep a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question: [whether] a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction. (paragraph 21(1), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(vii)).
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils (paragraph 23(1)(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure that cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such (paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(c)).
- The proprietor must ensure that leaders have sufficient skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently. To ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1)(a), (b), (c)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders do not ensure that pupils are safeguarded. They expose pupils to unnecessary risks in relation to their welfare and personal development. Leaders have not created a school culture where effective teaching flourishes. There are several independent school standards that are not met. Responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View showed over a quarter would not recommend the school to another parent.
- Safeguarding is weak. The designated safeguarding lead is not aware of the key changes to legislation because they have not completed up-to-date training. Checks on verifying whether staff are suitable to work with children are incomplete. The school has not checked if staff are prohibited from teaching. There has been no check to ascertain whether staff have an association with an adult who may pose a threat to children. The single central record is missing key information. For example, it is incomplete regarding whether all staff have the right to work in the UK. The safeguarding policy is incomplete.
- Parents' written responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire revealed concerns regarding leaders' capacity to improve the school. Other parents were worried about the lack of information from the school regarding how their child was performing. One parent summed up the views of many when they said: 'I have no idea how well my child is performing compared to her peers or compared to the expectations for her age.'
- The school does not accurately or regularly assess pupils' progress in each year group. This means that the school has little idea which pupils are falling behind. Because leaders do not know how well pupils are learning it is impossible for them to evaluate the quality of teaching effectively. Teachers are not fully held to account for the progress of pupils in their class.
- Leaders do not have an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although the school has recognised some areas to improve, there are many significant failings. Issues regarding safeguarding have not been identified.
- Some aspects of the school standards relating to the premises have not been met. For example, staff share some toilet facilities with pupils. This is inappropriate. In the playground, drinking water is not clearly labelled.
- Pupils have a very secure understanding of Christianity. However, the school has not actively promoted pupils' understanding and tolerance of those with different faiths or beliefs. When asked, pupils in Year 5 and 6 could not recall learning about different world religions, faiths or cultures. Books in several year groups show almost no coverage of different religions or cultures. As a result pupils are ill-prepared for this aspect of life in modern Britain.
- The school works hard to promote pupils' moral and social development. Pupils learn about democracy by standing for election as school councillors. Pupils have a clear understanding about the rule of law and they know right from wrong. Pupils said how much they enjoyed the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides, including the residential trips abroad and the large range of sports events.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is not effective. Governors are unclear about their responsibilities in relation to the independent school standards and have failed to ensure that all of them are met.
  - Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties because they have not checked to ensure that pupils are fully safeguarded while at the school.
  - Governors receive insufficient information about the school's performance from school leaders, so they have great difficulty in rigorously challenging the school and holding the school leaders to account regarding the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Governors have not ensured that leaders maintain an admissions register that clearly shows the pupils who are on roll and those who have left.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. There are inadequate checks regarding the suitability of staff who work with pupils. Leadership is not fully aware of the current legislation regarding pupil safeguarding.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**requires improvement**

- The impact of teaching on pupils' achievement is too variable and requires improvement.
- Teachers are unclear which pupils are making good progress and which pupils need to catch up. As a result they often do not take into account pupils' individual learning needs when planning lessons or additional support.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high. They do not challenge pupils effectively to ensure that they make the best possible progress. Pupils who were spoken to during the inspection said that they sometimes found the work provided too easy.
- Parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire expressed a lack of confidence in the quality of teaching at the school.
- Teaching assistants in some year groups provide valuable support in deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, in other year groups the quality of the support teaching assistants provide to pupils is variable. This is because the guidance teaching assistants receive from teachers is unclear regarding how pupils have progressed from their starting points and what they need to learn next.
- In some year groups teachers do have higher expectations and challenge pupils to do their best. Here, teaching meets pupils' needs effectively and pupils make good progress as a result.
- There have been improvements in the teaching of mathematics, and this has been a priority for the school over the last few months. Teachers increasingly ensure that pupils use and apply their mathematical knowledge in reasoning and problem solving.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**is inadequate**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The school's actions to help pupils stay safe from all forms of bullying are ineffective. While both governors and school leaders have investigated the recent prejudice-based bullying issues, they have not yet been successful in ensuring that all bullying in the school is eradicated.
- Pupil discussions and class logs reveal that there have been some persistent incidents of bullying, particularly in Year 4. This has an impact on pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Some pupils say that bullying is still ongoing. In discussions they say that, 'if only there was no bullying there would be a much better atmosphere in this school'.
- Over a third of parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire consider that the school deals ineffectively with bullying.
- Other more positive aspects of personal development include the large range of opportunities the school provides for pupils to take responsibility. Pupils say that the school gives them the confidence to try out ideas. For example, some pupils during the inspection had invited their parents to a breakfast event they had organised to raise money for a digital printer.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- This is because there are still incidents of inappropriate behaviour, particularly in Year 4. However, in most year groups teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. During the inspection pupils were seen to be ready to learn; they were keen to ask questions and play an active role in their learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 readily answered questions regarding insect pollination.
- Around the school, most pupils behave well. Records show that, apart from Year 4, there are few incidents of inappropriate behaviour and that pupils respond well to the system of rewards and sanctions.
- The attendance of pupils is above average. Pupils enjoy receiving their certificates for 100% attendance.

## Outcomes for pupils

**require improvement**

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because the progress that pupils make across the school, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, is inconsistent. This variation reflects inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Evidence of work in books during the inspection revealed that, while the majority do make progress over time, it is much stronger in some classes than others. For example, progress in writing in Year 6 is stronger than in some other classes.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive helpful support in lessons and in withdrawal groups. As a result they make similar rates of progress as other pupils in their class. However, as teaching is so variable not all of these pupils make good progress.
- The most able pupils do not achieve their full potential. This is because work is not consistently demanding enough for them throughout the school. Last year in key stage 1 the proportions of pupils reaching the higher than expected levels were lower than the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. At key stage 2 the proportions gaining the higher than expected levels were above the national average in reading and lower than the national average in writing. In mathematics the proportion of pupils gaining the highest possible level was broadly similar to the national average.
- Some attempts are made by teachers to help pupils who need to catch up. However, the needs of these pupils are not always accurately identified.

## Early years provision

## is inadequate

- Leadership and management of the early years are inadequate because of failings with regard to the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders have not ensured that they have complied with the statutory requirements regarding checking the suitability of staff.
- There is no clear oversight regarding the management of the 'Footprints' provision. Staff are employed without the appropriate checks as to whether they have been prohibited from teaching or have been disqualified by association with adults who may pose a threat to children.
- Some aspects of the independent school standards relating to the school's premises have not been met. For example, the only lavatory in the Reception class is unsuitable because it is full-sized.
- Progress in the early years is inconsistent. In the Nursery progress is slower than in the Reception class. This is because in the Nursery there is no clear assessment of children's skills and abilities so it is hard for leaders to accurately assess how children have progressed from their starting points. Children's progress profiles do not provide a clear record of each child's development in all of the areas of learning. Teachers do not focus on pupils' next steps and as a result children in the Nursery do not make the best possible progress.
- In the Reception class teaching and progress are stronger. Children show good engagement in the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics. A higher proportion than found nationally reached a good level of development in 2015. As a result children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Parents express confidence in the early years provision; they say that staff establish positive relationships with their children that make them feel well supported. Expectations of behaviour are high. In the outside area children behave well and take turns with play equipment.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118987
<b>Inspection number</b>	10006336
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/6041
This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.	
<b>Type of school</b>	Preparatory
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	141
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	24
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Sisters of Mercy
<b>Chair</b>	Neville Goodman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carola Timney
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£2,565–£7,755
<b>Telephone number</b>	01474 533 012
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sjcps.org">www.sjcps.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:secretary@sjcps.org">secretary@sjcps.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8–9 December 2011

## Information about this school

- St Joseph's Convent Preparatory School is a Roman Catholic independent co-educational day school. There are currently 141 boys and girls on roll aged from two to 11.
- Pupils come from three main ethnic groups: Black African, Asian and White British.
- There is one Nursery class with 24 part-time children. In the Reception class there are 21 full-time children.
- The school was first registered with the Department for Education in 1957. It was last inspected in 2011 when the school was judged to provide a good standard of education. Since then there has been one published emergency inspection report in 2013.
- The school's proprietors are the Sisters of Mercy (a Roman Catholic religious order). The school is now managed by a governing body in association with the proprietors. The 2015 census report that the school provided to the Department for Education states that the proprietor is the Newco Trust. However, the school states that the proprietor is still the Sisters of Mercy.
- All pupils have a class teacher who takes them for most subjects, including English and mathematics. Pupils are taught by specialist teachers in subjects which include French and physical education.
- The school has not notified the Department for Education that it accepts children from the age of two.
- The school is non-selective. It aims to maintain a Christian environment where children grow and develop into caring individuals and learn to discover their individual gifts and strengths. It aims to ensure that each child is secure in the knowledge that they have a role in the school and a valued contribution to make to its life.
- Since the previous inspection the school has started to offer an additional provision for Nursery children called Footprints. It operates out of term time for nine and a half days a year. The provision is run by staff who are not regular employees of the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects. There were 12 lessons and part lessons visited, some of which were observed jointly with senior staff.
- Two meetings were held with pupils. Inspectors looked at work in books and listened to some pupils reading. There were also informal discussions with pupils at lunchtime regarding what it was like to be a pupil at this school.
- Inspectors took account of 45 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and also spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- Staff responses from 44 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- Inspectors undertook activities to check compliance with the independent school standards. They looked at a range of policies. Documents checking the quality of teaching and learning and records relating to behaviour, attendance, child protection and safeguarding were also examined.

## Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Metcalf	Ofsted Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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