

Iona School

310 Sneinton Dale, Sneinton, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG3 7DN

Inspection dates

4–6 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met.
- Roles and responsibilities for the leadership and management of the school are unclear. Trustees do not hold school leaders to account well enough for the quality of education. School leaders do not hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the performance of the school is overgenerous. They have not fully identified weaknesses in the quality of teaching or in the implementation of the curriculum.
- Leaders' plans to improve the quality of teaching are not comprehensive. It is not clear how leaders judge whether actions taken have been effective.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Teachers' expectations for the most able pupils are low.
- Teachers do not consistently use their assessments to develop pupils' problem-solving and writing skills effectively.
- Pupils' ability to spell age-appropriate words is underdeveloped.
- Pupils do not have a deep understanding of the scientific methods that are taught.
- Leaders' self-evaluation in the early years is overgenerous. In addition, leaders do not provide enough support and guidance to help staff improve the quality of teaching. The most able children underachieve.
- Leaders do not check pupils' attendance closely.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well in reading. They read challenging texts fluently and accurately.
- The pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are articulate and cooperate very well with each other and with adults.
- Pupils accurately complete calculations in mathematics using all four rules of number.
- Teaching is more effective in art, crafts, design technology and music. Pupils make strong progress in these subjects.
- The curriculum is greatly enhanced by enrichment activities. Pupils gain a good knowledge of the environment.
- Parents are very supportive of the school.

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.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the trustees so that they hold school leaders to account for the implementation of the school's curriculum and for the outcomes that pupils achieve
 - ensuring that school leaders hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make
 - identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately
 - ensuring that the school's action plan to rectify the weaknesses in the quality of teaching states who is responsible for completing the actions, and how leaders will judge whether actions taken have been effective
 - checking that the training provided for teachers has a positive impact on the quality of teaching
 - monitoring the attendance of pupils for the whole school more closely so that leaders can intervene quickly if pupils' absence increases.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - increasing teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing and mathematical problem solving, particularly for the most able
 - deepening pupils' understanding of scientific methods that have been taught in the curriculum
 - developing pupils' ability to spell words accurately
 - ensuring that the information from the assessments is used to plan activities to meet the pupils' needs, particularly for the most able.
- Improve the leadership and management and the provision in the early years by:
 - ensuring that leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses
 - ensuring that the supervision of staff supports their professional development needs
 - improving the quality of assessments of children's abilities to ensure that activities meet their needs, particularly for the most able.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught. The proprietor must ensure that teaching at the school involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time. The proprietor must ensure that teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils, and ensure that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons. The proprietor must ensure that

teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught. The proprietor must ensure that an assessment 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 (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(g)).

- The proprietor must ensure that a framework is in place to evaluate pupil performance (paragraph 4).
- The proprietor must ensure that the particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations are in place and this information is provided to parents of pupils and prospective parents of pupils (paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(3)(e)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met.
- The roles and responsibilities of trustees and leaders are not fully clarified. Trustees do not check how well school leaders implement the curriculum or check how well pupils achieve. School leaders do not fully hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is overgenerous. They have not checked the quality of teaching effectively, or considered the outcomes that pupils achieve, to inform their judgement of the school's effectiveness.
- Action planning by leaders is not comprehensive enough. It does not state who is responsible for leading specific actions or how leaders intend to judge whether actions taken have been successful. Actions in the school improvement plan to improve teaching are limited.
- Leaders have not thoroughly checked whether training for staff has improved the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have not regularly checked pupils' attendance for the whole school. Although attendance is good, leaders do not routinely analyse the school's attendance to try and improve it further.
- Leaders and teachers have created a positive environment for pupils to learn. There is a high level of respect between teachers and pupils which is conducive to good learning.
- Leaders have demonstrated a capacity to improve standards in some areas of the curriculum. Pupils are confident and demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. Pupils develop a love of reading and use a wide vocabulary to express their thoughts. Pupils' outcomes in these areas of the curriculum are strong.
- The curriculum has many strengths. Pupils' artistic, musical and design skills are very well developed. Pupils also gain a deep knowledge of the environment and of natural resources. Pupils grow crops in raised beds and regularly visit farms to learn about animal husbandry. However, there are weakness in the teaching of mathematics, writing and science.
- The curriculum is greatly enhanced by a range of enrichment activities to inspire the pupils to learn in a range of curriculum areas. Pupils who visited the Eden Project in Cornwall learned about plants from different parts of the world and the conditions they need to grow. Younger pupils enjoyed picking apples from the school's orchard and pressed the fruit for juice. Older pupils have recently worked with an artist to design a shelter for the homeless as part of the 'Nott Forgotten' project. Pupils visited Nottingham and researched where homeless people live. Using this information, they have designed two different shelters with thought and care.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a deep appreciation of the natural environment. They have a clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils have learned about the history of the Galleries of Justice in Nottingham and re-enacted a trial from the past. Pupils were horrified to discover that poor-quality evidence

had been used to convict a defendant.

- Pupils have a good understanding of equality. They have learned about groups of people who represent the protected characteristics in the Equality Act. Pupils have discussed issues faced by those people who are transgender. They have researched the impact of the suffragette movement and compared the role of women in society today with that from the past. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different religions. Pupils have recently studied Buddhism and have a good knowledge of the Buddhist faith. In addition, they have visited a mosque and a Greek Orthodox church. Pupils have studied the teachings from the Old Testament. Pupils are respectful of people who follow different religions to that of their own.
- Parents and carers are highly complimentary about the school. All parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, stated they would recommend the school to other parents. One parent wrote: 'Excellent school; both my children have attended. Its holistic approach to their development leads to maturity and self-reliance.'

Governance

- The trustees are committed to the school. They visit the school regularly and meet with the teachers. They also check on the welfare of staff. Trustees are proactive at discussing safeguarding matters. They have received appropriate training in safeguarding and closely monitor the actions taken by leaders following a concern raised.
- Trustees regularly discuss the school's finances, health and safety and security matters. The school meets the welfare requirements of the independent school standards. However, trustees have not asked school leaders how well pupils are progressing in their learning or about the implementation of the curriculum. Consequently, they are not fully aware of the school's weaknesses in these areas.
- Trustees have recently used external consultants to provide them with a report of about the quality of education. However, they have not checked whether leaders have rectified the weaknesses that were identified in the report.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There are six designated leaders for safeguarding with one member of staff taking overall responsibility for the work of these leaders. All the leaders have attended training provided by the local authority. Leaders regularly attend local network safeguarding meetings for the early years and for school settings to ensure that they are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance. Leaders' knowledge and understanding of their role to keep children safe are strong.
- The school's safeguarding policy includes the latest government guidance and is published on the school's website.
- Leaders are proactive and report concerns promptly to the relevant authorities. Records demonstrate that leaders have improved their record-keeping of concerns over the past eighteen months. Leaders report that their practice has become much sharper because of the training that they have received.

- Staff have also received training from the local authority about safeguarding. They follow the school's procedures for reporting concerns closely. All staff have received 'Prevent' duty training and are aware of the potential signs of pupils being radicalised.
- Most staff have completed paediatric first aid training. The first aid boxes contain appropriate resources.
- Staff have written detailed and appropriate risk assessments for school activities. Older pupils contribute to writing risk assessments to make them fully aware of the potential risks they face.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers have not used their assessments of pupils' abilities incisively to set work to meet the most able pupils' needs.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills. Too often, pupils only write very short pieces of writing independently. Pupils have not learned how to independently structure a longer piece of writing. Teachers do not consistently support pupils' ability to spell accurately.
- Although pupils can complete calculations using the four rules of number consistently well, their ability to solve complex problems using these rules is underdeveloped.
- Teachers have not developed pupils' knowledge of scientific methods. Pupils do not understand the concept of a fair test or know how to check whether results of an investigation are reliable. However, teachers enable pupils to gain a good knowledge of scientific facts, particularly in relation to plants and animals.
- Teachers promote a love of reading well. Teachers ensure that pupils read high-quality texts as a class to improve pupils' vocabulary. Pupils read daily at school and regularly at home. They demonstrate a good understanding of what they have read.
- The teaching of German is a strength. Pupils learn to speak fluently and write grammatically correct sentences.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Pupils' needs are assessed, and specific programmes support the pupils' learning. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) checks how well pupils are achieving and puts in place further support if required.
- Teachers promote a love of art and design technology. Pupils have visited the Tate Gallery in St Ives and studied the work of Barbara Hepworth. Pupils use watercolours and pastels to make impressive pictures. Pupils' ability to draw is developed well. They have successfully designed and built balancing scales using natural resources. Older pupils have carved wood to make an egg.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the properties of materials. Pupils have sheared sheep, carded the wool to clean the fibres, and then dyed it to make recorder cases.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. They are attentive in class and eager to please. Pupils are confident talking with each other and with adults. They express their thoughts and feelings well.
- Pupils have discussed the harmful effects of homophobic bullying and show a keen determination to treat everyone equally. School records show very few incidents of bullying.
- Older pupils show a deep empathy for people in their community. They have designed an advent calendar with their own ideas of kindness for each day, for example donating toys and clothes to charity.
- Pupils have a good understanding of internet safety. They recognise the dangers of putting personal details online. They know to report anything that worries them online to their parents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils cooperate very well with each other in their lessons and at breaktimes. They conduct themselves well around the school. The school is a calm and orderly environment.
- They have successfully worked together to build rafts as part of team-building exercises.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is good. Leaders scrutinise the attendance for individual pupils daily to ensure that all absences are accounted for. However, leaders do not systematically check the level of attendance for the whole school. Consequently, it makes it more difficult for leaders to provide a timely response if rates of attendance fall.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' mathematical achievement is not as good as it should be. Pupils' ability to solve complex problems using the four rules of number and to reason mathematically is underdeveloped.
- Pupils' ability to structure a piece of writing is weak. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their independent writing at length. Nonetheless, when pupils are provided with brief opportunities to write creatively, they do so with flair and use a wide vocabulary. One pupil wrote: 'Snow falls from the sky in great torrents. The wind pushes it about mid-flight and creates great billowing curtain-like things.' Examples of high-quality sentences are common in the older pupils' books.
- Pupils have a good understanding of scientific knowledge, particularly of plants and animals. However, they do not demonstrate a good understanding of scientific methods, such as conducting a fair test, or know how to analyse results of their investigations.

- Pupils' ability to spell words appropriate for their age is weaker than it should be.
- Pupils read fluently and often. By the time they leave school, the reading age of most pupils is well above their chronological age. Pupils read texts of increasing complexity and learn new knowledge from their reading which supports their understanding across many curriculum areas. This greatly supports their preparation for their next stage of education.
- Most pupils with SEND make steady progress from their starting points. However, some pupils have made strong progress in their reading and speaking and listening skills.
- Pupils can complete calculations using the four rules of number consistently well. By the time pupils leave the school, they can use long multiplication and long division accurately.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of rhythm and can tap to musical beats of increasing complexity and speed. Pupils' singing is of a high standard.
- Pupils' knowledge of different artists and their ability to create pictures using different mediums are of a high quality. The use of pastels to create sunsets by older pupils is stunning. Pupils used their drawings of leaves to create excellent patterns using lino printing.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders' self-evaluation of the early years is not accurate enough. Leaders have not clearly identified the provision's priorities or considered how these will be developed. The early years provision has been slow to improve.
- Assessment systems of children's abilities are undergoing a process of change. Current systems have not provided teachers with adequate information about what a child can do. As a result, the activities planned by teachers do not take sufficient account of children's needs. Progress, therefore, is not consistently good, particularly for the most able.
- Although there is a programme of staff training, it is not comprehensive. Leaders have not identified individual practitioners' strengths or established their training needs in supervision meetings. Staff do not get the opportunity to reflect fully on their teaching practice. The quality of teaching is variable.
- Children's behaviour is good. Children cooperate well with one another and learn to take turns. Older children support younger ones by helping them to put on their shoes at breaktime and putting on their coats. The children follow adults' instructions and are interested in their learning.
- Children demonstrate high levels of engagement during circle time. They accurately recall songs and sing rhymes.
- Children's physical health is promoted well. Children eat a variety of fruit and pour themselves water to drink. They have lots of opportunity for walks and for playing outside, where they are creative and play imaginative games. Children's speaking and listening skills are developed well.
- Children's artwork is of high quality. They learn to hold crayons correctly and can draw detailed pictures. Children have created impressive wax sculptures.
- The school's special educational needs coordinator works very closely with the early years leader to identify any barriers to a child's learning. Interventions are put in place and

external services are used to help overcome learning difficulties.

- Parents are highly supportive of the early years provision. A typical comment was, 'It is a wonderful caring and protective environment which encourages creativity and play.'
- The statutory requirements for children's welfare and health and safety in the early years are met.

School details

Unique reference number	122941
DfE registration number	892/6010
Inspection number	10085193

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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Number of part-time pupils	9
Proprietor	The Iona School Association
Chair of college of teachers	Robert Stafford
Business manager	Fiona Stuart
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,373.52
Telephone number	01159 415295
Website	www.theionaschool.org.uk
Email address	admin@theionaschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–4 February 2016

Information about this school

- The Iona School is an independent school for boys and girls. The school follows the Steiner curriculum. The school's ethos is 'that education should be a continuing process and our task is to stimulate and develop the faculties and skills, which enable our pupils to learn ... for life ... from life ... throughout life.'
- In line with normal Steiner practice, there is no headteacher. However, there is a chair of the college of teachers. This group is responsible body for the education provision. The business manager is in charge of the day-to-day running of the school.
- The school was previously inspected by the School Inspection Service (SIS). The previous

standard inspection took place on 2–4 February 2016 and the school received an outstanding judgement. The school also had an emergency inspection by SIS on 5 July 2017 following concerns about safeguarding. There were no unmet standards following this visit.

- The school has an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons through the school and at breaktime and lunchtime. Inspectors looked at pupils' work from every class and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the trustees, the chair of the college of teachers, teachers, teaching assistants, the SENCo, the school business manager and the lead for safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke to two groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke with the local authority designated officer by telephone.
- Inspectors reviewed school policies, schemes of work, attendance and documents related to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with parents during the inspection and took account of the 62 responses to Parent View and the 56 responses to the Ofsted free-text service to parents.
- The DfE commissioned Ofsted to carry out the standard inspection earlier in the cycle than previously planned.

Inspection team

Martin Finch, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Keay

Her Majesty's Inspector

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