

**Inspection report**

**St Augustine's Priory**

**Independent school**

**DfES ref no: 307/6005**

**Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002**

**Dates of inspection: 3 - 6 July 2006**

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

### **Information about the school**

St Augustine's Priory is an independent Catholic day school for girls aged between 4 and 18 years. St Augustine's Priory School Limited, a charitable company limited by guarantee owns the school. It is situated in Ealing, West London and occupies the buildings of an Augustinian priory. The school has a long established tradition. Originally founded in Paris, in 1634, by Lady Mary Tredway, it moved to its present purpose built premises in 1915. Generations of families have attended the school. Indeed, many staff, including the headteacher, are previous pupils. The school considers this long history of family association a unique characteristic and strength of the school.

The school admits pupils from all religions. It has a distinctive Christian philosophical foundation based on the gospel values of truth, justice, compassion and forgiveness. The school's stated mission is to provide pupils with a '*full and balanced education in the Catholic tradition*' in a caring and stimulating environment. It places great emphasis on '*individuality, originality and responsible care for others*'. It aims to stretch those who are gifted both academically and in other ways to enable them to realise their full potential in the school or in the wider world.

The school is organised into three departments, the preparatory (ages 4 - 7), junior (ages 7 - 11) and senior (ages 11 - 18) schools. Currently there are 509 pupils on roll. Although the school is culturally diverse, there are only eight pupils for whom English is not their principal language. The school gives additional learning support to 26 pupils including those with a statement of special educational need (SEN).

### **Summary of main findings**

St Augustine's Priory is an effective school, which provides pupils with a well-rounded education. As a result, they attain very high standards. The school's Christian foundation is central to all it does and exerts a positive influence on its ethos. The school's stated values are championed by the headteacher and most staff, and provide pupils with a strong moral compass by which they work and play together in harmony. However, the school does not meet a number of health and safety, and accommodation issues. In addition, some key policies are not implemented consistently.

### **What the school does well:**

- it enables pupils to achieve very high standards in their academic and social development;

- it makes very good provision for pupils' moral, social, and cultural development and this promotes excellent behaviour;
- it enables pupils to develop excellent communication and interpersonal skills which foster very strong relationships among pupils of all ages; and
- it provides a wide range of high quality enrichment activities which make learning interesting and which pupils enjoy.

**What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:**

- ensure that there are consistent systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and in using this information to plan appropriate learning experiences so that all pupils make good progress in relation to their ability;
- ensure that all staff consistently implement the school's anti-bullying policy by listening to the concerns raised by pupils;
- rectify all the health and safety issues identified in section 3;
- address the premises issues identified in sections 3 and 5; and
- carry out annual reviews for pupils with a statement of educational need and ensure that this information is supplied to the responsible Local Authority.

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

## **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

### **The quality of the curriculum**

The school provides pupils with a very broad and interesting curriculum. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to study a wide range of subjects, including several languages, from an early age. Pupils have access to all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious studies (RS). In addition, junior school pupils study Latin, French and ballet, while senior school pupils also study physics, chemistry, biology, Spanish, classical civilisation, Greek, and drama. The curriculum is supported by a range of appropriate schemes of work and long term planning documents, which are of good quality.

Pupils in the preparatory department have access to the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. However, the curriculum plans for this phase do not always result in successful and appropriate learning activities. Despite this weakness, standards are well above average by the end of the Foundation Stage. Pupils above compulsory school age, have access to a very wide range of subject options. However, as a result of timetabling difficulties they have limited access to physical education (PE). Pupils with a statement of SEN receive appropriate support and make good progress.

There is a strong emphasis on homework, which plays a key role in helping pupils to build on what they learn in school. The school provides pupils with an exciting variety of extra-curricular activities. These include sports, music and other literary pursuits in which pupils compete up to national and international standards.

The school provides personal, social and health education (PSHE) much of which is implicit in the school's ethos or taught through RS. Although citizenship is taught, it does not have a high enough profile and tends to be taught as an aspect of PSHE rather than as a subject in its own right.

The school provides careers guidance for pupils of secondary age but acknowledges that the provision could be greatly improved. Only pupils in the sixth form have access to work placements. The sixth form booklet provides guidance on appropriate subjects for different university courses and on how to make university applications. However, many pupils feel they have had insufficient help to decide what subjects they should study and some would welcome guidance earlier than it is currently given. The school has made appropriate plans to improve its provision in this area from September 2006.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

Overall, the quality of teaching is good and pupils are encouraged to apply themselves intellectually, physically and creatively. Most parents say that their children really enjoy coming to school and the pupils agree. Most of the teaching observed was good and some of it was outstanding. However, inspectors also observed some inadequate teaching. Teachers generally have very strong subject

knowledge and the high levels of specialist teaching in the junior department have a positive impact on the quality of provision.

In the best lessons, teachers use their time efficiently and employ a range of strategies successfully to involve pupils in the learning process. They listen carefully to pupils, and give them many opportunities to express themselves and ask questions to clarify their understanding. They encourage pupils to be creative and to engage in discussions at a high level of sophistication. In these lessons, the positive and trusting relationships between staff and pupils are obvious and pupils express themselves confidently. Pupils greatly enjoy these lessons and make very good progress.

In contrast, in some of the least successful lessons, teachers are not sufficiently sensitive to pupils' needs and undermine them for instance by ignoring their questions. Consequently, pupils are less confident that the teachers listen to or value their views and they become passive in the lessons. In a few lessons, teachers over-manage the learning process by using inappropriate teaching methods that do not allow pupils to use the full range of their creative abilities. Teachers generally plan for the needs of the higher ability pupils but do not pay as much attention to planning for the needs of those who are less able or those who work at a slower pace. The school does not yet have effective procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that they are of a consistently high quality. There are no systems for sharing more widely among staff some of the good practice and highly successful teaching observed.

Pupils enter the school at the age of four years with attainment which is generally higher than age-related expectations. Over their time in the school, they make good progress and by the age of 16 achieve very high standards in the General Certificate of Secondary Education. However, pupils' progress varies across subjects from satisfactory in some to outstanding in others. Pupils are highly confident and independent individuals. They are industrious and able to work individually, in pairs or in groups with high levels of dedication. They know the school has high expectations of them and they behave very sensibly even when teaching is not of a good standard.

The school has a five-point grading system to assess pupils twice a year in relation to their effort and attainment. It keeps detailed records of these assessments, which show pupils' progress from year to year. However, there is a lack of transparency in how assessments are made. Examination papers, which are devised by individual teachers, lack standardisation as assessment parameters change from one examination to the other. Marking in pupils' books generally takes the form of ticks and there are very few comments that tell pupils what they need to do to improve. Pupil's attainment is not benchmarked against age-related expectations and there are no formalised or explicit parameters which describe the school's own grading system for each subject in each year group. As a result, assessment practices vary among teachers and the judgements made lack consistency. The school is therefore unable to make reliable comparisons and judgements about the rate of pupils' progress across phases or to use assessment data thoroughly to plan lessons and ensure that all pupils make progress that is in line with their ability. The school is

aware of some of the shortcomings of the current system and has plans to trial some standardised tests in English from September 2006.

Overall, classroom resources are of an adequate quality, quantity and range. The school has two information and communication technology (ICT) suites and several science laboratories. Younger pupils who do not have access to the ICT suites have a computer in their classroom. Teachers generally use learning resources effectively, although outside of the computer suite there is very little use of ICT to enhance teaching. The outdoor environment including the all-weather multi-purpose pitch greatly enhances the core curriculum and the extra-curricular provision.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets all but one of the requirements of the regulations.*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure that there are consistent systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and in using this information to plan appropriate learning experiences so that all pupils make good progress in relation to their ability (paragraph 1(3)(g)).*

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. It gives a high level of attention to pupils' spiritual development through the teaching of RS. Pupils develop high self-esteem and strong self-awareness. They have a deep respect for others and a tolerance of religious views other than their own, although in some year groups, their awareness of faiths other than Christianity is only satisfactory. Pupils express the Christian values promoted by the school through the caring relationships they have with each other. The presence of a chapel on site provides them with opportunities for quiet self-reflection and meditation.

The school's very strong emphasis on moral principles ensures that pupils learn to distinguish right from wrong quickly. Consequently, their behaviour is excellent. Pupils have a clear understanding of how people's actions can have a positive or negative impact on the lives of others and they value the principles of justice and fairness, which are strongly promoted by the school.

Pupils' social development is outstanding. They have positive attitudes to learning and life. Teachers provide them with regular opportunities to co-operate and work successfully in groups. Regular use of the extensive grounds gives pupils many opportunities to play team games harmoniously. As a result, their support for one another is exceptional. The very strong emphasis on speaking and listening helps pupils develop excellent communication skills and prepares them well for the next stage of their education and for the outside world.

The school successfully promotes healthy life styles amongst pupils. They have regular access to water during lesson times and have very healthy food choices at lunchtime. The school makes effective use of outside speakers to promote pupils' awareness of the effects of drug and alcohol abuse. Pupils are encouraged to take regular exercise and most pupils have access to a wide range of sports activities and regular PE lessons.

Overall provision for pupils' cultural development is good although some year groups have better access to it than others. Many pupils learn about different world cultures through geography, French, Spanish, assemblies and a wide range of visits including those to China and America. Pupils have opportunities to learn about the different cultures represented in their classes from their peers. Their cultural development is also cultivated through their work in art, drama and music.

Pupils are prepared for the responsibilities of adult life through a range of responsibilities within the school, which they perform diligently. They learn to have concern for those less fortunate than themselves and contribute to the wider community for example through fundraising activities for cancer sufferers.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The pastoral care that the school gives to pupils is good overall. However, as a result of the shortcomings in the assessment systems, the academic guidance provided is only satisfactory. Most staff know their pupils well and respond to their needs. There is a written policy to combat bullying and pupils know and say that they can approach the headteacher and some staff if they have a problem. However, a small minority of staff do not demonstrate sufficient commitment to the school's values for example by paying attention to pupils' concerns. A significant number of pupils in the senior school feel that these staff do not treat them with respect or listen to their views. As a result, they lack confidence in the anti-bullying procedures and many choose not to share their concerns with an adult. Nonetheless, pupils have strong and positive relationships with each other and this provides very effective peer support for their personal needs.

The school's child protection policy is up to date and implemented effectively. The headteacher is the responsible child protection officer. She is readily approachable to pupils and provides an inspirational role model of respect and care for pupils of all ages.

Overall, arrangements to promote good behaviour are effective. The policy is clear and respected by the pupils in the preparatory and junior schools who place a high value on the commonly adopted reward system. In the senior school, pupils find this same approach to be inconsistent and say it is unfair at times. Where sanctions are needed, they are appropriate and contribute to the school's high expectations for pupils' behaviour. The school keeps appropriate records of serious sanctions. Arrangements to safeguard pupils' health and safety are outlined in the school's

extensive policies, which include plans to improve the building and safety. A health and safety committee meets regularly and regular risk assessments are undertaken including those for educational visits. Fire safety arrangements are thorough and appliances and evacuation procedures are tested regularly.

During the inspection, a number of areas for improvement were brought to the school's attention. Some top floor windows do not have restrainers. A part of the junior playground surface is in need of repair and ropes to section off this area are in themselves a hazard. Internal doors do not have finger protectors. In addition, toilet cubicles for the youngest pupils do not provide adequate privacy.

The school nurse plays a significant role in supporting the welfare of pupils, and a large number of staff are trained in First Aid. Accident records are properly kept. Teachers are mindful of potential risks in lessons and take appropriate steps to minimize these, for example during very hot weather, pupils taking part in outdoor PE activities are allowed frequent breaks for drinks. Supervision of pupils in the building and around the extensive school grounds is satisfactory. Pupils say they feel safe and that there is always an adult available if needed.

Accurate records are maintained for admissions and attendance, and the school operates a 'first day of absence' phone call system. The caterers provide pupils with an ample choice of balanced and nourishing meals. Pupils clearly enjoy the experience of dining together, and the school has responded to their requests to eat outdoors when possible. A calm and happy atmosphere prevails at meal times. The school has an up-to-date plan to improve accessibility and this meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets nearly all of the requirements of the regulations.*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure that all staff consistently implement the school's anti-bullying policy and listen to the concerns raised by pupils (paragraph 3(2)(a)); and*
- *rectify the health and safety issues identified during the inspection (paragraph 3(4)) by:*
  - *installing restrainers to the top floor windows that do not have them;*
  - *ensuring that the sectioned off part of the junior playground does not constitute a hazard;*
  - *fitting finger protectors to internal doors; and*
  - *ensuring that toilet cubicles for the youngest pupils provide adequate privacy.*



#### **4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school has a very large and highly qualified staff. Prior to confirming their appointment, the school carries out appropriate checks on the identity, medical fitness, qualifications, and employment history of all staff. The school ensures that staff and other adults, who come into regular contact with the pupils are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau at an appropriate level.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The school occupies a 13-acre site with extensive grounds, including a play meadow and all-weather sports area. There are a number of teaching blocks as well as a chapel, which is situated within the main building. The teaching accommodation includes specialist teaching rooms for science, art, drama, music and ICT. Classrooms are generally quite small and do not always have appropriately sized furniture for some pupils. The cramped conditions in some classes restrict pupils' movement around the rooms and limit the effectiveness of teaching. However, the school is in the process of commissioning a new extension, which will provide more modern and specialist teaching rooms.

The premises are maintained in a clean, tidy and hygienic state. A particularly pleasant feature is the excellent artwork produced by older pupils, which is displayed around the school. Although several rooms have been refurbished since the last inspection, some areas remain in a poor state of repair and decoration. There is an adequate number of washrooms for staff and pupils. Facilities for those who are ill are appropriate. Heating, acoustics, lighting, ventilation and flooring are satisfactory.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets nearly all of the requirements of the regulations.*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should ensure that:*

- *all classrooms are appropriate in size to allow effective teaching (paragraph 5(j)); and*
- *furniture and fittings are appropriately designed for the age and needs (including any special needs) of all pupils (paragraph 5(r)).*

#### **6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

The school provides parents with a range of useful information through the prospectus, its termly calendar and frequent letters. The information provided meets

the requirements of the regulations and parents have been made aware of additional information that is available on request. Parents receive formal reports twice or three times a year depending on the age of the pupils. These contain useful comments and grades about examination and test results as well as pupils' effort, attainment and the work covered. They also provide parents with a benchmark for measuring their children's attainment in relation to the rest of the class.

The school has not held annual review meetings for pupils with a statement of SEN for the past two years. Nor have they sent the required information to the responsible local authority.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school complies with all but one of the requirements.*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *carry out annual reviews for pupils with a statement of educational need and ensure that this information is supplied to the responsible Local Authority (paragraph 6(8)).*

**7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**

The school has a written complaints procedure that meets the requirements. It sets out clear timescales and procedures the school will follow in the management of a complaint. Although the school has received written complaints, these have been managed under the informal part of the procedure and no complaints have proceeded to the formal stage within the last academic year.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	St Augustine's Priory
DfES Number:	307/6005
Type of school:	Girls' Catholic Day School
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 - 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Girls
Number on roll:	509
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	1
Annual fees:	£5,886 - £8,208
Address of school:	Hillcrest Road Ealing London W5 2JL
Telephone number:	020 8997 2022
Fax number:	020 8810 6501
Email address:	registrar@saintaugustinespriory.org.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs F J Gumley-Mason MA (Cantab)
Proprietor:	St Augustine's Priory School Limited
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs F Olajide HMI
Date of inspection:	3 - 6 July 2006

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