

# St Christopher's School

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	886/6049
Unique Reference Number	118997
Inspection number	307215
Inspection dates	3-4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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 Christopher's School was founded in 1923 and it provides non-selective education for up to 140 pupils aged 2-11. The school is located close to the centre of Canterbury in a large Victorian semi-detached house. The school's aims are to give the pupils a broad and balanced 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. In the final year most pupils take examinations relevant to gaining entry to local grammar schools. The school was last inspected in 2002, although its nursery provision has yet to be inspected by the appropriate inspectorate.

## Evaluation of the school

St Christopher's is a good school. It provides a good quality education where the pupils progress well in their learning as a result of effective teaching. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as is their behaviour. The majority of parents have positive views of what the school provides for their children. The attention given to the pupils' welfare health and safety is satisfactory, overall. The school does not meet all relevant regulations.

## Quality of education

The quality of education is good and is effective in meeting the school's aims. Although there is no overarching curriculum policy or specific policy for speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy the school has appropriate schemes of work for individual subjects. These documents are sufficiently detailed to enable the school to support continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Furthermore, a recent review of the curriculum has given added breadth with increased time for physical activities, religious education and other areas including additional personal, social, health and citizenship education. There is appropriate preparation for pupils moving on to local grammar schools. In recent years the school has achieved considerable success in this regard. The curriculum enables pupils to make good progress, particularly in English, mathematics and science, where most reach levels which are beyond the expectation for their age. A suitable emphasis is given to encouraging pupils'

independence and social skills throughout their time at the school. The programme for Nursery and Reception classes addresses all the required areas of learning and provides a sound platform for later studies based on the National Curriculum. Good attention is given to enabling the younger learners to make choices within well-planned lessons. The curriculum for older pupils is enriched by the study of philosophy, French and Spanish. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including a residential visit, as well as sport and music opportunities that make a good contribution to the pupils' personal development.

The quality of teaching throughout the school, including the Foundation Stage is good. Staff know their pupils well and relationships between pupils and staff are generally friendly and mutually supportive. Well-planned lessons and high expectations of pupils ensure good behaviour in lessons. Staff are passionate about their subjects and teaching assistants are carefully deployed, resulting in enthusiastic learning and pupils fully immersed in activities. Teachers make appropriate use of information and communication technology (ICT) and other resources to support learning. The headteacher's methods of monitoring classroom teaching are largely informal as are the processes for self-evaluation of overall effectiveness. A more systematic review is under development in the Foundation Stage.

Good systems have been established for assessing pupils' learning. Initial assessments enable the teachers from Year 1 onwards to have a good knowledge of the pupils' needs. The school tracks individual pupils' progress in each subject and identifies those who are at risk of underachieving and those who would benefit from extension activities. Teachers use this information well when planning their lessons and when setting and reviewing targets for individual pupils. Pupils make good progress in their learning because expectations are high, the pace of lessons challenges them to give of their best, and homework is well used. This is evident in their examination success where the overwhelming majority succeed in securing a place at the school of their choice.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils enjoy their work. Self-knowledge and self-confidence are promoted well through rewards and the opportunities for leadership. Behaviour in lessons is good but pupils are less aware of what is acceptable in other situations. They are keen to participate in activities and develop respectful relationships with fellow pupils and members of staff. They distinguish right from wrong and learn to respect rules and the law. The bronze award won for eco awareness together with opportunities to raise money for a variety of charities, helps pupils gain respect for the planet and others' rights.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school by working together on drama productions, school council, sporting and musical activities. The contribution made to

the local community by partaking in visits raises the profile of the school and provides meaningful opportunities to interact with members of the public.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The small numbers in each class and the regard for individuals means that the pupils receive good levels of attention and supervision from staff. The school has recently reviewed relevant policies including those relating to the prevention of bullying, the promotion of good behaviour and first aid. Implementation of these policies and others is satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory policy for child protection although staff have not yet received appropriate training as required by regulation. The supervision of pupils in school is generally appropriate and visits out of school are supported by a recently written policy. Good records are kept of any administered medication or accidents. Attention to fire safety is good, although further checks on portable electrical equipment are required. Registers of attendance and admissions are meticulously maintained. The school has recently drawn up an appropriate plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has suitably qualified and experienced teachers and assistants. The school ensures that appointments are confirmed only after thorough checks of adults' suitability to work with children. Other appropriate checks are made as a result of recently revised policy and procedures.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's accommodation is adequate. Located on four levels, there are sufficient classrooms and other areas for dining and school administration. The headteacher's office is currently used for teaching. The classrooms are generally adequate for the number of pupils being taught at any one time, although this is not always the case. Teachers make good use of the limited space available and the attractive display of pupils' work is particularly effective in celebrating achievement. The number of washrooms is very close to the minimum requirements. There are no suitable facilities for pupils who fall ill during the day.

The outdoor play area has improved markedly for the youngest children, although there is a shortage of large play apparatus. The main playground has also been improved and provides a very good all-weather surface. However, this playground is smaller than recommended when all pupils are at play. Good use is made of the local community sports centre and the nearby county cricket ground for physical activities.

The premises are generally well maintained and in good decorative order. Suitable plans are in hand to address remaining areas. The proprietors' recent search for additional premises has proved unsuccessful.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has produced an attractive prospectus and seeks to provide additional information on its useful website. Much of the required information has been recently revised to meet requirements but thus far the school has not made it clear to parents and prospective parents that this information is available to them on request. These requirements are listed below.

The school provides academic reports but these do not comment sufficiently on how the pupils have progressed in their knowledge, skills and understanding. There is no provision for parental feedback or for pupils to comment about their progress or future targets. The reports are supplemented by open evenings for parents to discuss their children's progress.

Parent questionnaires indicate the majority support the work of the school. However, a significant minority express concern about several issues including the lack of information about their children's progress, the curriculum and the school's complaints procedures.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints policy and procedures for handling complaints are inadequate and the omissions are listed below. The proprietor has recently received appropriate guidance to support the development of an appropriate policy and suitable procedures.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish and implement a written curriculum policy (paragraph 1(2))
- agree a written policy for speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy (paragraph 1(2)(c))

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- ensure all classrooms are appropriate in size to allow effective teaching (paragraph 5 (j))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill during the school day (paragraph 5(l))
- make appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely (paragraph 5 (t)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents and prospective parents are aware they can request details of the curriculum (paragraph 6(2) (g))
- ensure that parents and prospective parents are aware they can request particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))
- ensure that parents and prospective parents are aware they can request details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
- ensure that parents and prospective parents may request details in relation to the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k))
- provide parents with an annual written report of the progress and attainment of each child in the main subject areas taught (paragraph 6(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- make the complaints procedure available on request to parents of pupils and prospective pupils (paragraph 7(b))
- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and that the procedure stipulates that the complainant, proprietors and headteacher, and, where relevant, the person complained

about, should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))

- ensure that the procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j))
- ensure that the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

## School details

Name of school	St Christopher's School		
DfES number	886/6049		
Unique reference number	118997		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1923		
Age range of pupils	2-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 74	Girls: 58	Total: 132
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,696.00 - £6,651.00		
Address of school	New Dover Road		
	Canterbury		
	Kent		
	CT1 3DT		
Telephone number	01227462960		
Fax number	01227462960		
Email address	enquiries@stchristopherscanterbury.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr David Evans		
Proprietor	Mr David Evans		
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell AI		
Dates of inspection	3-4 July 2007		