

# Saint-Pierre Prep School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	882/6007
Unique Reference Number	115408
Inspection number	322253
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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).



## 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Saint Pierre School is an independent school for girls and boys aged between two and eleven. The school occupies a large detached house in a residential area of Leigh on Sea. It was established in 1952 as an independent day and boarding school for boys between four and eighteen. In 1972 it was reorganised as a boys' preparatory school and in 1985, was opened to girls and to pupils as young as three. There are currently 74 pupils aged between two and eleven on roll: 53 full-time and 21 part-time. There have been a number of important changes in recent years. A new headteacher joined the staff in January 2007 and recently become co-proprietor. There has also been a significant change in the teaching staff, with most teachers being new to the school.

Saint Pierre's primary aim is to 'provide the highest quality education in a secure, stimulating and mutually respectful environment, preparing children for the next phase of their education.' A further aim is to give children a major say in the running of their own school through the school council. Saint Pierre offers a predominantly Christian-based education, whilst welcoming pupils from all faiths. The school's last Ofsted inspection took place in June 2004.

## Evaluation of the school

This is a good school which provides a good quality education. Its major strength lies in well balanced provision, which not only effectively supports each pupil's academic achievement, but also pays equally good attention to their personal development. The school pays good attention to the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection and now the school meets virtually all regulations.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The curriculum plan is supported by complete schemes of work and designed to provide a progressive development of skills and knowledge. This represents improvement since the previous inspection, when this was weak. Pupils follow the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and there is a commercially produced mathematics scheme to support and extend provision in

numeracy. All pupils learn French. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been developed significantly and now has a prominent role in the curriculum, effectively supporting learning in other subjects. A scheme for personal, social and health education and citizenship has recently been introduced and supports pupils' personal development well. The curriculum is strong on providing for creative and aesthetic aspects of learning through music, art and drama. The quality of curriculum enrichment is excellent, adding significantly to the level of pupils' interest in learning and their enjoyment of school. There is an extensive range of after school clubs, which pupils say they enjoy. They cover a wide range of interests and therefore meet the preferences of the vast majority of pupils. Visitors to the school and visits out of school are frequent, interesting and pupils value them highly. They are linked to school work and add relevance to learning.

Teaching is good. Features of good teaching are the effective use of additional staff, questioning skills, teachers' subject knowledge, relationships with pupils, consistent expectations of behaviour and the use of positive behaviour management strategies. Teachers provide effective guidance for pupils. There is some specialist teaching in ICT, physical education, drama, music and teachers exchange classes to teach to their own strengths, such as in science and art. Teaching is carefully monitored by the headteacher, who has introduced procedures for staff appraisal, leading to teachers being able to develop their professional expertise. Marking is generally satisfactory. It identifies what is good about the work and what needs to be corrected. However, the next steps for learning are not consistently identified nor is there always sufficient indication of how pupils can further improve the quality of their work. The school has identified the need to revise and update their marking policy.

Assessment systems have developed significantly in the last year. At the time of the previous inspection, assessment was an identified weakness. New procedures have recently been put in place and are being implemented fully from the beginning of the next school year. The school holds accurate data on each pupil's progress but is still in the early stages of using this information to plan the next steps for learning. All pupils have targets, which are specific to their individual academic and personal achievement. These are reviewed regularly. Pupils are aware of their targets and levels for which they are aiming. They now complete a 'weekly self-reflection journal', which teachers are beginning to use well to support pupils where they identify difficulties and to move pupils on at a quicker pace where necessary.

Good quality in teaching and in the curriculum support pupils' good achievement. Standards in writing are good. Pupils write in a wide range of genre, including stories, poems, instructional writing, diaries and letters. Grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting are good. Good standards of literacy are reflected in other subjects. Attainment in mathematics is good, with good progress in numeracy, shape and space and data handling. Standards in music and drama, especially in speaking and listening and in performance are good. The school, for its size, has an

impressive record of sporting achievement. Pupils do well in competitive sports, including swimming, football, cross-country running, cricket, athletics and gymnastics. Southend Council has awarded the school an Award for Sporting Excellence and it has the Football Association Charter Mark for achievement in football.

In mixed-age classes, pupils in both year groups generally cover work at a similar level. Although overall progress in each class is good, this means that older pupils are not progressing as rapidly as the younger ones and progress is uneven as pupils move through the school. This is particularly so in science and subjects other than English and mathematics. A number of pupils come from overseas and have little or no English when they start. The school supports these pupils very well. They make excellent progress in acquiring English, enabling them to access the full curriculum and achieve well.

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

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school a great deal and consequently attendance is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are excellent. Pupils have many opportunities to work together, for example, in dramatic productions and other musical activities. The school is a harmonious community and pupils feel safe. Praise and encouragement from staff enhance pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Parents appreciate what the school is doing for the confidence of their children and helping them to develop well their personal qualities. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and perform their duties diligently as school councilors. The good standards pupils achieve, their good communication skills and personal development prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

There is a very strong moral dimension to the school. Pupils understand right from wrong and are caring towards peers and younger pupils in the school. Behaviour is outstanding. They support those less fortunate than themselves through fund-raising for charities. Pupils' cultural development is good and they have many opportunities to learn about their own cultural institutions and services in Britain when they listen to visitors to school, such as the police. Pupils' spiritual development is good. They are confident learners who are sensitive to the feelings of others.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school is a caring place, where the health, safety and welfare of pupils play an important part in its provision. There are effective policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and the school is vigilant in ensuring that pupils are kept safe in all activities. Premises are checked at the beginning of each school day. Risk assessments are

completed for all activities. Fire safety measures are up-to-date. Almost all staff members have current first aid certificates and there is a good supply of first aid kits around the school, and available for visits. Child protection procedures are fully in place and all staff are aware of them and are vigilant. There is a suitable anti-bullying policy and pupils say there is no bullying at the school and that they feel safe. The school kitchen serves high quality, nutritious meals, which pupils thoroughly enjoy. Together with the extensive range of sporting activity, pupils are able to get fit and stay healthy. The school has carefully considered access for people with disabilities and complies with requirements.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children meet most requirements. Even though all necessary checks have been made, they are not entered into a single central register. In this respect the school does not fully meet regulations.

## School's premises and accommodation

There has been extensive improvement work undertaken recently in terms of providing accommodation and resources to help improve the quality of education and to enable pupils to learn effectively and safely. The school is well equipped. A new computer suite and library have been established. There are sufficient computers to enable pupils to have individual access to each of these. There has been a recent 'cull' of library books. Those books remaining are relevant to pupils' current interests. A new drama studio provides a good space for drama work and a large space for art and craft activities. The school has undergone an extensive redecoration programme to improve the learning environment. Classrooms and general areas are bright, welcoming and used effectively to celebrate achievement and display pupils' work. The school is able to use nearby large open spaces for physical activities. Play areas are adequate for the number of pupils. These include a hard area and the garden is available as a play area.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents receive informative fortnightly newsletters, which inform them about school events that have taken place or are planned. They also receive termly curriculum guides for their child's class, informing them of curriculum content for the term. Information is clear, accurate and up-to-date.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has an effective complaints procedure that is available to parents and meets the requirements. There have been no formal complaints received by the school in the last academic year.

## 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 suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- enter details of all checks relating to the suitability of all staff (including volunteers) and proprietors into a single central record (paragraphs 4C(2 and 3), (6 and 7), (9)).

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Improve the use of assessment data to plan the next steps in learning and ensure the highest appropriate levels of challenge so that all pupils make at least good progress.
- Ensure that marking identifies how pupils can improve the quality of their work.

## School details

Name of school	Saint-Pierre Prep School		
DCSF number	882/6007		
Unique reference number	115408		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1952		
Age range of pupils	2–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 32	Girls: 21	Total: 53
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 7	Total: 21
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	Nursery - £4125 Reception - £4884 Years 1-2 - £5895 Years 3-6 - £6339		
Address of school	16 Leigh Road Leigh-on-Sea Essex SS9 1LE		
Telephone number	01702 474164		
Fax number	01702 474164		
Email address	info@saintpiereschool.com		
Headteacher	Mr Chris Perkins		
Proprietor	Mr Kurt Davies & Mr Chris Perkins		
Reporting inspector	David Speakman		
Dates of inspection	8–9 July 2008		