

St John's Priory School

Independent School

Inspection report

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| DCSF Registration Number | 931/6009 |
| Unique Reference Number | 123279 |
| URN for registered childcare and social care | EY308827 |
| Inspection number | 329743 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 October 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Jill Bainton AI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision¹ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

Information about the school

St John' Priory School is a non-selective, non-denominational, co-educational school for pupils aged from two years and three months to eleven years. It came into private ownership in 1990 and occupies a large grade 2 listed building, which was a former Priory close to the centre of Banbury. Currently there are 107 full-time and 22 part-time pupils. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2008. The school is registered with Ofsted Children's Services for after-school and holiday care which was inspected in 2006. There are 32 children in receipt of nursery funding. The nursery was inspected in 2005. This is the first inspection of the school under Section 162a of the Education Act 2005.

The school aims to *'provide a broad, balanced curriculum which ensures that each child extends his or her academic abilities alongside creative and artistic talents.'*

Evaluation of the school

St John's Priory School provides a good quality of education and care for children and pupils including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and successfully meets its aims. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere and pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. They benefit from well-informed teaching and make good progress. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has many strong features, and pupils' behaviour is outstanding. The school meets most of the regulations for registration.

¹ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

Quality of education

The good quality curriculum provides interesting learning experiences in the academic, aesthetic and practical areas of learning for children in the EYFS and in Years 1 to 6. It encourages excellent personal development, ensuring that children and pupils are confident when facing new challenges. The older pupils are prepared well for, and achieve considerable success in, the entrance examinations for the next stage of their education in mainly independent schools. Personal, social and health education is taught weekly and is also successfully integrated into the daily life of the school. Specialists teach music, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education, art, ballet and tap, gymnastics, judo, drama and French. Pupils from Year 2 are learning to play the violin. There is good, additional provision for those pupils with learning difficulties. An interesting range of out-of-school trips further enhances the curriculum; these have recently included a visit to Mary Arden's house in Stratford-upon-Avon and the Roman Museum in Cirencester. A large number of lunchtime and after-school clubs extend the curriculum and include drama, sports and dancing. The pupils have had much success in gymnastics when taking part in local competitions and school sports teams also take part in matches locally.

Teaching and assessment are good. As a result children in the EYFS and pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress. The teaching has some outstanding features, mainly the strong relationships between teachers and pupils. The teachers know the pupils and their capabilities very well and use this information effectively in their teaching, for example with good use of questioning. Lessons are planned to take account of pupils' differing abilities and prior knowledge and incorporate a range of varied activities, including paired and group work. The pace of most lessons is brisk with good use made of the time available. Pupils are keen to learn and make good progress, with some making better progress when the teacher focuses on challenging the more able. There is an emphasis on speaking and listening particularly with the older pupils, most of whom are very articulate. Overall, pupils' written work is good, the head teacher has identified already that writing skills require some improvement. The headteacher has identified the need for the school development plan to cover this and other issues at the school.

Both the teachers and assistants give individual pupils very good support in lessons, where the teachers check and assess pupils' learning carefully. Older pupils take examinations twice each year. The school achieves good results in national tests. Homework is used effectively to support learning. Resources are plentiful but some are in need of replacement.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and there are many outstanding features. Relationships between pupils and adults and between the pupils themselves are excellent and are conducive to a very pleasant and stimulating learning environment. Pupils are highly valued as individuals and respond by being respectful and considerate towards others. They say that they enjoy coming to school and they have positive attitudes to their learning. The children in the EYFS are integrated well into school life. Levels of attendance are very high and behaviour both in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils are confident and polite. There is a friendly atmosphere and visitors are made very welcome. Pupils are given the opportunity to take on responsibility. For example, members of the school council are very enthusiastic and take their roles very seriously. They are consulted on matters that affect them, notably the formulation of the school rules. Older pupils become prefects, house captains and 'buddies' to younger children. A Year 6 pupil said '*We always find them a friend to play with.*' Through visits to the locality and a comprehensive programme of visiting experts pupils are developing a clear understanding of how society works. Pupils are very keen to participate in school assemblies, which provide opportunities for spiritual reflection and the sharing of success and achievement. This, together with religious education (RE), gives the pupils a firm spiritual foundation. Within the RE curriculum pupils are taught about world religions so that they develop a sound understanding of similarities and differences and an understanding of cultural diversity. Art, drama and music contribute very strongly to the cultural dimension of the curriculum. Through their good achievement in mathematics, English and ICT, pupils are thoroughly prepared for their transition to secondary schools and their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. The school has devised and implemented effectively a range of policies to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in the EYFS and older pupils. These procedures include any visits outside of school, safeguarding of pupils and anti-bullying. Pupils, both younger and older, are adamant that there is no bullying and playtimes are supervised effectively. The school is vigilant about fire precautions and well-formulated procedures are in place. An appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid, including in the EYFS paediatric first aid. The attendance and admission registers are kept according to regulations. Pupils bring a packed lunch and are encouraged to eat healthily. They take very regular exercise in the planned programme of activities, including swimming. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has checked all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. They hold the information on a single central register. Currently the school does not undertake medical checks before appointing staff.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory to ensure effective learning. The building is three storeys high, with some narrow staircases which the pupils negotiate very well. The premises are clean and generally well maintained, but some areas are in need of redecoration. The classrooms are attractive learning environments, well decorated with examples of pupils' work. There are specialist rooms for ICT and art, a hall and a dining room. There is no hot water in some toilet areas. Currently there is a kitchen area in part of the activities room, which is potentially dangerous. There are two large play areas at the rear of the premises; one is mainly dedicated to the younger pupils and has adventure play equipment and a grassed area. Part of the play area outside the Early Years Unit is on several levels with an uneven surface, which is hazardous for the young children.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a good range of information for parents, carers and others through a helpful, informative prospectus, website and regular newsletters. A large number of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school, making comments such as '*we are very pleased with the school...it provides a welcoming and caring environment.*' Parents are given two helpful written reports and have the opportunity for consultation evenings.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which meet the regulations, although some parents said that they are unaware of them.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the EYFS provision is good, so that the needs of the children are met successfully. There is a wide range of activities both initiated by the children and led by teachers which are carefully planned, interesting, stimulating and purposeful. The provision is led and managed well. The staff are confident in helping

children and sympathetic towards their needs, enabling the children to learn and develop at an appropriate rate. Activities are matched closely to the range of children's needs and are based upon thorough observation. Most children make good progress, in relation to their starting point, towards the early learning goals in most areas of learning; some will confidently achieve these before the end of their Reception year. The children are happy, play well on their own and with others and are able to communicate their learning. They behave well, are nurtured and adopt healthy practices. Children from different backgrounds and cultures play in harmony. Staff are vigilant in their care and children's welfare is carefully promoted. Some groups are not able to enjoy full and effective use of the outdoor play areas in their current locations. Provision for after-school care is effective and maintains the good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), 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:

- carry out a medical check prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

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

- provide hot water in all the washbasins (paragraph 5(a))
- ensure that all classroom areas do not compromise health and safety by relocating the cookers in the activities room (paragraph 5(j))
- level and improve the surfaces in the EYFS play area (paragraph 5(t)).

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- ongoing use of the development plan to assist a review of the curriculum, the monitoring of teaching and learning, staff professional development, record keeping and assessment procedures, policy documentation and the quality of the premises.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

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| Overall quality of education | | ✓ | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils | | ✓ | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs | | ✓ | | |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning | | ✓ | | |

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | ✓ | | |
| The behaviour of pupils | ✓ | | | |

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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|--|--|---|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | | ✓ | | |
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

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| How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop? | | ✓ | | |
| How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities? | | ✓ | | |
| How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | | ✓ | | |
| What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | | ✓ | | |
| How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed? | | ✓ | | |
| What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare? | | ✓ | | |

School details

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|-----------------------------------|--|-----------|------------|
| Name of school | St John's Priory School | | |
| DCSF number | 931/6009 | | |
| Unique reference number | 123279 | | |
| EY URN | EY308827 | | |
| Type of school | Nursery and preparatory | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Date school opened | 1990 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 2 years 3 months to 11 years | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | Boys: 64 | Girls: 43 | Total: 107 |
| Number on roll (part-time pupils) | Boys: 13 | Girls: 9 | Total: 22 |
| Annual fees | £6,990 | | |
| Address of school | St John's Road Banbury Oxfordshire OX16 5HX | | |
| Telephone number | 01295 259607 | | |
| Fax number | 01295 273326 | | |
| Email address | Sholding@stjohnspriory.com | | |
| Headteacher | Mrs Susan Holding | | |
| Proprietor | Mr Simon Chamberlain | | |
| Reporting inspector | Jill Bainton AI | | |
| Dates of inspection | 7–8 October 2008 | | |