

# School inspection report

28 to 30 November 2023

## **St Catherine's School**

Cross Deep

Twickenham

Middlesex

TW1 4QJ

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders nurture pupils' talents through a challenging academic curriculum in the context of a strong Catholic Christian community in which all pupils are encouraged to be compassionate, courageous, ambitious and outward-looking. Pupils of all ages respond positively by working hard and being mindful of the importance of respecting and helping others within and beyond the school community.
2. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum drawn up by leaders includes the development of pupils' self-knowledge and their awareness of the needs of others. Serious misbehaviour and bullying are rare, and leaders deal effectively with any instances of bullying. As a result, pupils are happy, and behave well in lessons and around school. They respect one another and enjoy positive relationships with their peers and with staff. They are keen to participate in activities, enjoy positions of responsibility and leadership and, when older, act as mentors for younger pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic about serving the local community and supporting charities by volunteering or raising money.
3. Leaders are committed to providing teaching of a high standard. Teachers plan effectively and set realistic but ambitious expectations of the pupils. In response, pupils are conscientious learners. They take pride in their work and are keen to find ways to improve. Pupils make good progress and senior pupils achieve results in public examinations at least in line with expectations. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in both the prep and senior schools achieve similar results to their peers as a result of the individual support offered by the learning support team and by their subject teachers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are also well supported by teachers and the learning support team, make good progress and achieve results in line with their peers.
4. In typical lessons, teachers challenge pupils to think for themselves, for example by discussing ideas with their peers. In some lessons, however, pupils are not provided with the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills.
5. School leaders, working closely with governors, have created a school development plan with clear strategic targets. These are underpinned and informed by Christian virtues, and seek to promote the wellbeing of pupils.
6. Governors, leaders and managers work together so that safeguarding arrangements are effective, and leaders are aware of the contextual risks for pupils. Staff at all levels are well trained and understand how to recognise and report safeguarding concerns. As a result, pupils feel safe in school and are confident that their teachers know them well.
7. Governors effectively support and monitor the work of school leaders, including through an appropriate range of committees. Governors meet leaders regularly and offer challenge and advice to support leaders in their work.
8. In almost all areas, leaders and managers demonstrate relevant knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles effectively. Appropriate policies are in place and are implemented effectively so that nearly all of the relevant standards are met consistently. However, leaders were not aware of their duty to notify the local authority when a pupil joins the school at a non-standard transition time.



## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are not met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are not met consistently.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Areas for action

- The proprietor must ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities:
  - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and
  - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the Independent School Standards are met consistently, and
  - actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
- Leaders must ensure that they notify the local authority when they add a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point.

## Recommended next steps

- Leaders should provide pupils with more opportunities to think for themselves in lessons so that they develop their critical thinking skills.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors work collaboratively with leaders on effective arrangements to support pupils' wellbeing and to provide an inclusive education that is suited to the needs of all pupils.
10. Governors and leaders nurture a Catholic Christian ethos in the school, in which strategic plans, based on a realistic assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses, are underpinned and informed by Christian virtues and focus on promoting the wellbeing of pupils.
11. Governors monitor leaders' work systematically through focused committees and provide an appropriate level of challenge to senior leaders. Leaders understand the contextual risks for pupils in the school and implement effective procedures for assessing risk. Staff are well-trained in risk assessment, so they effectively assess and mitigate risk to pupils on the school site and on trips.
12. Governors are diligent in monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, including links with external agencies, through regular visits and close liaison with leaders. Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities and offer appropriate support and challenge to pastoral leaders.
13. Leaders oversee the reasonable adjustments made for those pupils who have SEND. They provide appropriate support to pupils who speak EAL. A suitable accessibility plan is in place.
14. Overall, leaders and managers demonstrate relevant knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles effectively. Appropriate policies are in place and are implemented effectively so that almost all of the relevant standards are met consistently. However, leaders were not aware before the inspection of their duty to notify the local authority when they added a pupil to the admission register at non-standard transitions and, consequently, were not making these notifications.
15. Leaders and managers provide a cycle of regular and focused training to that staff understand policies and procedures. Pupils also have a clear understanding of school policies and procedures. As a result, they behave well and understand the consequences of any misbehaviour.
16. Leaders respond promptly and effectively to pupils' concerns and ideas, which are heard regularly through meetings with pupils and are facilitated by the open and mutually respectful relations between staff and pupils. Leaders readily support pupils' initiatives. For example, pupils recently planned and organised a highly successful 'Unity Week' to celebrate diversity in the school. Staff throughout the school respond quickly and sensitively to any pupil who raises a concern about their wellbeing and, as a result, pupils speak appreciatively about how they feel supported and affirmed as individuals within a caring community.
17. Governors and leaders respond to any complaints in a timely and effective manner and are keen to hear and understand the views of parents through regular formal and informal meetings. All required policies and information for parents are available on the school's website or by request from the school.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

18. Standards are not met with respect to the requirement to notify the local authority when they add a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point.

19. As a result, standards relating to governance, leadership and management are not met consistently.
- 20. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders plan the curriculum carefully so that a wide range of subjects is offered, appropriate to the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils experience a range of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological and creative subjects as they progress through the school. Pupils develop a firm grounding in all key areas of the curriculum. They develop practical study skills through individual guidance offered by teachers and in study skills sessions within the extra-curricular programme. Leaders and managers oversee the effective implementation of the curriculum through appropriate plans and schemes of work, and through the extensive extra-curricular programme.
22. Throughout the school, teachers have good subject knowledge, plan well and set clear expectations. Pupils appreciate how teachers are willing to offer additional support out of lessons to help them understand or improve, which helps them to be more confident in their learning.
23. In lessons, pupils of all ages are quick to settle, eager to engage and behave very well. They listen attentively to the advice offered by their teachers and are keen to review their work and to improve. Pupils communicate well. They are confident speakers, articulate and fluent when presenting. They express their ideas persuasively and clearly and enjoy, when given the opportunity, working together in pairs or in larger groups to explore ideas or to solve problems. Pupils are keen to take charge of their own learning and to develop their thinking skills through research and analysis.
24. In lessons where teachers encourage pupils to take risks in their learning and to think for themselves, pupils rise to the challenge and make rapid progress. However, in both the prep and the senior school, the teaching occasionally lacks challenge. In lessons where the teaching is more directive, pupils have fewer opportunities to develop their thinking skills.
25. Overall, pupils make good progress in their studies. Almost all pupils attain grades at GCSE in line with or above those expected for their ability. Similarly, at A level, most pupils achieve grades in line with expectations. In the prep school, pupils achieve results in line with their starting points.
26. In both the prep and the senior schools, pupils who have SEND achieve similar results to their peers, demonstrating their good progress. Pupils who speak EAL also make good progress and achieve results on a par with their peers. Throughout the school, the individual support offered by teachers gives pupils who have SEND and those who speak EAL greater confidence in their learning and helps them to succeed.
27. Leaders have designed an extensive extra-curricular programme which offers a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide variety of activities. The extra-curricular activities increase pupils' self-confidence and expand their horizons. For example, senior pupils' involvement in house events offers leadership opportunities and they appreciate the chance to try new activities without fear of failure.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 28. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

29. The curriculum, in both the prep and the senior schools, provides an extensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), including relationships and sex education, which meets pupils' needs. The programme includes teaching pupils to treat all people with respect. It contributes to the kindness and respect shown by pupils in their day-to-day interactions with their peers and their warm and open relationships with staff. The PSHE lessons develop pupils' confidence, their self-understanding and their awareness of the needs of others.
30. Governors have provided support for pupils' mental health by appointing an independent listener and chaplains, who work across both the prep and senior schools. Leaders have overseen training for sixth-form pupils to act as 'Big Sisters' to support younger pupils in the prep and senior schools. Pupils, particularly in the senior school, are appreciative of how the school's provision helps them to keep their concerns in perspective and to be more self-aware.
31. Leaders provide a wide and varied programme of physical education to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils with particular talents and interests in sport are coached to develop their skills to a high level, while other pupils enjoy physical activity for relaxation. Leaders take care that the physical education programme in both the prep and senior schools does not discriminate. The sporting opportunities contribute to pupils' development of a healthy lifestyle.
32. Leaders and managers set clear expectations of pupils' behaviour, and pupils of all ages respond accordingly. Pupils' behaviour in and out of lessons is of a high standard. At break and lunchtime, pupils who are not busy with an activity enjoy relaxing and chatting with one another in quiet spaces, reflecting the warm and friendly atmosphere in the school.
33. Serious misbehaviour and bullying are rare. If bullying does occur, it is dealt with effectively, and appropriate records are kept. Pupils have confidence in school leaders to recognise and deal with any bullying and their discussions in PSHE have alerted them to the importance of speaking out in support of someone who might be a victim of bullying.
34. Leaders' implementation of the school's ethos enables pupils of all faiths and none to value spiritual contemplation and reflection. Pupils with a personal faith speak about their beliefs in lessons and assemblies, while others recognise that the school's ethos of showing kindness and service promotes the development of moral character. Pupils who wish to express or explore their faith appreciate the various opportunities for worship and discussion provided through the chaplaincy, in assemblies and in the annual retreats and pilgrimages.
35. Under the oversight of governors and leaders, the premises are well-maintained the school site is secure and supervised appropriately by staff. Arrangements for first aid and medical support in school are effective. The first-aid policy is clear, and an appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid. Leaders and staff understand all relevant health and safety laws, including those relating to fire safety and evacuation, and they implement the relevant policies and procedures appropriately.
36. Admission and attendance registers are maintained effectively. School staff report to the local authority any pupil who is removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition but leaders were unaware before the inspection of their duty to notify the local authority when adding a

pupil's name to the register at a non-standard transition time. As a consequence, these notifications were not being made.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

37. Leaders were unaware of their duty to notify the local authority when the name of any pupil was added to the school's admission register at a non-standard transition time and had therefore made no such notifications.
- 38. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

39. In accordance with the curriculum, pupils learn about right and wrong, British society and the wider world. In PSHE lessons, pupils discuss and develop their understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities and examine the role of local and national political institutions. Senior school pupils broaden their political, economic and social awareness in the extra-curricular clubs and societies. Visiting speakers, the content of whose talks is checked in advance by staff, challenge pupils to consider and debate topical and contentious issues. As a result, pupils have a discerning understanding of current affairs and learn to appreciate the importance of hearing a variety of viewpoints.
40. Leaders encourage pupils to serve within the school community. Pupils of all ages grow in confidence when leading or representing others in their form, house or at a more senior level in the school. Sixth-form pupils who volunteer to support younger pupils develop empathy and a sense of personal fulfilment as they fulfil those responsibilities. Pupils help to run clubs and societies, developing teamwork and their ability to manage others tactfully and successfully.
41. Pupils are enthusiastic about their service in the local community and further afield, reflecting their understanding of the aims of the school. Older pupils volunteer in local charity shops and support food banks. In the prep school, pupils undertake a variety of initiatives to raise money for charity.
42. Leaders listen to the views of pupils and encourage them to take the initiative in promoting ideas and projects in school. For example, pupils recently conceived and organised a 'Unity Week' to celebrate and promote diversity in school and to raise pupils' awareness of the diverse society in which they live. The PSHE curriculum promotes understanding of inclusivity. Effective teaching about respect for other people is evidenced in the way in which pupils speak maturely about their understanding of those whose background or lifestyle is different from their own. As a result, pupils of all ages and backgrounds speak warmly about how well pupils get on with each other.
43. Leaders encourage pupils to be ambitious and to plan carefully as they consider the next step in their education. Staff offer individualised guidance and support for pupils at each stage of their education.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

## Safeguarding

45. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. The implementation of safeguarding policies throughout the school is monitored by governors, who liaise closely with leaders so that any safeguarding cases are handled appropriately. Leaders understand when and how to liaise with external agencies if concerns arise. Any referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and the police are made in a timely manner.
46. The safeguarding policy is accessible to staff, parents and pupils via the school's website and contains all necessary contact information. The policy is up to date and reflects the most recent published guidance.
47. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online, and effective filtering systems are in place. Leaders monitor pupils' use of the school's internet systems and staff respond quickly to any pupil who may need pastoral support.
48. All staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training as they join the school, and this is updated at regular intervals. Those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities receive appropriate training and are aware of relevant risks to pupils, including contextual risks for pupils in the school, radicalisation and extremism. Staff are knowledgeable in child protection procedures, including those for online safety, and monitor pupils' attendance effectively.
49. Staff are confident to report any low-level concerns about other staff or to self-refer if the need arises. Leaders keep careful records of low-level concerns and scrutinise these to identify any trends or patterns.
50. Pupils feel safe in school and know that there is an adult they can speak to if they have any concern. Leaders provide a well-resourced counselling service, and pupils appreciate the positive impact this has on their mental wellbeing.
51. Records are kept appropriately and show that any reported safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly. All of the required checks are undertaken in relation to the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors. An accurate central record of appointments is maintained, which is checked regularly by governors and leaders.

## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 52. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Schedule of unmet Standards

### Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The relevant Standards are not met.

| Paragraph number             | Standard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34(1) | <p>The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;</li> <li>(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and</li> <li>(c) actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.</li> </ul> |

### Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

The relevant Standards are met.

### Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing

The relevant Standards are not met.

| Paragraph number          | Standard                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15 | <p>The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.</p> |

### Section 4: Pupils' social and economic wellbeing and contribution to society

The relevant Standards are met.

#### Safeguarding

The relevant Standards are met.

## School details

|                                        |                                                  |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>School</b>                          | St Catherine's School                            |
| <b>Department for Education number</b> | 318/6008                                         |
| <b>Registered charity number</b>       | 1014651                                          |
| <b>Address</b>                         | Cross Deep<br>Twickenham<br>Middlesex<br>TW1 4QJ |
| <b>Phone number</b>                    | 020 8891 2898                                    |
| <b>Email address</b>                   | info@stcatherineschool.co.uk                     |
| <b>Website</b>                         | stcatherineschool.co.uk                          |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                      | St Catherine's School Trust                      |
| <b>Chair</b>                           | Ms Sylvia Hamilton                               |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                     | Mrs Johneen McPherson                            |
| <b>Age range</b>                       | 5 to 18                                          |
| <b>Number of pupils</b>                | 404                                              |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>     | 26 February 2020                                 |

## Information about the school

53. St Catherine's School is a single-sex day school for female pupils located in Twickenham, Middlesex. It consists of a senior school, which includes a sixth form, and a preparatory school located on the same site. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors was appointed in 2021.
54. Leaders have identified 70 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
55. English is an additional language for 21 pupils.
56. The school aims to create a strong Catholic Christian community which welcomes pupils of all faiths or none. It encourages pupils to be compassionate, courageous, ambitious and outward-looking.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

28 to 30 November 2023

57. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

58. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by school leaders.

59. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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