

School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

St John's School

47 to 49 Stock Road

Billericay

Essex

CM12 0AR

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 are effective in their roles and they understand their responsibilities. They keep accurate records of incidents regarding behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, and ensure that any ongoing concerns are followed up appropriately. However, the manner in which some records of behavioural and bullying incidents are kept by pastoral staff inhibits the ability of leaders to keep an effective overview of these and spot any patterns or trends that may need addressing.
2. Leaders set clear expectations of pupils in terms of their work and behaviour, and the vast majority of pupils respond positively. Pupils make typically good progress because they work in well-ordered classrooms and because their teachers provide them with support which is often highly individualised. Teachers mostly adapt tasks to meet the different needs of pupils so that they are able to achieve with confidence. GCSE results show that pupils perform above expectations from their starting points.
3. In many lessons, teachers plan engaging and effective activities which motivate pupils to learn, and to develop their knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, however, pupils do not learn as effectively as possible. This is when the teaching does not challenge or engage pupils sufficiently, or because teachers do not help pupils to address any lack of understanding.
4. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. This is because leaders deploy teachers appropriately and because teachers effectively plan their lessons and adapt the curriculum to the pupils' individual needs. These pupils also receive additional support both during and outside of lessons which promotes their learning.
5. Leaders articulate clearly to all pupils that high standards of behaviour are expected. Nearly all pupils respond positively and are respectful of one another and of their teachers. Where behaviour does not meet these high expectations, leaders take action which includes appropriate sanctions and, where necessary, additional supervision.
6. The school promotes pupils' social and cultural development effectively. Pupils learn about themes such as equality, the importance of mutual respect and the justice system.
7. Leaders ensure that staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and that appropriate processes are in place to act swiftly if any safeguarding concerns arise.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are 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 met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that behaviour and bullying records are maintained clearly and effectively so that trends and patterns in behaviour can be more effectively monitored
- ensure that teaching consistently engages pupils and clarifies any lack of understanding effectively so that pupils can make progress consistently and learn effectively.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders have suitable knowledge to carry out their responsibilities effectively. They have an understanding of the school and its context which they utilise in effective self-evaluation. This leads to further action, for example by further promotion of the school's aims through providing additional support for pupils' emotional wellbeing.
9. Leaders monitor the curriculum and consider how best to meet the evolving needs of particular pupils at different stages of their education, such as the range of subjects on offer at GCSE. For example, they enable some pupils to attempt the dual award in science and others to undertake separate qualifications in biology, chemistry and physics.
10. Leaders monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning by observing lessons and having professional discussions with teachers. Leaders facilitate and provide ongoing staff training and support to encourage effective teaching methods. Practitioners in the early years have regular dialogue with leaders to support their professional development. These actions encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching and to aim to refine the learning experience for pupils.
11. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities related to safeguarding. They have established an effective culture which ensures that all adults understand their responsibility to be vigilant for signs that a pupil's welfare may be compromised. Leaders also encourage staff to share with them any low-level or other concerns about other adults and to self-refer incidents which have the potential for misinterpretation.
12. Leaders and the proprietor consider a range of risks and take action appropriately to mitigate them. Assessments for areas such as science or food technology take account of the contextual risks associated with those subjects and appropriate practices are insisted upon to keep pupils safe. Trips out of school are carefully prepared for with a series of internal checks to ensure that potential risks have been accounted for. Leaders ensure that staff are deployed effectively to meet the needs of the pupils.
13. Leaders share all required information with parents, for example by placing policies on the school website, and provide them with regular written reports on their children's progress. The school liaises with and provides appropriate information to relevant external agencies, such as informing the local authority of pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard transition points.
14. There are few parental complaints which reach a formal stage but those that do, as well as informal concerns, are responded to in an appropriate timescale and are suitably recorded.
15. The proprietor, who works at the school and present on a daily basis, assures herself that leaders are fulfilling their duties by meeting them both formally and informally on a regular basis and by undertaking regular checks of records such as the single central record of staff appointments.
16. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act. They plan suitable adjustments to improve accessibility to the school site for pupils who have SEND. For example, the school is considering the installation of hearing loops. Where a pupil's temporary needs might result from injury or illness, adjustments are put in place to amend aspects of the school day to facilitate their attendance.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. The suitable curriculum meets the needs of all groups of pupils through a broad range of subjects covering linguistic, mathematical and aesthetic disciplines. Planning within subjects considers how pupils develop their learning skills, building on previous learning as well as revisiting topics in greater depth as pupils proceed through the school. A range of choices is available to the oldest pupils when they approach their GCSE studies, including business studies, sociology and statistics.
19. Leaders use a range of assessment tools to monitor the progress of individual pupils, as well as tracking cohorts through their education. These tools are being used with increasing sophistication to help pupils to maximise the progress they make in their learning. For example, leaders examine pupils' profiles at the end of their early years education which informs planning both for their ongoing learning needs and for future cohorts. Standardised test data is used to explore the need for any additional support for the learning of pupils, as well as monitoring the progress of those pupils approaching their GCSE examinations. Results at GCSE, which are above the national average, demonstrate good progress from starting points overall.
20. Pupils typically make good progress because they are motivated to achieve as a result of their teaching and support from teachers. They are enabled to work calmly in well-ordered classrooms and teachers have appropriate subject knowledge which, typically, they communicate effectively. Tasks are usually adapted with the needs and abilities of the pupils in mind. In many lessons teachers plan effective activities which encourage pupils to be self-motivated and answer questions thoughtfully. As a result, pupils are engaged in such lessons and make rapid progress.
21. However, in some lessons teaching does not engage pupils or develop their learning to this extent. For example, some teachers expect pupils to digest the knowledge they are being taught without consideration of how to help those who do not immediately understand. In other lessons the goal of maintaining a quiet learning environment leads to pupils feeling unable to share their misconceptions and ask for help. On occasions the ineffective pace of the lesson and the limited use of resources also reduces the scope for pupils to be extended in their learning. As a result of these various factors, pupils make less progress in such lessons.
22. Children in the early years make good progress with their communication and language skills because their teachers model and encourage conversation. For example, whilst enjoying a snack children debated whether cucumbers grow above or below ground, and commented on how pouring milk is easier from a standing position. They also make good progress in numeracy skills, for example because adults encourage them to count during their play. Children also develop skills in computing and music as a result of lessons taught by subject specialists who have relevant subject knowledge.
23. Pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points. This is because teachers tailor their lessons to meet these pupils' individual needs, and because pupils have effective additional support from experienced teachers and support assistants, who use a range of techniques and activities to help the pupils to overcome any barrier to their learning. Leaders and teachers meet regularly to discuss the learning of pupils who have SEND and any inconsistent pupil progress is noticed and acted upon quickly.

24. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities both within the school day and after-school. This includes music ensembles and choirs. Pupils can opt to have additional individual lessons in music or speech and drama, and take a variety of performance examinations with success. A wide variety of sporting activities is available to pupils including disciplines such as gymnastics, table tennis and trampolining. Other clubs encompass a range of artistic and intellectual endeavours such as additional modern foreign languages. The extra-curricular activities help pupils develop their self-confidence and learn new skills in the areas engaged with.

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

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

26. The curriculum includes guidance for pupils about how they can support their own physical and mental health, such as teaching them strategies for monitoring and moderating their own emotions. As a result, pupils develop their understanding of how they can actively support and improve their own emotional wellbeing. Several staff have also been trained in mental health first aid and are available to pupils who feel the need for additional support in this regard.
27. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme teaches pupils about aspects of reproduction, healthy sexual relationships and consent in ways appropriate to their age. Teachers who plan and deliver RSE lessons address such topics thoughtfully and carefully. Leaders consult with parents appropriately about RSE provision.
28. Pupils experience an appropriate programme of physical education lessons, which have a positive impact on their emotional and physical wellbeing, such as developing specific physical skills and stamina. Many choose to take part in a variety of regional and national sporting competitions and tournaments for both team and individual sports. Certain sports such as pickleball and female pupils' football have been introduced to increase inclusion and participation, or to support the pastoral programme. Children in the early years have physical education lessons in which they develop co-ordination skills as well as an enjoyment of exercise and fitness.
29. Teachers take effective opportunities that arise to encourage pupils to develop their self-knowledge. For example, in a lesson discussing the story of Diogenes, Year 9 pupils were challenged by their teacher to consider their own understanding of materialism and their wider awareness of what makes them happy.
30. Pupils interact appropriately with their teachers and nearly all pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance for one another. Leaders articulate their expectations of pupil behaviour clearly. As a result, the vast majority of pupils demonstrate high standards of behaviour both in and out of the classroom. In the junior school, pupils listen to one another respectfully and wait their turn patiently. During recreational periods, appropriate behaviour enables all pupils to enjoy their free time in a relaxed environment.
31. Where these high standards of behaviour are not met, teachers are quick to act. Sanctions are clearly explained and implemented in line with the school's policy, and leaders put appropriate measures in place, such as additional supervision or additional guidance about the maintenance of positive friendships, when useful. Unkindness and bullying are rare but, when they occur, teachers address issues in an appropriate and timely manner. Leaders promote initiatives such as anti-bullying week in order to promote greater awareness, such as of the harm that bullying can do and the role of bystanders in helping to prevent and respond to it. However, behaviour and bullying logs are not always maintained clearly and effectively so that trends and patterns in behaviour can be effectively monitored.
32. Supervision of pupils and children in the early years, including arrangements at the beginning and end of each school day, is effective because adults are appropriately deployed and are suitably vigilant.

33. The attendance of pupils is registered twice daily by teachers and any unexpected absence is followed up by staff effectively. Staff monitor and track any potential patterns of pupil absence. The school maintains suitable admissions and attendance registers.
34. The school premises are appropriately maintained because staff regularly check the condition of buildings and any reported defects are swiftly addressed. Health and safety checks are carried out and remedial works planned and undertaken. Regular fire drills ensure that pupils know what to do in the case of an evacuation. Leaders ensure that fire marshals and those responsible for the management of fire risk are appropriately trained, and suitable action is taken in response to external fire risk assessments. If pupils are unwell or experience injury during the school day, they receive appropriate treatment from staff who have received appropriate first aid training. Parents are informed of accidents or illness in line with the school's policies and procedures.

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

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

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

36. The curriculum covers a range of topics designed to help pupils develop a broader understanding of British society and the world around them, such as the judicial system, elections and Parliament. Pupils also learn about the need to protect the environment, and fundamental British values of democracy, liberty, respect and tolerance are articulated and referenced in lessons. Teachers ensure that political issues and current affairs, such as current conflicts around the world, are explored in a sensitive, age-appropriate and unbiased manner.
37. Through the curriculum, through talks from visiting speakers and in their relationships at school, pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of how all people should be treated equally. Pupils in the junior school research and display information about diverse cultures at an 'international day'. Pupils learn about different faiths in their religious education curriculum, which includes visits to places of worship. Teachers and pupils lead assemblies on religious and cultural festivals and celebrations, as well as marking events such as 'Black History Month'. As a result of these activities, pupils develop an appreciation and respect for cultures other than their own.
38. Representatives of the emergency services visit younger pupils and children in the early years, which helps them to develop an understanding of how these institutions help everyone in society. Pupils learn about democracy through activities such as the 'national Parliament week' and learning about local and national elections when these occur.
39. Pupils take part in voting for membership of the school council, which meets to discuss aspects of school life. They choose a school charity from a shortlist presented to them, and some members of the council visit the local food bank when donations have been collected. Pupils who undertake activities within the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) are encouraged to participate in volunteering activities within the school's locality, which helps them to develop their understanding of how they can contribute positively to the wider community.
40. Economic education begins in the early years when children roleplay making transactions in shops. Junior pupils take part in a challenge to raise money for charity by competing to develop business plans and sell products for the greatest level of profit. Older pupils have lessons in how businesses function, as well as financial education informed by resources and visiting speakers from banking institutions.
41. Careers advice begins with learning in the junior school about different types of employment and a visit to an exhibition in London representing a wide range of careers opportunities. A careers programme for pupils in the senior school, which follows national benchmarks, culminates in individual interviews with an independent advisor as well as workshops for writing CVs and mock interviews. This support helps pupils to consider their next steps in education and their routes towards potential careers.
42. Children in the early years experience a range of activities which successfully promote their social development. Teachers provide a range of equipment and resources which the children use in their play, demonstrating that they can collaborate and share. Teachers encourage children to converse appropriately and listen to each other, and to be considerate of each other's needs.

43. Teachers establish polite manners with the children in early years, for example when receiving and eating their lunch. The school rules are clearly articulated to pupils and themes of 'right and wrong' are explored in the curriculum. As a result, pupils develop their understanding of how rules are important to help the school to function as a community and relate this to wider society.

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. Suitable safeguarding arrangements that reflect current statutory guidance are in place. Leaders respond appropriately whenever safeguarding concerns are raised. They liaise with parents appropriately and contact relevant external agencies when this is necessary. Referrals to safeguarding partners are made swiftly. Leaders maintain suitable records of safeguarding incidents and concerns. The proprietor monitors safeguarding appropriately in regular meetings with leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead.
46. Appropriate safeguarding training is undertaken by all staff, including that with regard to the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are trained appropriately for their role, as is the proprietor. Leaders check that staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities, including their role in noticing and passing on concerns, and the different forms that abuse can take.
47. Leaders encourage pupils to speak to staff if they have concerns about their welfare or that of their peers. In addition, pupils have access to letterboxes around the school which can be used to report concerns anonymously and are checked regularly.
48. Pupils learn about online safety and a number of measures are put in place to promote pupils' understanding in this respect. For example, pupils are taught never to post on social media whilst in their uniform, as this could reveal details of their identity. Appropriate filtering and monitoring are in place. Staff working with children in the early years follow the safeguarding policy's guidance relating to mobile phones and other devices that can record and share images.
49. Leaders implement appropriate procedures to respond to any allegations or low-level concerns about members of staff.
50. All appropriate safer recruitment checks are undertaken on new members of staff. Leaders maintain a single central record of appointments which records these checks accurately.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	St John's School
Department for Education number	881/6013
Address	St John's School 47 to 49 Stock Road Billericay Essex CM12 0AR
Phone number	01277 623070
Email address	office@stjohnsschool.net
Website	www.stjohnsschool.net
Proprietor	Mrs Joanne Osen
Headteacher	Mr Andreas Angeli
Age range	2 to 16
Number of pupils	292
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 February 2020

Information about the school

52. St John's School is an independent co-educational day school situated in Billericay. It is governed by the sole proprietor, who is the daughter of the previous owners.
53. There are 45 children in the early years, comprising two Nursery classes and a Reception class.
54. The school has identified 43 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
55. English is an additional language for 33 pupils.
56. The school states its aims are to provide a caring, purposeful, and encouraging environment where happy and hardworking pupils are taught in small classes by dedicated and experienced teachers.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 April to 2 May 2024

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

58. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor
- 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 the school.

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**.

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