



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION REPORT

ST DOMINIC'S PRIORY SCHOOL

MARCH 2018



Contents

SCHOOL’S DETAILS	3
1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION	4
About the school	4
What the school seeks to do	4
About the pupils	4
2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION	5
Preface	5
Key findings	6
PART 1 – Quality of education provided	6
PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	6
PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils	6
PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	6
PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools	7
PART 6 – Provision of information	7
PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled	7
PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools	7
THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	8
Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision	8
Effectiveness of leadership and management	8
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	9
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	10
Outcomes for children	11
Compliance with statutory requirements	11
Recommendation for further improvement	11
3. INSPECTION EVIDENCE	12

SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	St Dominic's Priory School			
DfE number	860/6011			
Registered charity number	1141147			
Address	St Dominic's Priory School 21 Station Road Stone Staffordshire ST15 8EN			
Telephone number	01785 814181			
Email address	info@stdominicspriory.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Harrison			
Chair of governors	Mr Mark Burton			
Age range	3 months to 16 years			
Number of pupils on roll	175			
	Boys	52	Girls	123
	Nursery	32	Prep	68
	Seniors	75		
Inspection dates	14 to 15 March 2018			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 St Dominic's Priory is a co-educational day school and Nursery for pupils from the age of 3 months to 16 years. The English Dominican Sisters founded the school in 1934. In May 2011 ownership of the school transferred from the English Dominican Congregation to a new independent charitable trust with a governing body. Since the previous inspection the school has ceased taking boarders and is currently in the process of restructuring its pre-school provision.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school's aim is to create a love for learning in a friendly and happy environment, to nurture individuality and instil in pupils a sense of community spirit and belonging. By knowing and understanding each child, the school believes it can tailor their learning and wider experiences, so they can achieve their full potential in a warm, loving environment.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds, mostly from White British families living within a 15-mile radius of the school. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability range of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 23 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. There are 2 pupils in the school with an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language for 1 pupil, whose needs are supported by their teachers. Data used by the school have identified 12 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 15 other pupils because of their special talents in sport, art, music or drama.

2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2014 to 2016, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools. Results in IGCSE biology, chemistry, and physics have been higher than worldwide norms. Results in IGCSE combined science and co-ordinated science have been similar to worldwide norms.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 **The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 **The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.12 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, and its results in public examinations, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

- 2.20 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is outstanding.
- 2.21 Due to the excellent levels of care and suitable learning experiences that the setting provides, the majority of children under the age of two meet or exceed the level of development that is typical for their age. Staff know the children for whom they take key responsibility exceptionally well and endow them with the confidence and skills to prepare them for the next stage in their education. Carefully planned activities ensure that children's individual needs are extremely well met and reflect their interests. Staff make good use of the setting's resources. The systems in place to identify children with additional needs are appropriate, and they are overseen by experienced and well-qualified staff. Children's personal and emotional development and well-being is given high priority and consequently the children forge excellent relationships with staff and feel happy and secure in their environment. Babies and toddlers separate quickly from their parents and settle easily with their key person. Each child benefits from high-quality individual time with adults. The setting has appointed a special education needs coordinator, thus meeting the action point from the previous inspection.
- 2.22 The requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare are fully met. Members of staff are fully aware of their responsibilities regarding safeguarding and have a thorough understanding of how to keep children safe. The outstanding outcomes for children are the result of the knowledgeable, inspiring and highly effective leadership and management that has established rigorous and supportive systems of monitoring, evaluation and assessment. All policies are implemented well and all necessary checks on staff have been undertaken.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- 2.23 The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding.
- 2.24 The strong leadership provided by the most senior staff results in an enthusiastic and strong EYFS team who share an ambitious vision to provide high-quality education and levels of care. A cycle of one-to-one supervision meetings and appraisals for staff is in place. This ensures that staff are extremely well supported in their roles as key people and that any training needs are identified and met. This impacts positively on children's learning and development.
- 2.25 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and comments from parent interviews during the inspection, highlighted that most parents are happy with the provision of care their children receive.
- 2.26 Self-evaluation is strong. Leaders evaluate the quality of provision and outcomes for children through robust, collaborative systems. The views of staff and parents are an important part of this process. Staff continually strive to improve the provision for care and learning to ensure that children receive an excellent start to their education.
- 2.27 Leaders and managers are effective in overseeing the educational plans, staff practice and children's records to ensure that the curriculum is suitably covered and offers a stimulating breadth of experiences.
- 2.28 Staff have excellent knowledge of the EYFS requirements. Carefully planned learning programmes, linked to these, ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of these young children forming firm foundations for future learning.

- 2.29 The regular monitoring of planning, together with the careful use of assessment data, ensures that learning experiences are matched to children's individual needs. Equality, diversity and British values of respect and tolerance are woven effectively into everyday experiences and routines. Staff ensure that appropriate resources are provided to stimulate children's awareness of other cultures. Poor behaviour is managed effectively, and staff expertly model the high standards expected. In this way, even the youngest children respect each other. Staff undertake regular safeguarding training, including training to prevent radicalisation and extremism, and they are highly aware of the actions to be followed if there is cause for concern, ensuring effective arrangements are in place.
- 2.30 Comprehensive policies and risk assessments ensure that children are kept safe. Procedures at the start and at the end of the day ensure a safe environment for all children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- 2.31 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.
- 2.32 Practitioners set high expectations and have an excellent awareness of the range of children's needs, which they support well. This means that all children, including those with additional needs as well as the more able, make at least good and often better progress in relation to their ability. Staff devise enjoyable, interesting and age-appropriate activities that enthuse and challenge all children, constantly stimulating their interest. Staff model language highly effectively for babies and toddlers, and they use books creatively to increase vocabulary.
- 2.33 Highly qualified staff throughout the setting have appropriate training and are very well attuned to the needs of the age group. They apply their secure knowledge of age-appropriate goals for individual children, seek further specific training if required and share this effectively with colleagues. Assessment information is continually gathered through photographs and written observations of the children, and is carefully kept in their learning journals. Staff regularly observe children's participation in activities to evaluate what children know, understand and can do. They make excellent use of these assessments to aid planning for next steps for future learning.
- 2.34 Interactions between staff and children are timely and purposeful, and they help to extend children's understanding and development. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to help children understand when they are doing well and how to develop. Members of staff engage positively with children during routine daily activities, such as nappy changing, to maximise opportunities for social and language development.
- 2.35 Excellent relationships with parents enable information about the children to be exchanged seamlessly at handover times. This includes 'wow' moments from school and home. A comprehensive handbook provides clear information about the Nursery. Parent's consultations, access to learning journals, 'stay and play' sessions and verbal feedback at the end of sessions help parents to understand and engage with their children's learning. Daily communication books also facilitate effective communication between home and school. All children receive informative bi-annual reports.
- 2.36 Staff recognise and embrace diversity. Resources showing different ethnic groups are used in children's play activities, increasing their understanding of the world. The children's cultural awareness is deepened through the celebration of various cultural festivals from Britain and around the world. Staff effectively facilitate both child-initiated and adult-led activities. They ensure that children from the earliest age are equipped with excellent learning skills as shown during an adult-led activity where children were using spades to fill buckets of sand to develop fine motor skills.

- 2.37 The curriculum is underpinned by the characteristics of effective learning, which ensures that all children are provided with equal opportunities to develop into enthusiastic and independent learners. Detailed evidence of achievement and development taken from observations is recorded in each child's learning journal.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- 2.38 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are outstanding.
- 2.39 Highly positive attitudes to learning and a consistent culture of praise and encouragement foster the development of the children's independence and their sense of curiosity. The staff encourage the children to listen, engage and enjoy their learning.
- 2.40 Children are happy to take risks to succeed in mastering new skills. Achievement is valued and celebrated, and children are praised when they have a go. Babies and toddlers demonstrate great confidence in their surroundings, using their increasing confidence and independence, as they feed themselves and clean their hands before eating. All children enjoy their learning. They are happy to explore the excellent range of learning opportunities provided. They relish the opportunities to use their imagination, for example during a role play shopping activity, using the till to scan the items and make the appropriate noise.
- 2.41 Transition arrangements within the setting are excellent. Children are effectively managed so that they are introduced to their new surrounding, and parents are fully supported throughout the process. Detailed handovers ensure that essential information about each child is passed on, enabling a smooth transition between rooms. Introductory taster days help new children settle smoothly into the setting's routines. The strong key person system ensures positive relationships and close bonds with children and their families. Well-established routines enable children to feel safe and secure emotionally and physically. Staff effectively promote prompt and regular attendance and accurate records are kept.
- 2.42 Children of all ages are encouraged to share and take turns. Younger children are content to play alongside each other, sharing resources as necessary. Members of staff use a gentle manner and consistent approach to manage behaviour. Important skills for life, such as learning about safety and healthy lifestyles, are introduced to the youngest children. This was evident when staff reinforced road safety rules whilst on an outing to the local library.
- 2.43 Nutritious food at lunchtime and tea time ensures that children have a balanced and healthy diet. High standards of care and hygiene support the children's personal needs. Regular time is spent outdoors, in the play area or on visits to various places in the local community, ensuring that children have fresh air and exercise in a safe and stimulating environment. Space is limited in the outdoor area that is frequently used by babies and toddlers, thus limiting the opportunities for physical and gross motor development. Children are developing an awareness of one another and readily engage in activities together. They are taught to respect each other and are beginning to develop an understanding of how they can contribute to wider society and life in Britain.

Outcomes for children

2.44 Outcomes for children are outstanding.

2.45 Children of all ages and abilities progress well from their individual starting points. Staff and managers carefully track children to ensure appropriate support and intervention is given. Babies and toddlers explore their environment with determination and excitement responding to the caring staff. This allows them to be emotionally secure and able to develop skills for the future. For example, on an outing to the local library, children choose books independently, turn the pages and look at the pictures, then return them to the box and choose another one. They are inquisitive and happy as they self-select their activities. The youngest children explored mark making using chunky crayons to make marks on paper. Toddlers were seen successfully tackling wooden shaped puzzles, manipulating the pieces to make them fit and exploring dinosaurs hidden in shredded paper. They listen attentively to stories and join in enthusiastically with songs, spontaneously and independently doing the actions. Children take great delight in recognising these and being able to join in with repeated phrases.

2.46 The development of children's communication and language skills is highly effective, supported effectively through open-ended questions from staff who repeat phrases and model language for them. The excellent learning environment is effective in encouraging children to be confident learners who are motivated to explore and investigate. This culminates in the fact that the majority of the children meet or exceed the level of development that is typical for their age so that they can effectively move on to the next stage of their education.

Compliance with statutory requirements

2.47 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Recommendation for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvement to its provision for children in the early years.

- Enable children to strengthen their physical and gross motor skills through the further development of their outdoor area.

3. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house meetings and chapel. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Graham Gorton	Reporting inspector
Mrs Judith McHugh	Compliance team inspector (Compliance officer, HMC school)
Mrs Valerie Holloway	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Former head of EYFS, IAPS school)