



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL

OCTOBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	St Catherine's School			
DfE number	936/6004			
Registered charity number	1070858			
Address	St Catherine's School Station Road Bramley Guildford Surrey GU5 0DF			
Telephone number	01483 893363			
Email address	schooloffice@stcatherines.info			
Headmistress	Mrs Alice Phillips			
Chair of governors	Mr Peter Martin			
Age range	4 to 18			
Number of pupils	905			
	Boys	0	Girls	905
	Day pupils	767	Boarders	138
	Pre-prep	91	Prep	164
	Seniors	481	Sixth Form	169
Inspection dates	05 to 06 Oct 2016			

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.

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 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 following their inspection 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.

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.

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 an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and grade descriptors from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff, the chair of governors and a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and form meetings, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and 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 Geoffrey Marston	Reporting inspector
Mrs Anne Camm	Team inspector (Headteacher, IAPS school)
Mr John Coakley	Team inspector (Principal, IAPS school)
Mrs Wendy Martin	Team inspector (Deputy head, Society of Heads school)
Mr John Pearson	Team inspector (Director of studies, HMC school)
Ms Clare Trelfa	Team inspector (Headteacher, ISA school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 St Catherine's School is an independent day and boarding school for girls between the ages of four and eighteen, situated in the village of Bramley, near Guildford in Surrey. The school was founded in 1885 and celebrated its 125th anniversary in September 2010. The school is a charity governed by its trustees, who are appointed for their experience and expertise.
- 1.2 Significant changes since the last inspection include the investment in new facilities, such as the school's 125th Anniversary Halls which provides the venue for musical concerts, plays and other events. Pupils can board from Year 7 upwards and pupils are provided with residential accommodation within four houses on the campus.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 As a Church of England foundation, the school seeks to promote Christian values, thoughts and deeds and actively encourages an awareness of and respect for the school community and the wider world, politeness, kindness and a concern for others. The school aims to provide both a breadth of opportunity for its pupils and an atmosphere of support and encouragement that will result in a happy educational experience. Further, it aims to give pupils opportunities to develop their own talents and abilities by providing a safe and healthy environment and personalised curriculum.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Day pupils mostly live within a 15-mile radius of the school and come from a variety of backgrounds. Boarders include a small number of children from overseas. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 123. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 14 prep school and 82 senior school pupils, who speak English as an additional language (EAL) but their fluency means that they very rarely need further support.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The school's own names differ from those used nationally; the details are given in the table below:

Pre-preparatory/Preparatory School

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Pre-Prep 1	Reception
Pre-Prep 2	Year 1
Pre-Prep 3	Year 2
Form 1	Year 3
Lower II	Year 4
Upper II	Year 5

Lower III	Year 6
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Senior School/Upper School

<i>School</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Upper III	Year 7
Lower IV	Year 8
Upper IV	Year 9
Lower V	Year 10
Upper V	Year 11
Lower VI	Year 12
Upper VI	Year 13

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an Interim inspection in December 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were to:
- Implement plans, as outlined in the school development plan, to improve the speed of broadband connections.
 - Finalise the nomination of a member of the governors' prep school committee to provide specific support and oversight for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- 1.7 The previous full inspection of boarding at the school by ISI was an Intermediate Boarding inspection in January 2014. The recommendation from that inspection was to:
- Review the provision of meals, including at weekends, to ensure that boarders have wider food choices.
- 1.8 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspections. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- All pupils are very well educated and their achievement represents a successful fulfilment of the school's ambitious aims, enabling all pupils to develop fully their own talents and abilities, which will properly equip them for the next stage of their lives.
- Pupils' positive attitudes, underpinned by their excellent rapport with teachers and their peers, enables them to take full advantage of the wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to develop their learning skills and enhance their achievement.
- Pupils' learning skills have been broadened as a result of the decision of the leadership and management of the school over the last decade to adapt the curriculum and continuing to invest resources in developing the use of information and communication technology.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- The personal development of pupils is supported by a school ethos that is characterised by a respect and concern for others and an empathy and awareness of the needs for those who are less fortunate.
- Pupils have highly developed collaborative skills, clearly evident in both lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils benefit from the outstanding balance that the school finds in supporting pupils' achievements and their personal development.

Recommendations

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- In line with the school's development plan, continue to develop the successful use of electronic tablets across the school.
- Continue to preserve the outstanding balance the school has achieved.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils' basic learning skills are at a particularly high level in all areas of learning across the school. Children in the EYFS make rapid progress in relation to their starting points so that by the end of Reception, almost all children perform at levels that are well above those expected for their age. They follow a curriculum which gives emphasis to the enhancement of their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, while still encouraging their wider intellectual and social development. With regard to a new approach of encouraging children to make decisions, the EYFS teaching areas and outside space have been developed to enable children to flow freely between rooms and decide which task to undertake at a variety of creative workstations. Teachers are adept at encouraging and cajoling, without compelling, children to try new activities. Through highly effective planning, teachers set a range of different challenges appropriate to the learning needs of all pupils. For example, children supported with their learning, were able to cut out photographs of a pumpkin lifecycle and place them in order, using a number line, for example and more able children were given the opportunity to develop their fine motor and counting skills in harvesting fruit from jelly in a finite time. Teaching in the setting demonstrates a clear understanding of how children learn, sets appropriately high expectations, gives exciting opportunities for independence in learning and is supported by excellent facilities. The school has successfully responded to the recommendation of the previous inspection and has had a strong governor oversight for six years with EYFS.
- 3.3 The prep school does not take part in national curriculum tests but evidence provided by the school suggests that attainment is well above age-related expectations. Pupils develop very good skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy, through a diverse and exciting curriculum offered. A formidable amount of extended writing opportunities are provided with some pupils performing at an outstanding level in both internal and external essay competitions. More able pupils, demonstrated the use of column subtraction methods to a very high level through a range of challenges set by the teacher. The progress in numeracy of all pupils has been given focus this year by leadership and management. Pupils' numeracy is further being supported by the development of new twilight sessions to advise parents of pre-prep and prep pupils on how to support mathematics learning at home. In Year 4, pupils start to understand their own learning styles and how their brains process and learn information through an embedded Thinking Skills scheme. The achievement of prep pupils with either SEND or EAL is excellent, as shown by the rapid progress they make in relation to their difficulties or starting points, with no significant differences in attainment from their peers. The sensible use of longitudinal tracking from Year 2 ensures that rapid levels of progress are made, with increasingly challenging targets set as pupils move up through the prep school and beyond.
- 3.4 Progress throughout the senior school, including pupils with SEND or EAL, is considerable, well monitored and leads to excellent public exam results. Results in IGCSE examinations have been above worldwide norms. Pupil progress is excellent and there are no significant differences between defined groups of pupils or areas of learning, as reflected in pupils' written work, displays and the observation of pupils' performance in lessons. They welcome any intellectual challenges given by staff. Data provided by the school confirmed that results in GCSE examinations for the last two years were well above the national average for maintained schools. In 2016, this level of attainment was maintained, with notable achievement in GCSE English. The opportunity is not always taken to allow pupils to develop more sophisticated skills through the use of tablet devices, sometimes by not making use of

the full functionality available for research and consolidation of further learning. The leadership and management of the school is already aware of the need to integrate this further into lesson planning. In contrast, pupils requiring support with dyslexia value the use of tablets in enabling them to reduce the time required for taking notes or accessing key texts already provided in the digital classroom area.

- 3.5 Progress is excellent because pupils follow a curriculum which is tailored to their ages and individual needs and teachers provide an inspiring learning environment for all its pupils. It is complemented by trips and visits which give real life context to their studies. They benefit from the interconnected academic and pastoral support provided. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of pupils disagreed that they knew how well they were doing in their subjects. However, this view was not shared by parents or by pupils spoken to during the inspection. School records showed that pupils have access to a clear indication of their progress in each subject via the St Catherine's grades system (SCAGs). The art and technology on display in the school shows creativity and independent thought. Pupils are beginning to demonstrate higher levels of ICT skills through the teaching of programming language skills throughout the curriculum from year 7. An excellent example of pupils' creativity and independent thought is in religious studies, where pupils are able to look at various materials around the philosophy and meaning of Christianity. The digital learning platform also enables pupils to have forums and debates as a class around a topic or tackle contentious questions posed by the teacher. The school's leadership and management have prioritised the further development of mobile digital learning in the school in their plans.
- 3.6 Attainment in the sixth form is above the national average for maintained schools. Data provided by the school shows that this has been maintained for 2016 and pupils make very good progress from their initial entry into the sixth form. Sixth formers are expected to undertake research projects as part of their academic studies, which helps them to develop research and enquiry skills, resilience and perseverance with their learning, equipping them well for higher education or direct employment. The quality of technical discussion is excellent, for example when taking on the Bronsted-Lowry theory of acids. Senior school pupils from Year 9 upwards are provided with excellent careers support, which allows them to make informed choices about their future. All senior school pupils are academically well prepared for sixth form studies, and consequently a very large majority of them achieve offers from highly rated universities. Interview skills workshops and work experience opportunities are provided. Former pupils speaking about their experiences, and survival skills in cookery and budgeting, further enhance the careers programme.
- 3.7 The range and quality of pupils' achievements in extra-curricular activities are considerable. Pupils participate in a range of activities that includes music, sport, dance, drama, art, chess, debating, sailing, equestrianism, the Young Enterprise Scheme (YES), community projects and charity fund raising. Pupils achieve extremely high success rates in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) at all levels every year, with notable success with the gold award in the sixth form, which is a result of extensive training and support provided by staff. A significant number of pupils have achieved success, either individually or as school teams, in national sport, music and debating competitions. Pupils regularly benefit from performing music and drama in the Auditorium of the 125th Anniversary Halls, which is a high quality venue. They achieve high standards in orchestra and choral concerts, ensembles, bands and whole school productions, as demonstrated by their successful recent performance of Hamlet. Pupils attain distinctions in music and theory examinations up to diploma level, across a wide range of instruments as a result of the excellent support from specialist qualified staff.

- 3.8 Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and they enjoy a strong rapport with their teachers and peers. Teachers create an ambience of encouragement in which learning thrives. They style questions that elicit deeper understanding in lessons, particularly amongst the more able. Pupils are naturally supportive of each other's successes. Sixth formers are able to become subject mentors to younger pupils and work alongside teachers and pastoral staff in regular weekly timetabled slots. Pupils are self-motivated and demonstrate very good study habits, often seeking help when necessary for example during form time in the prep school and period 7 in the senior school.
- 3.9 Boarding pupils achieve well above expectation for their ages due to the excellent support provided for their studies by their peers and boarding staff in the evenings and at weekends. This community spirit is further strengthened by the wide range of activities provided, such as trips to theme parks, museums, and theatres. Levels of participation in activities are high and pupils speak enthusiastically about their involvement.
- 3.10 The pupils are positive about their work and life at the school. A very large majority of those responding to the pre-inspection questionnaires said that they were making good progress and felt they were encouraged to become independent learners. The school successfully met the recommendation of the previous inspection and has invested significantly in its ICT infrastructure, resulting in faster broadband connections across the campus.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The leadership and management of the school ensure that pupils' personal development is strongly promoted alongside academic studies in line with the ethos of the school. Pupils have highly developed self-esteem and self-confidence for their age. They are self-reflective and set their own academic targets, seizing the opportunities provided by thought boxes in the prep school and the use of a hash sign (#) as a marking symbol in the senior school that indicates global verbal feedback will be given in class. They clearly take responsibility for any improvements to their work. In this way pupils readily gain a greater awareness about themselves and can learn from their mistakes. Since the previous inspection, the school has further developed a Life Matters programme which provides workshops for pupils to develop more resilience in their learning, through challenged based learning opportunities and well-being workshops.
- 4.3 Pupils know how to stay safe online and are actively engaged in the production of videos showing other pupils how to protect their own privacy and personal information online. The school works in parallel with parents to promote the personal development of pupils. The web-based parent portal allows quick communication to inform parents when report cards are being sent home as well as information about new initiatives at the school. For example, parents can access bespoke online guidance and interactive videos about the safe use of mobile technology at home. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, almost all parents said that teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future and that they regularly receive information about their children's performance and progress.
- 4.4 From the earliest years in the school, pupils develop an appreciation of the non-material aspects of life and for those less fortunate than themselves, through their spiritual reflection in chapel and their participation in music, art, literature and charity fund raising. In the prep school, pupils clearly demonstrated enjoyment when rehearsing their songs in preparation for the harvest festival and have opportunities to perform music recitals in chapel or assemblies. In the senior school, cross-curricular teaching in history and art, for example, enables pupils to gain an excellent understanding and appreciation of Baroque Art. Pupils grow in confidence as they move through the school. In the EYFS, children were able to articulate very clearly what tasks they had been given to complete and why they were doing them. In the EYFS and pre-prep, children are actively encouraged to participate in show and tell activities, which can include for example, about places they have visited or something they have been proud of cooking at home. Senior and sixth form pupils present regular update reports at whole school assemblies with examples including a recent trip to Italy or D of E expeditions.
- 4.5 Pupils understand how to be physically and mentally healthy, especially in terms of diet, exercise and balanced lifestyles, through the Life Matters programmes. In the questionnaires, almost all pupils stated that the school provides them with a safe and healthy environment, although a few boarding pupils disagreed that the food provided was of sufficient quality and quantity. However, a very large majority of pupils interviewed during the inspection opined that school food was of much better quality now, and their comments had been historic. The school has successfully responded to the previous boarding inspection recommendation and improved the provision of meals, including at weekends to ensure that boarders have wider food choices. Boarders speak positively of the menus which were revised in 2014 and the way in which the catering staff make the dining room feel homelier and cosy at weekends.

- 4.6 Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and of what is fair. The well-structured Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is incorporated into the school's Life Matters programme which, provides excellent opportunities for peer-to-peer and peer-to-staff discussion, for example, sharing toys in the EYFS and debating whether dictators should be paid to resign in the senior school. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for their own behaviour, which is inherent in the school's ethos, traditions and culture. Pupils understand that the decisions they make are important determinants of their own success and well-being. In the EYFS, children were observed clearly articulating through supportive questioning which areas they are allowed to go into, which doors they cannot go through during free flow lessons and why these rules are important for their own safety and well-being.
- 4.7 Pupils exhibit exemplary behaviour. They are polite and kind to each other and to adults. Year 5 pupils showed prospective parents around the prep school with confidence, answering questions articulately. In their questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of pupils said that bullying, including cyber-bullying, was very rare, and that they were confident that staff would take steps to resolve the matter quickly if it occurred. Pupils also reported to inspectors that they look out for each other and provide support to anyone who has concerns. A small minority of pupils said that some staff were inconsistent in awarding rewards and sanctions. However, records confirmed the pupils' observation that sanctions are rarely used, and any imbalance in the awarding of commendations by departments is insignificant.
- 4.8 Staff have excellent rapport with pupils as do pupils with their peers. There is an instilled culture of celebrating success with each other in a friendly but respectful environment. Sixth formers working, often but not exclusively, through the prefect and house captain systems act as role models to their peers and are always available for support, further enhancing the sense of community within the school. Pupils speak very highly of the help and advice they receive from prefects, of the mentoring provided by older pupils as well as the network of support available from teaching and non-teaching staff. The vertical tutoring system in both schools provides a conduit for older pupils to support the younger ones. The strong lines of communication between pastoral and teaching staff ensure that there is balanced view of pupils' academic and personal needs.
- 4.9 Pupils readily promote an understanding of their own and other cultures at the school. They are tolerant of others and respect differences, particularly those who have particular needs or characteristics. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the cultural diversity of the school community and regularly participate in various school planned national days, which also provides opportunities for boarders to eat themed menus. The pupils' clear awareness of the British values of democracy, tolerance and individual liberty are secured through a rich and varied assembly programme of guest speakers, presentations and self-reflection in chapel. Recently pupils' understanding of democracy was enhanced through a Year 6 led prep school "Brexit" referendum.
- 4.10 Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent. The chapel is at the heart of the school community and helps pupils to develop strong Christian values and to consider their own faith. Music enhances the spiritual experience in recitals, assemblies and chapel services, and regular music lessons are provided for a range of instruments. There is a great desire to take on responsibility and help support others within the school community and locally, as demonstrated by a pupil-initiated befriending project to link with residents of a local care home. Older boarders show excellent qualities of leadership, as they volunteer as shadow mentors to help new boarders settle in at the school. They send an introductory decorated

letter to new boarders before they arrive, which tells them about boarding life at the school and the support they will get from their many new friendships during their time at school. A significant number of pupils reported to inspectors that they have still maintained these friendships with the younger pupils, long after they have settled in. Sixth form pupils have also successfully worked collaboratively, providing swimming coaching for younger pupils from local primaries as well as hosting a sports day for one inner London primary school as part of the school's Outreach programme.

- 4.11 Pupils develop highly productive relationships with each other through a good range of opportunities to collaborate. From performing together in school drama productions, musicals, orchestras and competitive team-based sports, pupils learn how to persevere together and achieve common goals. Teachers' excellent planning allows for peer-to-peer assessment and group activities. Charity fund raising is yet another way in which pupils across the school work together in raising money for significant causes, which have included, for example, pupils experiencing hardship in Afghanistan, which has continued for over ten years.
- 4.12 Pupils report that boarding has helped immensely with their development of their own self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils recognise the importance of following the rules that govern boarding life. Highly effective pastoral and careers guidance is evident throughout the school and it enables pupils to develop the necessary skills for the next stages of their lives. By the time they leave school, they are able to think critically, have high aspirations and a self-belief that there are few things that they cannot achieve.