



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

St Pius X Preparatory School

November 2022

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School's Details

School	St Pius X Preparatory School			
DfE number	888/6004			
Registered charity number	526609			
Address	St Pius X Preparatory School 200 Garstang Road Fulwood Preston Lancashire PR2 8RD			
Telephone number	01772 719937			
Email address	enquiries@st-piusx.lancs.sch.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Patrick Gush			
Chair of governors	Mr Mark Hurst			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	122			
	EYFS	45	Juniors	77
Inspection dates	22 to 24 November 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St Pius X is a co-educational day school located in a residential area of Preston. Founded in 1955, the school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors. The school consists of the nursery for children aged two to four years and the main school for pupils aged from four to eleven years. The headmaster was appointed in January 2020 and the chair of governors took up his post in February 2020.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to ensure each pupil achieves their full potential through the integration of intellectual and personal development and interaction between home and school. It seeks to integrate prayer, worship and liturgy into school life and to pass on to its pupils a knowledge and understanding of the Roman Catholic faith. The school aims to foster a caring, polite and disciplined community and to help its pupils to become aware of their responsibilities to society.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds, most living in the local area. Data provided by the school indicated that the ability of the pupils is average when compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 25 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include autistic spectrum and sensory processing disorders and developmental delay, all of whom receive additional help. Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for seven pupils, whose needs are met through individual support. Data used by the school have identified ten pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified to meet their needs.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection 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. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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 standards 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 and relevant 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 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 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 in 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 and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' 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 published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes 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 any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, 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.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports 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.

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

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Little Acorns	Nursery (2 to 3 years)
Great Oaks	Nursery (3 to 4 years)

Key findings

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

- Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points; they achieve at high levels academically and beyond the classroom.
- Pupils are highly effective communicators. They are attentive listeners, eloquent speakers, and read and write with maturity and fluency.
- Pupils develop excellent abilities for their ages to hypothesise, analyse and synthesise.
- Pupils display excellent attitudes to their learning.

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

- Pupils display excellent levels of confidence and self-understanding.
- Pupils have a highly developed understanding of right and wrong.
- Pupils' understanding of the diversity of backgrounds, faiths and needs in the school community is outstanding; this actively contributes to the culture of respect which pervades the school.
- Pupils' social skills are excellent; their care and consideration for others is evident throughout the school.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Enable pupils throughout the school to improve their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and increase their application of these skills in other subjects.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils make excellent progress, as seen in assessment data, lesson observations and work scrutiny, with the majority attaining levels in advance of age-related expectations. Children make rapid progress during their time in the EYFS. This is due to the successful implementation of systematic development planning, which focuses on the ongoing improvement of attainment. Excellent progress is maintained throughout the school, with pupils of all ages achieving at levels which are excellent in relation to their abilities. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND, EAL and the more able achieve highly as a result of targeted support in lessons and senior leaders' effective use of assessment data to identify individual pupils' needs. The vast majority of parents who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching, including online provision, enables their child to make progress. Pupils who answered all agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons.
- 3.6 Pupils achieve considerable success in academic and other areas, in fulfilment of the school's aim to educate the whole person. They pursue a wide range of interests, often outside their natural areas of strength, in response to the school's encouragement to take part in activities in school and external events. Pupils are highly successful in music and drama examinations and in photography and engineering competitions. The quality of poetry published in county anthologies is excellent for their age. These accomplishments reflect the school's successful focus on creativity, curiosity and imagination. Sporting success at local and county levels is enhanced by specialist teaching against the backdrop of the school's sport-for-all ethic. Individual pupils are successful at county level in a variety of sports and are well-supported by the school in sustaining their challenging schedules. Pupils are highly successful in gaining places at their first choice grammar and senior schools, many with demanding and competitive entry requirements. A good proportion are offered scholarships for all round achievement, drama and sport.
- 3.7 Pupils are fluent and eloquent speakers who listen with great interest and attention to each other. Children in the EYFS make excellent progress in speech and language, responding to the school's individually tailored approach and close communications with parents. Older pupils speak with great poise and fluency in class, to visitors and in public, benefiting from encouragement to take part in class discussions and from public speaking lessons. Pupils in a Year 3 English lesson recited the poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson, incorporating their own ideas with great clarity and a clear sense of rhythm. Pupils of all ages display a love of reading, fostered by daily reading sessions and the leadership's investment in an attractive and well-stocked library. They are enthusiastic and fluent readers, employing these skills to good effect throughout the school day. Pupils of all abilities, and those with EAL read aloud to inspectors, demonstrating a mature understanding and a readiness to tackle challenging texts. Pupils write to a high standard in variety of forms and transfer these skills effectively to other curriculum areas. Work on display around the school and in pupils' writing portfolios demonstrates their advanced facility in writing not only poetry and spooky stories, but newspaper articles, fact files about imaginary creatures and science experiments.
- 3.8 Pupils develop excellent study skills through numerous opportunities for them to hypothesise, synthesise and analyse in their lessons. In the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents said that the school equips their child with the collaborative and research skills they need in later life; inspection evidence amply supports this view. Independent project work in pupils' books demonstrates their ability to draw information from a wide range of sources and apply this to their own studies. Topics investigated range from detailed and personalised research on different aspects of the USA to a consideration of the benefits and purpose of fair trade, and comparisons of different historical eras. Pupils are adept at presenting their work in different formats, as seen in posters about life cycles and avalanches. They plan and carry out their own investigations and experiments in science lessons, being challenged to do so from a young age. Pupils are regularly challenged to utilise their analytical abilities in English lessons. This was evident in pupils' use of context and imagination to

suggest words to replace those in a section of Robert Louis Stevenson's poetry. Another example was seen in convincing and mature written arguments about whether graffiti is art or vandalism.

- 3.9 Pupils display excellent attitudes to their work in a learning environment where they feel able to take risks, make mistakes and seize the opportunities offered to them. They engage fully in both independent and collaborative activities and readily take leadership in their learning, such as when choosing the focus of science experiments or history topics. Children begin to exert an influence over their own learning from the start of their time in the EYFS, encouraged to persevere with self-chosen challenges during 'tricky time'. Older pupils told inspectors about the decisions they make about how to present information in history or which methods to use when solving problems in mathematics. Pupils work extremely productively in pairs and groups, doing so without hesitation when presented with opportunities to do so throughout the day. Excellent partner work was seen when Year 6 pupils discussed tolerance and respect and in a Year 2 paired reading session. Pupils are highly focused and attentive in class, responding to the highly positive and productive relationships between staff and pupils. They are keen to do well and relish opportunities to challenge themselves, inspired by the regular use of praise and encouragement in the classroom.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate excellent skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum in response to engaging and well-paced teaching and a curriculum which allows them to pursue their own interests and ideas. Their achievements in science and technology are evident in their success in winning a county-wide competition in these areas. They have excellent knowledge of the humanities and French, and displays around the school demonstrate their achievements in art and design. Pupils answering the questionnaire all stated that their teachers know their subjects well and know how to help them learn, a view which was supported by inspection evidence. Pupils' achievements are strongly supported by their access, from the earliest age, to specialist teaching and resources in subjects including music, French, art and sport. Reception children demonstrated a wide knowledge of French vocabulary, whilst Year 1 and 2 pupils used and named specialist equipment in art with precision and confidence. Older pupils exercised skilful control of the ball in both football and netball, making evident progress during the lesson. Those in Year 6 exhibited excellent knowledge and understanding of scientific terms, such as migration, nocturnal, brumation and hibernation.
- 3.11 Pupils are highly competent mathematicians, developing their skills to a high level. Pupils with SEND achieve well and the more able respond to the open-ended nature of the work set in order to fully extend their skills. This is because of detailed planning which includes activities, support and challenge for pupils with different needs and abilities. Pupils in a Year 3 lesson showed an excellent understanding of time. Those in Year 6 demonstrated agility and confidence when identifying their preferred methods of calculating long division problems. Pupils are able problem-solvers in the upper years and utilise their numeracy to good effect in other subject areas. This was seen in the effective use of numerical data when creating spreadsheets in an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson. Pupils use their mathematical skills to compare rainfall in different locations and record their findings in geography. They accurately undertake measurements and calculations in science and design lessons and create timelines in history.
- 3.12 Pupils develop age-appropriate skills in computing, enabled by the governors' provision of resources and software to support their learning in ICT and its use in other areas of the curriculum. Older pupils demonstrated good levels of competency in lessons and when showing inspectors their work. They have a good understanding of coding and can explain their work confidently, using subject specific vocabulary. Pupils use electronic tablets to undertake research in science, history and geography, but their use of ICT skills across the curriculum is less well developed. Younger pupils acquire word processing and coding skills, and access suitable software and online programs to enable them to further their skills, knowledge and understanding in other subjects. However, their skills are not fully developed as they do not have regular opportunities to use ICT throughout the curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils become extremely self-possessed and mature individuals in response to senior leaders' promotion of highly positive and nurturing relationships throughout the school. Those who join the school with low levels of confidence swiftly grow in independence. Pupils who spoke to inspectors reflected on their personal strengths and pride in the school with insight and enthusiasm. They discussed with maturity the options open to them in the future, having been inspired by a 'Future me' day to consider careers as diverse as artist, engineer, vet and composer. Pupils are self-disciplined and resilient, ready to take risks in an environment where they are confident of receiving support should they need it. Pupils tackle problems with confidence, assessing for themselves whether help from their peers or teachers is required. They understand how to improve their work, using feedback from teachers and personalised targets to guide them. Pupils progress smoothly through the different stages of the school, supported by collaborative transition procedures in the EYFS and personalised support as they prepare to move to their senior schools.
- 3.15 Pupils have a deep-seated sense of right and wrong, viewing good behaviour as the norm. This is due to their excellent understanding and appreciation of the school's positive behaviour policy, which begins in the EYFS and is maintained throughout the school. Younger pupils readily report perceived injustices. Older pupils understand the impact of their actions upon others and have a clear understanding of the importance of laws in wider society. They reflect on the importance of kindness, apologising and learning from mistakes in their PSHE lessons. All pupils answering the questionnaire agreed that the school expects pupils to behave well and sorts out poor behaviour when it occurs. Observations during the inspection support this view and confirm the school's fulfilment of its aim to be a caring, courteous and disciplined community. Pupils displayed an enthusiasm for school and were keen to get to their next lessons and activities, but were observed to be consistently polite and self-disciplined.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate an intuitive acceptance of others, whatever their differences might be, and actively seek ways in which to support and include others. Pupils' broad understanding of the lives of others is promoted by the wider school curriculum, which enables pupils to learn about their own and other cultures. Pupils discussed numerous examples of difference, including gender, financial background, beliefs, race, and personality. Pupils show a mature awareness of the need for inclusion, encouraging their friends to play at break time and attempting to communicate with peers with EAL. Older pupils are particularly understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND, explaining that they need to do things differently. Pupils have an excellent understanding for their age of the Catholic faith and of other faiths. They relish the opportunity to participate in the democratic process when electing school councillors. Pupils have an excellent understanding of tolerance and respect, recognising that the latter must be given if it is also to be received. Almost all parents answering the questionnaire said that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. All pupils who answered stated that the pupils are kind and respect each other.
- 3.17 Pupils' social development is excellent, reflecting the atmosphere of care and consideration for the needs of others that permeates the school. This begins in the EYFS where the very youngest children were observed interacting non-verbally with each other as they played on their bikes and trikes. Reception pupils instinctively follow collaborative routines such as tidying the classroom. They quickly acquire excellent social skills by following the example of staff and older pupils, who model compassionate and collaborative relationships throughout the school. Younger pupils are proud to support new pupils as buddies. They voluntarily help other pupils and staff in the dining room and invariably ask after the well-being of visitors to the school. Pupils' excellent manners are evident in lessons, seen when pupils invited their partners to take the first turn in a maths activity. The oldest pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of what friendship means and speak of the school as a family. They work with great success to achieve common goals when organising charitable events, sports days and assemblies, and celebrate each other's successes in passing entrance exams to senior

schools. Parents overwhelmingly agreed in the questionnaire that the school helps their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills, a view that was clearly substantiated by inspection findings.

- 3.18 Pupils engage with a sense of pride and accomplishment in the wide range of meaningful positions of responsibility available to them. Pupils from Year 1 upwards apply for pupil-elected places on the school council. Councillors explained in interview how important their role was and what they had learnt about leadership, including the need to be kind. Every member of Year 6 also supports younger children in the EYFS, often giving up their own time to do so. Pupils engage with compassion in the many opportunities available to them to contribute to the lives of others in the local and wider community. They make donations to a food bank and sing to the residents of a home for the elderly in the local area. Pupils are pleased to be able to select a charity themselves each year and to support a number of national and international charities, including a school in Nepal. In this way the school is successful in achieving its aim for pupils to become aware of their responsibilities to society.
- 3.19 Pupils demonstrate a deep and instinctive appreciation of the non-material in response to the consistent promotion of the school's values by staff and senior leaders. This is evident in their responses to the regular opportunities for reflection provided during the school day, when they are invariable calm and thoughtful. Beginning their day with a time of reflection and prayer, pupils demonstrate a thoughtful awareness of the needs of others when saying prayers for family members. Older pupils showed great empathy when discussing the plight of evacuees in World War 2 and the character of Scrooge. Pupils have an excellent appreciation for their age of their faith, the school's values, family, friends, good health and education. Pupils new to the school described the kindness shown to them before starting. Others told inspectors about their enjoyment of the daily sessions of Rosary prayer offered during the month of November when they can reflect and think about those who are special to them.
- 3.20 Pupils make mature and carefully considered decisions throughout their lives at school, gaining a mature awareness of their impact on their future lives and on others. Children in the EYFS make daily choices about the activities they engage with and the resources they use. As they grow in maturity, so do pupils' decision making skills, as they help to select charities to support and members of the school council. They make increasingly important academic choices over time, such as how to present their work or what topic to research. By the time they leave the school, pupils have made numerous decisions about the course of their lives in school. These include which positions of responsibility to apply for, when to complete their homework, what level of challenge to work at in lessons and whether to enter competitions in school. The oldest pupils confidently make wise decisions about their learning. They are highly aware of the importance of the decisions they make about future schools and appreciative of the support of adults in this respect.
- 3.21 Pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay healthy, fostered by the school's provision of opportunities for exercise and healthy choices at lunch times. Pupils know how to stay physically healthy and appreciate the care taken by the school to provide them with healthy food and to ensure their allergies are known and understood. They engage regularly and actively in physical activities, making full use of the plentiful outdoor spaces and resources for outdoor play. Older pupils confidently explained the means by which they can stay safe when online, following the effective implementation of the PSHE and ICT curricula. Pupils know how to stay safe in the outside world and take sensible precautions when moving around the school. They understand the importance of staying healthy in mind as well as body, recognising the need to relax as well as to work hard.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions 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 assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Karen Williams	Reporting inspector
Mrs Karen Keeton	Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Nick Vernon	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)