

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

St Christopher's School

November 2022

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School's Details

School	St Christopher's S	School		
DfE number	846/6011			
Registered charity number	307061			
Address	St Christopher`s School 33 New Church Road Hove East Sussex BN3 4AD			
Telephone number 01273 735404				
Email address	office@stchristophershove.org.uk			
Head	Ms Elizabeth Lyle			
Chair of governors Mr Adrian Underwood				
Age range	4 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	281			
	Pre-Prep	95	Middle School	113
	Upper School	73		
Inspection dates	1 to 3 November 2022			

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1. Background Information

About the school

1.1 St Christopher's School is an independent co-educational day school. One of the Brighton College family of schools, it is administered by its own board of governors. The school is divided into three sections: pre-prep for pupils from Reception to Year 3, middle school comprising Years 4 to 6 and upper school for Years 7 and 8. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is located about a mile away on the same site as the school's playing fields. The current head was appointed in September 2021 and most of the senior management team have been appointed since the previous inspection.

What the school seeks to do

1.2 The school's primary aim is to give all its pupils a first-class academic education within a supportive family environment. It seeks to enable pupils to grow as individuals, learn the habits of hard work and careful study and to take responsibility for their own actions, considering the welfare of others. The objective is for pupils to enjoy discovering and developing their own talents and interests, appreciating the value of self-discipline and high standards in preparation for the next stage of their education.

About the pupils

1.3 Pupils represent the range of social and cultural backgrounds in the local area. Whilst pupils in the pre-prep are not assessed for cognitive ability, the school's assessment of pupils in the prep indicates that their ability is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 50 pupils as having special needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia, dyscalculia and specific learning difficulties, 30 of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 26 pupils, 4 of whom receive additional support. Work is modified for more able pupils and pupils are set according to ability from Year 5.

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 <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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.

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: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

Key findings

2.1 The school does not meet all of the required 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 should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

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 in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. 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 [paragraph 5] is met.

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 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 school's safeguarding policy was amended during the inspection to fully reflect local protocols for referral to children's services. Staff undertake suitable and regular training and are conscientious in reporting any concerns promptly. Safeguarding concerns are recorded and suitable action is taken to promote the child's welfare. However, safeguarding records are not clear and at the beginning of the inspection did not contain sufficient detail to identify actions taken in relation to concerns and a clear chronology of events. These records, therefore, do not meet the requirements of current statutory guidance.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9–16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but that in paragraph 7 [safeguarding] is not met.

Action point 1

The school must ensure that safeguarding records hold all information clearly in accordance with statutory guidance [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.7].

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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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

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

PART 6 - Provision of information

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.19 The proprietor has not ensured 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. The proprietor has not monitored safeguarding records with sufficient rigour to ensure that they are maintained in line with statutory guidance.
- 2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.

Action point 2

The school must ensure that the proprietor exercises sufficient rigour in the monitoring of safeguarding records [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c].

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.

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
 - Pupils' overall attainment is high. They make at least good and often excellent progress over time.
 - Pupils apply their excellent skills in literacy and numeracy well across the curriculum.
 - Pupils demonstrate study skills of a high order, which enable them to successfully conduct independent research from a range of digital and documented sources.
 - Pupils display highly positive attitudes to their learning. They are very well motivated and actively engage in all their activities.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - Pupils display high levels of self-awareness and self-discipline which help them to reflect maturely on their academic strengths and areas for development.
 - Pupils demonstrate excellent moral understanding and take mature responsibility for their own behaviour.
 - Pupils have a particularly strong sense of community. They perform their roles of responsibility conscientiously.
 - Pupils exhibit a deep appreciation of diversity and cultural understanding, viewing kindness as essential to their relationships.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
 - Enable pupils to develop greater awareness of non-material aspects of life through more opportunities to reflect on how their relationships, the natural world and arts contribute to their well-being.

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' overall achievement is excellent. In the EYFS, many children achieve the early learning goals before the end of their reception year. Further up the school, nationally standardised test data confirm that attainment is well above the average for pupils taking the same tests nationally. The school's own data confirm that pupils make at least good and often a high rate of progress and that there is no

significant difference between groups of pupils in this regard. Inspection evidence supports this, for instance through scrutiny of their work, meetings with pupils and lesson observations. Pupils with SEND typically maintain a similar rate of progress and achieve well in relation to their abilities. This is because leaders make effective use of assessment data to identify any learning needs, which leads to prompt action should long- or short-term support be required, either with strategies in class or through withdrawal in groups or individually. The academic success of pupils is reflected when they transfer and all gain places at their chosen senior school. The most able pupils make rapid progress due to being given additional challenge and each year results in scholarship examinations confirm their high attainment. Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils develop high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding which they apply very effectively across the curriculum. Children in the EYFS extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of key learning objectives as they engage in well-planned interesting activities. Younger pupils develop their knowledge of the natural world through regular activities such as mapping and classification at the beach and in the woods. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of science through practical investigations, such as making copper sulphate crystals. They are able to process information to develop their understanding of a topic. For example, in physics, older pupils discovered and questioned techniques to gain information from experiments to ensure that they were achieving the most effective and efficient methods of data gathering. In physical education, pupils show a developing understanding of physiology as they discuss which activities need to be performed three times to be a fair test, linking their knowledge to science. Careful lesson planning within a wellstructured curriculum affords pupils many opportunities to consolidate learning and apply it. In the questionnaire, almost all pupils agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons and that teachers know their subjects well. Pupils demonstrate creative flair such as when creating colourful and imaginative collages in art or linking to their study of the Big Friendly Giant, designing advertisements for a drink in their 'Giants Gazette'.
- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate an excellent ability to communicate. They are very articulate when expressing their knowledge and ideas in discussions across the curriculum. Pupils assert that they have a voice and that their opinions are listened to and valued. Consequently, there is a strong listening culture and respect for the values and opinions of others. Pupils display an evident love of reading which features prominently in the daily school routine where the development of fluency and comprehension is a priority. In Reception, children enjoy and are motivated by their older buddies coming to read to them. They quickly master sounds and acquire pre-reading skills. For example, they sang an alphabet song using sounds including digraphs with confidence and enthusiasm. Older pupils, add intonation and expression when reading, creating atmosphere and engaging the listener. Work scrutiny shows that from a young age pupils develop notably strong written communication skills, often producing writing of high quality for different purposes. Children in Reception make rapid progress from emerging mark making skills to formal letter formation and by the time they reach Year 1 write in competent full sentences. This is the result of carefully structured teaching of handwriting, punctuation and grammar across a range of genres. Older pupils go on to develop highly competent literacy skills, as observed in Year 4 where pupils confidently worked through the full process of planning using a mind map, writing a first draft, and then refining their work successfully.
- 3.8 Pupils acquire high levels of competency in mathematics. From a young age they demonstrate a secure knowledge of mathematical concepts and can apply their knowledge to problem solving. Children in Reception can subitise numbers to make five and they then apply this knowledge to exploring the equivalent number bonds. They use every opportunity to reinforce their knowledge of mathematical language, for example counting how many people in the line. Pupils in Year 6 were observed making excellent progress with their understanding of equivalent fractions and how to compare them, since teaching strategies within sets differed to address their varying abilities. Pupils say how much they enjoy mathematics lessons and that being taught a variety of methods to resolve mathematical problems helps them to overcome any difficulties. They apply their mathematical skills to other

- subjects, such as grid references in geography. In science, pupils were able to confidently recall and apply prior learning of formulae and then use data gained from an experiment to determine an answer.
- 3.9 Pupils of all ages use information and communication technology (ICT) highly competently. Younger pupils use the cameras on their computers to create and manipulate photos taken, whilst also understanding the importance of privacy and respecting other people's wishes in relation to images. Pupils learn coding and by the upper school can use several programming languages. Some pupils have achieved success in national STEM competitions where they had to use technology to complete challenge booklets. Older pupils are highly proficient in their directed and independent use of computers, such as for presenting work, research and revision. They undertake independent research capably and also communicate with staff by email or in their online feedback via their online classroom.
- 3.10 Pupils exhibit excellent study skills. Younger pupils learn to articulate their ideas through the highly effective use of working with partners. Pupils in Year 1 check and edit their work and by Year 4 pupils can critique work according to success criteria. As they grow older, they competently obtain knowledge from a range of digital and documented sources. For example, in a lesson on World War 1 poets, older pupils gathered information to help them determine when in the war a poem was written. They then inferred how the poet might have been feeling at this point compared to the start of the war. Pupils are able to analyse unseen texts in English and draw conclusions from data in science. They develop excellent critical thinking skills through mathematics challenges and reasoning lessons. Younger pupils conduct research competently, such as when producing leaflets with information about flora, fauna and geographical features from chosen areas of the world.
- 3.11 Pupils are very successful in their academic and other achievements. The most able regularly achieve academic, sports, drama and music scholarships to their senior schools. Pupils take part successfully in academic competitions such as the UK Maths Challenge and local inter-school spelling, general knowledge, science and debating competitions. Despite being a small school, sports teams achieve considerable success in various sports including rugby, football, netball and cricket, and leaders ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to represent the school in fixtures. Older pupils talk with passion about their appreciation of the many opportunities to progress in sport and represent their school. Many pupils take part in the regular drama performances staged each year. Pupils are also successful in external music and speech and drama examinations.
- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are outstanding and show successful fulfilment of the school's aims. They actively engage in lessons, displaying a positive and co-operative approach. Younger pupils listen very attentively to direct teaching, but equally settle quickly and with focus to individual work. Pupils are keen to become involved and discuss their thoughts, but their strength is their ability to wait and listen to others in order to discuss what they have heard. This was seen across the observations, including in personal, social and health education (PSHE) where they reached an understanding of various points of view in a playground scenario on friendship. Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy the varied activities in lessons, whether learning weather songs in French to the use of crocodiles in Year 6 mathematics to depict more than or less than number relationships. Whilst they relish working independently, they are highly productive in collaborative work. In performing arts, they are extremely well focused and intent on improving their own performance.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils exhibit a high level of self-awareness and self-discipline, in successful fulfilment of the school's aims. From a very early age, because pupils are actively encouraged to move outside their 'comfort zone', they are willing to take risks and develop independence. Younger pupils challenge themselves in woodland activities and are actively involved in a visual risk assessment for each visit to the beach.

Most pupils display a measured self-confidence and are willing to work hard to achieve their personal goals. Older pupils are able to reflect maturely on their academic strengths and areas for development. They are keen to develop themselves in lessons, and in interviews were able to voice what they would do if they were struggling, explaining how they could help themselves. This is the result of clear feedback on their work from staff as well as the school's highly effective pastoral arrangements. Leaders and staff make themselves available to offer individual support, particularly when they perceive pupils might be anxious about their performance and pupils appreciate this is key to their success. Most pupils indicated in the questionnaire that the school listens to them and that their teachers are supportive.

- 3.15 Pupils have a keen understanding of the importance of making good decisions. In Reception they choose the order of activities in which they wish to engage. As they progress through the school their ability to make positive decisions about their learning, personal development and relationships develops strongly. Pupils make carefully considered decisions which positively affect all aspects of their school life, such as to join the eco club or school council, through which they make confident decisions to improve the community. They appreciate the opportunities to make choices about their charitable endeavours and are aware that these have long-term impact.
- 3.16 Pupils have good spiritual awareness. They articulate a clear understanding of the importance of values such as kindness, in promoting the happiness of the school community. Older pupils discern the helpfulness of stillness and reflection in the context of calming their anxiety before examinations, but most do not link such activities with their sense of self and general wellbeing. They show aesthetic awareness and an appreciation of the feelings of others. For example, during an art lesson pupils requested a 'gallery walk' where they observed each other's incomplete artwork and shared their thoughts on why they enjoyed what others had created. Their praise was natural and clearly a regular occurrence which the pupils relish and use to help develop their own personal learning. The pupils enjoy opportunities to express themselves in music, dance and drama. They are thoughtful and deeply respectful of other viewpoints and beliefs.
- 3.17 Pupils' moral understanding and the level to which they take responsibility for their own behaviour is excellent. Their excellent behaviour reflects their understanding of the need for rules and laws and many can explain why they need to be adhered to. In the questionnaire, all the pupils and almost all the parents were positive about the school's promotion of good behaviour. The pupils show a high level of respect for one another and are reflective and open to learning from their mistakes. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, readily acknowledging the nurturing role that their teachers have in this aspect of their personal development. Pupils show strong moral understanding in a variety of contexts, from discussing playground scenarios from differing viewpoints in Year 4, to the reasons why underage conscriptions occurred at the start of World War 1 in Year 7. In this activity, pupils were able to show their understanding of what people of the day would have been feeling but also how they would have personally felt and acted, knowing what they know now. Older pupils are aware of the need to make moral judgements based on verifiable evidence and therefore state that they must approach any reported news with caution. They show a strong ability to understand another point of view, stating that fairness is an important consideration.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate a high level of social awareness. They are very supportive of one another and unanimous in saying that pupils in the school are kind to each other. Pupils of all ages demonstrate practical support and care for one another. They work together productively, for example working out strategies for how to complete a computing challenge rapidly. Older pupils state their awareness that they sometimes need to actively find common ground in order to successfully work together. Senior pupils are appreciative of the opportunities that they have to work with, and support younger pupils, through the 'buddy system' where pupils in Years 7 and 8 befriend a pupil in Reception or Year 1. Pupils naturally seek out opportunities to support others, as seen in lessons and meetings during the inspection, where they ensured no-one was left out. They can exemplify situations where they have worked together to achieve common goals, for example during woodland activities, when they work

- together to build shelters and rope ladders. Reception children were observed working together spontaneously and harmoniously to build towers from construction bricks. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes democracy, respect and tolerance. The leadership ensures that teamwork is actively and regularly taught in house activities so that pupils learn the tools for effective collaboration.
- 3.19 Pupils make a strong contribution to others, their school and the wider community. The leadership has introduced to good effect a number of initiatives focused on developing their sense of responsibility through assemblies, the house system and school council. Pupils are proud to hold positions of responsibility, ranging from form captains to house captains and prefects in Year 8, and undertake these conscientiously. The 'buddy system' promotes the feeling of family within the school and older pupils talk warmly of receiving similar care when younger, which they wish to replicate. Pupils are confident that they use their voice to elicit beneficial change since leaders listen and respond to their suggestions. Having looked at pollution in their community, pupils work hard to improve their environment, including, where possible, using environmentally friendly methods to travel to school. They value their work in the eco group, which has helped the school achieve *Eco School* status. Their commitment can be seen in posters outside the school to remind adults to turn off engines and not to double park on the road. Pupils talk proudly of their diverse charitable work which they initiate and organise in their houses. Recently they have collected money and food to donate to a local charity for the homeless. Younger pupils collected items to make welcome packs for refugee children and included personally written welcome letters.
- 3.20 Pupils' appreciation for diversity and cultural understanding are excellent. They identify the school's culture of mutual respect as a key driver in this area. Consequently, they are highly respectful of their peers, teachers and visitors. They are supportive of diversity within their own and wider community, taking every opportunity to learn about and share each other's culture and traditions. Pupils identify that the school is a very caring community and assert their belief that its values of trying hard, being kind and taking care, are fully understood and embedded. They wholeheartedly accept each other, stating their view that they are all equal and that no-one should be judged on their differences. Older pupils say they are in a welcoming and safe environment where they can share their thoughts, questions or viewpoints with others. This was evident in both lessons and their free play. Pupils' understanding of others helps to create an environment where all are welcomed and accepted without question.
- 3.21 Pupils exhibit a well-developed understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. They understand how to maintain their wellbeing through eating healthily and taking sufficient exercise. Pupils particularly value opportunities to improve and maintain their physical fitness and are keen participants in sports lessons and fixtures. Their good understanding of a healthy diet is shown as they make sensible choices from the varied selection of food at lunchtime. They are very knowledgeable and confident about online safety. Their awareness of mental and emotional health is grounded in the school's teaching of mindfulness and an understanding of how breathing techniques may help with anxiety. Pupils are able to discuss the importance of having a support network, as was observed in Year 4 PSHE, where important elements to make a relationship were cited as being able to trust each other and being kind.

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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 and another governor, and attended form time and an assembly. 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 Jan Preece Reporting inspector

Mrs Naomi Fowke Compliance team inspector (Former head, ISA school)

Mr James Ashcroft Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)