



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

St Christopher's School

June 2023

Contents

School's Details	3
1. Background Information	4
About the school	4
What the school seeks to do	4
About the pupils	4
2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection	5
Preface	5
Key findings	6
PART 1 – Quality of education provided	6
PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	6
PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils	6
PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	6
PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools	6
PART 6 – Provision of information	7
PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled	7
PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools	7
3. Educational Quality Inspection	8
Preface	8
Key findings	8
Recommendations	8
The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements	8
The quality of pupils' personal development.	10
4. Inspection Evidence	13

School's Details

School	St Christopher's School			
DfE number	936/6028			
Registered charity number	312045			
Address	St Christopher's School 6 Downs Road Epsom Surrey KT18 5HE			
Telephone number	01372 721807			
Email address	office@st-christophers.surrey.sch.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Bronia Grehan			
Chair of governors	Mr Dominic Roberts			
Proprietor	St Christopher's School Trust (Epsom) Ltd			
Age range	2 to 7			
Number of pupils on roll	173			
	Nursery	69	Pre-Prep	104
Inspection dates	6 to 8 June 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St Christopher's School is a co-educational pre-preparatory school. It is organised into a nursery for two year groups, nursery and pre-reception pupils and a two-form entry pre-prep for pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. The school was founded in 1938 and became a charitable trust in 1965. It is administered by a board of ten governors, many of whom are former parents. A new nursery and pre-reception building has opened since the previous inspection, catering for an extended age range, so that children may now enter at the age of 2 years. A new headteacher and chair of governors were appointed in 2022.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to provide a happy and purposeful environment, which provides each pupil with a broad and challenging education within a secure family atmosphere. It places a strong emphasis on good manners and behaviour, and promotes curiosity, autonomy, and collaboration from the youngest age. The school seeks to foster strong relationships with parents to ensure a seamless transition from home to school.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds living within a 5-mile radius of the school. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of pupils is average on entry. The school has identified 10 pupils as having special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including one pupil who has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as speech and language delay, with some children receiving additional specialist support. English is an additional language (EAL) for 23 pupils, 10 of whom receive EAL support. The school has identified eight pupils as being the most able of 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. 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.

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 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 [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 wellbeing 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'.

Key findings

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

- Pupils develop outstanding oracy and written skills, which they successfully apply to other areas of learning.
- Pupils have mature attitudes towards their learning, they go about their work responsibly and cooperate exceptionally well with their peers.
- Pupils achieve advanced levels of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Pupils achieve high levels of success in academic and other achievements, including in music and art.

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

- Pupils demonstrate an excellent sense of right and wrong and are very respectful of the systems determining behaviour and conduct in the school.
- Pupils have excellent social development and demonstrate a mature ability to work collaboratively with each other in all aspects of school life.
- Pupils demonstrate advanced understanding of the spiritual and non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils of all ages make significant contributions to their school community.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Enable older pupils to develop their study skills to the full in all 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 develop excellent communication skills throughout the school. Children in the Nursery listen highly attentively and respectfully to the views of others and with sustained concentration. This is due to teachers' careful planning of activities which are well-considered and take the interests of pupils into account. They are confident in speaking to an audience when sharing their thoughts and are given frequent opportunities to do so by sensitive probing and questioning from their teachers. Reception children were acutely aware of the way they could moderate their voices for greater effect. Year 2 pupils, when writing about James and the Giant Peach, demonstrated a well-developed understanding of writing for different purposes for their newspaper report. By Year 2, pupils are eloquent and confident speakers because of the modelling of language by the adults in school and the varied

opportunities they have to speak in school. In a Reception French lesson, higher ability pupils were able to speak in simple sentences to ask for their favourite fruit politely. Pupils demonstrate great pride in their work and most employ an excellent cursive handwriting script by the time they move onto their next schools, as seen in their work throughout the inspection.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages demonstrate an excellent attitude to their work, both in and outside the classroom setting. This starts from the moment they join the school where they set out and clear away many of their items in creative activities. Throughout the school, pupils of all ages were observed participating enthusiastically in their learning and were clearly enjoying the lessons. Children in the EYFS engage fully in activities and lessons that clearly take their aptitudes and abilities into account. They quickly settle to task when asked, collect resources independently and ensure that their peers have what they need. Older pupils feel they enjoy the challenge that the work offers, and demonstrate a willingness to tackle problems, knowing that supportive staff are always available should they require help. In an ICT lesson, Year 2 pupils were challenged to think about why a robot was not moving in the direction the pupils expected.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages acquire knowledge, skills and understanding at an excellent rate in response to diligently resourced and planned activities, coupled with the outstanding encouragement that they receive from their teachers. Children in the EYFS acquire literacy skills at a rapid rate and are confident in recognising, saying and writing sounds and words independently. Teachers in the EYFS continuously ask open questions and provide opportunities for pupils to extend their understanding by explaining what they have learnt to others. This was seen in a Reception mathematics lesson, where the teacher assumed the role of pupil, allowing a pupil to confidently 'teach' the task to the class. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, complex sound patterns were recognised and written accurately. Lessons observed provided a range of engaging contexts, which encouraged pupil participation. In an art lesson, Year 1 pupils developed a very good understanding of the importance of touch and texture in painting their clay sculptures, using high-level artistic vocabulary. Pupils demonstrate excellent understanding of terms such as alliteration and simile, as seen in an English lesson when describing jungle animals. Pupils make excellent progress in physical education (PE) due to the expertise of specialist teachers. This was apparent in the development of a range of jumping and running skills from Reception leading to excellent hurdling techniques in Year 2. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 2, they have developed excellent scientific knowledge and understanding and can accurately use terms such as vertebrates and invertebrates when sorting, classifying and explaining choices for putting animals into different groups. Teaching is engaging but does not always allow pupils to apply their study skills and work independently enough in all lessons.
- 3.8 Pupils are highly successful in their achievements outside the curriculum and are supported by the specialist teaching and coaching they receive in music, art and sport. They achieve notable success in art, having recently been awarded first place in regional and national competitions. Pupils demonstrate their excellent public speaking, acting and singing skills through many performance opportunities. They all learn to play the recorder, with some playing orchestral instruments to a very high level for their age. The quality of singing observed was outstanding and showed both confidence and musicality. All pupils benefit from access to a wide and high-quality range of after-school clubs, run by both the school staff and external providers. The range of clubs changes over the course of the year and pupils were observed enthusiastically participating in them.
- 3.9 Pupils make excellent progress throughout the school. By the time they reach Year 2, they achieve at high levels compared with pupils of the same age nationally, because of a carefully planned broad and challenging curriculum in line with the school's aims, together with highly effective teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make progress in line with their peers, achieving at levels appropriate to their starting points. Most pupils demonstrate a high level of understanding in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school, supported by the school's effective use of its comprehensive assessment and tracking systems. Leaders are highly successful in reviewing individual pupils' progress, including those with SEND, and in planning effective

interventions in learning. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) receive support, both individually and in small groups, and make good progress as a result. They achieve in line with age-related expectations and engage effectively with their learning using the school's on-line learning platform. Pupils with EHC plans are supported through additional assistants, who ensure resources are in an accessible form for the pupils.

- 3.10 Pupils' numeracy skills are excellent. Starting in the nursery, children have many opportunities to count, handle and sort a range of objects according to different criteria to help them develop their concept of number and size. In the lessons seen in the Reception classes, pupils had a sound understanding of number bonds to ten and could accurately and rapidly recall number facts, reinforced by the access to practical resources to help them cement their understanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of mathematical vocabulary and use it in their discussions with their peers and in class. In a Year 1 lesson on directions, pupils confidently demonstrated an ability to understand quarter turns and other related vocabulary, demonstrating this through physical movement, warmly encouraged by their teacher. Pupils in Year 2 developed an excellent understanding of measure, using balances to weigh carefully and accurately read scales in kilogrammes. Excellent teacher knowledge, targeted intervention and high expectations ensure that pupils make rapid progress and achieve high results. Pupils respond positively when they are introduced to problems and investigations in mathematics as part of their lessons, their understanding and progress accelerating as a result.
- 3.11 Pupils develop good information and communication technology (ICT) skills by the time they reach Year 2. Year 1 pupils confidently used QR codes to log in to their learning platform. They skilfully use a range of devices such as tablet computers, digital cameras, and programmable robots in their ICT lessons. Pupils develop a good knowledge of coding and apply this to solve problems such as how to make a vehicle move forward. During an ICT lesson, pupils identified errors in their coding and re-wrote it to turn a pull movement into a push movement. The pupils' knowledge of, and skills in ICT, have been enhanced by school leaders' commitment to develop this area of the curriculum and specialist teaching, strongly supported by the governors.
- 3.12 Pupils develop excellent study skills that enable them to gain entry to a wide range of selective schools. The strong partnership between home and school contributes positively to the pupils' success in their development of study skills, supported by the use of the on-line learning records throughout the school. Children in the EYFS develop a range of skills that help them to consider how to improve their learning outcomes in response to the use of open and challenge questions. Teaching and leadership encourage a high degree of self-sufficiency through their careful resourcing of materials and high expectations. Older pupils demonstrate their abilities through their work in books and completion of independent homework tasks. However, opportunities for them to develop their critical thinking skills to the full are not provided consistently across all areas of the curriculum.

The quality of pupils' personal development.

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have excellent moral understanding and respect for the systems determining behaviour and conduct throughout the school, accepting responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils who spoke to inspectors felt strongly that the positive systems in place encouraged them to behave well. Questionnaire responses showed that both parents and pupils felt that the school successfully promoted high behavioural standards in line with its aims. Pupils are kind, share resources, cooperate, and listen to each other and adults. They demonstrate an ability to regulate their own behaviour and are quick to apologise if they do something that upsets another child. Strong leadership and management have developed a culture of warm relationships throughout the school and staff are highly effective in modelling courtesy and good manners to the pupils, who respond positively. Pupils have contributed to the mutually agreed class codes of conduct, with all taking a pledge to abide by them. Younger pupils develop a strong sense of fairness from an early age. In a Reception mathematics

lesson based on the Rainbow Fish, pupils demonstrated their understanding dividing equally and gave examples of when something was not fair.

- 3.15 Pupils of all ages demonstrate an excellent ability to work effectively in social groups. They work productively with discussion partners throughout the day, and in the many group activities planned in their lessons, where staff consistently and calmly enforce co-operation. Pupils regularly offer to hold doors for others, with door monitors taking pride in the role, as they are chosen by their peers on account of their notable collaborations in school. Pupils support newcomers to the school, having been carefully buddied up by staff. Teachers recognise consistent class collaboration in the use of a class reward system, which encourages the whole class to work together to earn a reward. In well-resourced art, PE and ICT lessons pupils share resources willingly, recognising that greater success can be achieved by doing so. In observations of break, all groups of pupils interacted well, and Year 2 pupils said that putting on plays and pantomimes had made them focus on working well together.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate an excellent appreciation of spiritual and non-material aspects of their lives. In this they are supported by staff, who are open and honest in sharing their experiences and model their feelings in a highly empathetic manner. During break, pupils were highly protective of a bee, explaining passionately that it should not be feared and talking about its role as a key pollinator, vital for flowers to grow. Nursery children spoke very movingly about things they wished to remember, including relatives who had passed away. In the context of life cycles, they had discussed that some cocoons and caterpillar did not survive. Pupils in Year 2 make thoughtful use of gratitude journals to comment on what they feel appreciation for. The provision of a range of opportunities for self-reflection is embedded in their school lives, and pupils spoke of their appreciation of the use of the chime bell for meditative reflection.
- 3.17 Pupils make a very strong and positive contribution to each other's lives at school because teachers and leaders place great value on them acquiring a sense of responsibility from a young age. They are enormously proud of their school and demonstrate great willingness to be involved in the wider aspects of community life. All pupils in Year 2 have roles, including captains for lunch, sports, houses and music, each of which have defined responsibilities, including helping younger pupils or assisting staff. Eco-warriors organise litter picks and the Blue Bench Monitors monitor the blue friendship bench. Pupils carry out these roles effectively, showing a great deal of maturity for their ages. Music performances to local community hospices and retirement homes are appreciated by the pupils and residents alike. Pupils undertake charitable activities outside school, such as climbing Mount Snowden to raise funds or growing then donating their hair to charity to help the Princess Trust. These achievements are valued by fellow pupils and by the staff at school.
- 3.18 Pupils throughout the school, including those with SEND, develop very good levels of self-knowledge and are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Children in the EYFS develop a strong sense of self-confidence and self-esteem through the regular opportunities to lead their own learning. Pupils are highly appreciative of the support offered by their teachers, who are approachable and encouraging throughout the school. During interviews, Year 2 pupils were very keen to explain how the 'you can do it' approach is encouraged by the school, making them feel confident. They feel happy to go on to their next schools, prepared for their future lives through opportunities such as an overnight trip to a local residential centre. Pupils with SEND feel valued and supported through the recognition of their needs, developing confidence using resources such as wobble cushions, visual timetables, and careful consideration of space. There is strong collaboration between home and school, evidenced both in the use of on-line learning platforms, and in the overwhelmingly positive responses to the parent questionnaires.
- 3.19 Pupils have good understanding that the decisions they make are important determinants of their success and wellbeing. Pupils enjoy and respond to decision-making opportunities in their learning willingly when they are provided. For example, planned maths challenge activities are provided for higher ability pupils, and pupils can opt into the level of challenge in some subjects. In a school council meeting observed, pupils were involved in deciding what end of year fun activities would be suitable

for the whole school. They put forward a range of ideas that were well argued and reasoned, taking into account the age and needs of the younger pupils. For example, they all thought ice-creams would be a good idea for the hot weather, but a picnic on The Downs might be too far for nursery children to walk to. Pupils were keen to ensure the needs of vegetarians were considered when planning the picnic. The excellent relations between the pupils and teachers made the pupils feel their ideas were valued and respected. In the pupil questionnaire responses, all pupils felt that the school takes into account their views and responds to them.

- 3.20 Pupils show an excellent appreciation of, and respect for, the diversity within the school community. Year 2 pupils spoke of their 'amazement' at the accounts of their peers when sharing their Islamic faith or the festival of Holi and enjoyed entering a truck art activity instigated by a family from Pakistan. Leadership encourages the diverse parent body to be a part of school life and pupils have responded enthusiastically to visits from Korean martial art practitioners as well as an assembly about Eid. Pupils clearly understand that they can hold opinions but need to have respect for other viewpoints. Those pupils interviewed demonstrated a strong awareness of the importance of treating others with respect and of challenging discriminatory behaviour.
- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe, both physically and mentally, supported by an effective curriculum. Pupils explained the 'do, share, listen' mantra confidently and had no qualms about being open with their feelings. Leaders place a great deal of emphasis on mental health through ventures such as a wellbeing week, where pupils enjoyed activities such as den building and petting farm animals. Children in the EYFS handle construction tools safely, having been taught how to do so by their teachers. Pupils develop a good understanding of road and fire safety through visits from local key personnel such as the fire fighters. They are aware of the need for on-line safety and respond positively to the use of Good Digital Citizen awards for behaving well online. As they grow through the school, pupils become aware of the need for a balanced diet, demonstrating an excellent knowledge of the sub sections of key food groups. Pupils understand the need for exercise and how undertaking physical activity keeps them healthy.

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 a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form time and an assembly. Inspectors visited 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

Mr Keith Morrow	Reporting inspector
Mrs Kaye Lovejoy	Compliance team inspector (Former head, ISA school)
Mr Thomas Mylne	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)