



Jersey Standards for Independent Schools Inspection of

St Christopher's School

Rue de la Chapelle
St Clement
Jersey
JE2 6LN

Proprietors: Amanda Le Brocq, Cheryl Ahearn
Acting Headteacher: Cheryl Ahearn
Inspection date: 13-14 July 2023

Summary

The school ethos of 'kindness, respect and self-belief' underpins daily life at St Christopher's. Pupils say it's easy to make friends here, they describe their small school as being like a family. They enthusiastically explain their learning and how staff and pupils here are kind and look out for each other. As one parent commented, 'Our children are nurtured to flourish as individuals and supported to achieve well.'

Staff know each child as an individual; nurturing warm and trusting relationships so that they feel safe and secure. There is hardly any inappropriate behaviour or unkindness here. The school curriculum provides well for pupils' personal development, and British values are promoted well. Pupils learn how to be good friends to others and show genuine empathy and respect. They trust staff to resolve any worries they may have.

Teachers promote reading and mathematical skills and foster a love of learning across the required range of subjects. Pupils learn to work cooperatively and develop a suitable range of knowledge and skills. They benefit from a broad selection of extra-curricular opportunities and participation in local community events.

The quality of teaching is effective with some notable areas of strength. For example, in drama. Teachers typically use effective questioning and group work to promote thinking and the development of skills. Across the subjects, while there are some areas of strong practice, further refinements to planning and assessment are required.

Leaders have worked tirelessly to maintain stability and have been able to implement some improvements at a time of staffing challenge for the school. They deserve to be commended for this and for ensuring that all the Jersey Standards for Independent Schools are met. They know which areas of their planning, monitoring and record keeping are not yet sufficiently robust and they have plans in place to address these areas.

Recommendations for Improvement

Current leaders have worked extremely hard to refine policies and practices to ensure that the school meets the Independent Standards. However, they are aware that aspects of curriculum planning and some school systems are either new or being developed. Leaders know that these will require time to become embedded. Senior leaders should prioritise addressing the following areas:

Further improve the quality of education by:

- refining curriculum planning and ongoing assessment in early years to offer a richer range of activities to support children to meet the Early Learning Goals. Leaders need to provide a wider range of play-based and independent learning opportunities for children, especially in the outdoor learning environments.
- ensuring fidelity to one approach for the teaching of phonics and early reading across the school. Then making sure that this is consistently used across the early years and Key Stage 1.
- sharpening curriculum planning for science and the foundation subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2 to identify the big ideas and key concepts to be learned across each of the subjects in each year. Leaders need to support teachers to focus on sequencing knowledge and skills in a subject over time so they can target learning activities that better stretch and challenge all pupils.
- identifying clear end points for subject-based assessment that define expected standards for each age group.

Embedding new systems and boost the impact of leadership by:

- implementing better monitoring and record keeping systems including those relating to safer recruitment, pupil behaviour and pupils with SEND. Rolling out their existing plans, and collaborating with other schools, in order to gather information and engage in a more systematic self-evaluation of the strengths and areas for refinement in current provision. Leaders should then apply their knowledge to produce more detailed strategic planning with more specific, measurable targets.
- continuing to improve health and safety monitoring systems and risk assessments so that all aspects are equally thorough. Further staff training, together with the use of the government support and policies will facilitate more robust premises risk assessment and management.
- using the new website to better communicate the opportunities the school offers and to allow parents to have access to the required information on admissions and policies.

CYPES will arrange a follow up monitoring visit by the end of spring term 2024 to review progress made to meet each of the recommendations above. CYPES officers will also link leaders to relevant sources of information and best practice as necessary.

Standard 1: The Quality of Education Provided

The Quality of Education meets the standard

Comment:

Children and pupils typically receive well-organised lessons. There is a calm, purposeful learning atmosphere across the school. Teachers know their children well and tailor learning to follow pupil's interests. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and use questioning well, together with a focus on subject-specific vocabulary, to challenge pupils appropriately and promote independence. Staff work together well to ensure suitable additional guidance and support is sourced and offered to any pupils who require it.

The nurturing ethos of the school shines through. Behaviour is managed very positively, sensitively and effectively in lessons to support learning. Some quality resources are made available to promote engagement and valuable classroom displays provide prompts, language and a celebration of pupils' learning. Across the school, staff support pupils to gain confidence and become self-motivated. Over time pupils typically make strong progress from their starting points.

Warm relationships underpin learning in early years. Visits to classrooms evidence the strong focus on literacy and understanding the world. Displays celebrate the regular visits used to enrich the curriculum. Leaders are seeking to secure further funding for their nursery provision. However, significant changes to curriculum planning are required to underpin learning over time that is better structured to meet the Early Learning Goals to achieve this. More use of play-based learning to interact with the environment, particularly outdoors are required. Staff should target mathematics and ensure the learning environments promote opportunities for indoor and outdoor activities that support learning, particularly in physical development and expressive arts.

Reading is given suitably high priority. However, the approaches taken to the teaching of early reading are not consistent across the school. Staff are currently using a mix of phonics schemes and different approaches, which inhibits the progress that pupils make in early reading over time. Leaders know this and they have plans in place to address it.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 staff have developed a vision for each subject, with plans that outline the allocation of themes and topics over time and identification of likely impact. However, these plans need developing further to improve the depth and scope of subject-specific planning. Better identification of the key subject-specific knowledge and skills is needed to ensure teachers plan lessons that better sequence and develop key concepts over time. For example, in mathematics improved assessment is needed to establish what pupils already know and to improve the richness and depth of pupils' problem-solving.

While leaders have outline subject planning in place, refinements are needed to support better assessment. Curriculum plans need to identify clear end points that can be used for subject-based assessment that defines expected standards for each age group. In addition, staff should also seek to make clearer links between subjects. For example; the mathematics and literacy needed to support scientific enquiries in different year groups, or how in PSHE staff can make use of different texts to promote conversations around diversity.

Standard 2: Pupil Behaviour and Personal Development

Pupil Behaviour and Personal Development meets the standard

Comment:

Pupils are typically attentive and keen to learn in class and they conduct themselves well. At break and lunch times they play together well in mixed-age groups and older pupils look out for their younger peers. Established warm and trusting relationships underpin a real sense of belonging to the school family. Pupils, staff and parents are rightly proud to be a part of the St Christopher's community.

Behaviour and personal development are strengths and spiritual, social and moral values are promoted well through PSHE and wider school activities. The ethos of the school and the curriculum combine to ensure equalities are promoted well and that pupils learn respect and tolerance for different faiths and beliefs. The Jersey values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect are promoted effectively. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to learn about and respect people from different faiths and backgrounds.

Standard 3: Pupil Safeguarding and Welfare

Pupil Safeguarding and Welfare meets the standard

Comment:

Pupils say that they feel safe here and they know that there are trusted adults who will listen and take appropriate action when they raise any concerns.

Leaders ensure staff receive regular training and briefings about safeguarding. There is a culture of vigilance at St Christopher's and adults are alert to any signs that a pupil may be at risk. There are systems in place to record and share any concerns that staff may have about pupils. Leaders have plans to implement a better central electronic record keeping system from September rather than the current system of pupils files. This is a wise move and will allow better monitoring and analysis of any trends or patterns. Safeguarding leaders know how to work proactively with external agencies should it be necessary to ensure pupils and families have access to any help they may need.

Admissions and attendance registers meet requirements and there are risk assessment procedures in place when required. However, leaders are aware that some health and safety risk assessments need updating and improving, particularly those in relation to the building. Leaders have recently become more aware of Jersey guidance for fire standards and are prioritising appropriate actions to mitigate risks associated with the age and design of the premises. Regular fire drills are conducted, and logs kept are used for learning points. There has been significant investment in the first aid training of staff and further training is booked to ensure staff are up to date with first aider at work qualifications.

The school behaviour policy sets out clear expected standards, identifies rewards and sanctions and ensures a consistent approach to behaviour management. There is provision in place to support the wellbeing of learners from leaders and the ELSA, who offer appropriate resources for any pupils who need time away from class.

Standard 4: Suitability of Staff and Proprietors

Suitability of Staff and Proprietors meets the standard

Comment:

Leaders ensure all required and appropriate pre-recruitment checks are made on teaching and non-teaching staff and appropriate records are centrally held in a single file. These checks include; enhanced DBS and update checks, right to work, health/fitness to work checks, identity checks and references, qualifications checks and referees. Due to having a small number of staff the records kept meet requirements. However, record keeping here could be enhanced by having an overview sheet to allow for better monitoring practices.

Standard 5: Suitability of School Premises

Suitability of School Premises meets the standard

Comment:

The school is housed in the 1901 Building which, due to its age, raises some challenges in relation to meeting modern requirements. Leaders have ensured that it offers suitably high-quality facilities including: teaching rooms, toilets and medical needs accommodation as well as meeting acoustic, drinking water, hot water and lighting needs and the provision of suitable outdoor space. Heating and ventilation are appropriate. There are risk assessments in place in relation to aspects of the accommodation that are becoming tired but the quality, monitoring and oversight of these needs to be improved.

The caretaker is responsive to any concerns around the site and successfully increased site security installing new locks to a gate during the inspection. Other recent investment includes the conversion of an old stationary storage room into a multi-purpose room for cooking and science practical work.

The school is open 51 weeks of the year and maintaining a rolling maintenance programme is a challenge. However, leaders and the caretaker work to maintain the accommodation and facilities, so far as is reasonably practicable, to a standard that ensures the health and safety of the pupils.

Standard 6: Provision of Information

Provision of Information meets the standard

Comment:

St Christopher's, until very recently, has not had a school website, but has had a Facebook page celebrating pupil's successes and providing contact details.

Leaders have ensured that they have shared details of the school's aims and ethos and the required range of information policies with parents as required. This includes the policies for admissions, behaviour and complaints and information for parents on SEND provision. The school also meets the requirements to provide written reports to parents of its current pupils.

Information has been made available to parents via paper copies being available at Reception and through the publication of the 'Starting School' documentation. A new school website was launched during this inspection. It is currently being brought up to date so that it too offers all required policies and information required by this section of the Jersey Standards for Independent Schools

Standard 7: Parental Complaints

Parental Complaints meets the standard

Comment:

The school meets the requirements in relation to responding to any parental complaints. It has a compliant complaints policy. Leaders maintain a suitable log of concerns and complaints, which are very few and far between. Appropriate levels of confidentiality are maintained as files are accessible only to key members of the senior leadership team.

The school has an open approach to any expressions of parental concern and the vast majority of questions and concerns are resolved informally. However, there are appropriate procedures in place should a complaint need to be raised. Communication is encouraged with clear lines of responsibility shared with pupils and parents so they know who to contact. Leaders are reflective and keen to apply learning where it is appropriate, for example, in considering revisions to current practices and/or policy.

Standard 8: The Quality of Leadership and Management

The Quality of Leadership and Management meets the standard

Comment:

This last year has been a turbulent time for the school, with the substantive headteacher off ill and some changes in staffing. The deputy headteacher has run the school as acting headteacher and other staff have also stepped forward to take responsibility. The drive and teamwork that exists across the school are to be commended. For example, in how swiftly leaders responded to implement changes and update policies recently. During this inspection leaders were undertaking additional training updates and the caretaker made site improvements to ensure compliance. Their actions clearly demonstrated the passion and dedication of leaders and staff to St Christopher's long-term success.

While the school does meet the Jersey Standards for Independent Inspections, there are several areas of leadership which require further improvement. Some policies and monitoring systems are new and not yet embedded, including those relating to the health and safety of the school site. Here systems and procedures are being developed and improved and so some aspects are stronger than others. Further staff training is needed, and the use of the government support and policies is required, to ensure more robust premises risk assessment and management.

Leaders have monitoring systems in place for teaching and learning. However, these are focusing on delivery in the classroom and not how effectively the staff are delivering a sequenced curriculum over time. While the current curriculum offer is sufficient to meet the compliance elements of this inspection framework, curriculum planning and assessment within each phase and subject are areas that require further development.

Leaders should prioritise improving the quality of their self-evaluation and development planning. The school development plan seen during this inspection outlined basic targets only. Whilst it does identify appropriate goals and who is responsible to achieve them, the targets set lack depth, timescales and details of monitoring. Better, more systematic analysis of current provision is required to fuel improved strategic planning. This will help leaders to develop the curriculum, assessment systems and risk assessments in particular. Senior leaders are aware of what is needed and have made appropriate choices to prioritise these areas.

Information about the school

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll: 68
School telephone number: 01534 724758
School website: www.stchristophersprep.com

St Christopher's School is a small independent nursery and primary school founded by the original proprietor over 50 years ago. It attracts children and primary pupils from across Jersey.

The principal and main proprietor has been absent due to illness this year. The school is currently run by the deputy headteacher, who has stepped up as acting headteacher and joint proprietor this last academic year, alongside two other senior leaders.

- The school does not have any pupils eligible for Jersey Premium.
- A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are lower than in most Jersey schools.

Information about the inspection

This inspection was carried out at the Minister's request. Judgements were made against the Jersey Standards for Independent Schools only. These standards are based on the statutory requirements of Education (Jersey) Law, 1999 and are the minimum standards required to be met in all independent schools in Jersey. The inspectors did not conduct a full Jersey School Review.

- Visits to lessons were made in all year groups across the school and samples of pupils' work across different subjects were considered.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils about their work and the way the school ensures their safety and wellbeing.
- A tour was made of the school's site to check its security and safety. Documents including a range of risk assessments, were scrutinised.
- Extended discussions were held with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, support staff and the caretaker.
- The lead inspector met with a small group of parents.
- A wide range of documents, policies and curriculum plans were considered.
- Safeguarding records and staff recruitment files were sampled and reviewed.

The inspection team

The inspection team consisted of two inspectors. Both are senior advisers from the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills. The inspection was led by a senior adviser who is an experienced off-Island inspector.

Enquiries about this report should be addressed to Head School Improvement & Advisory Service, Children, Young People, Education and Skills, Highlands Campus, PO Box 142, St Saviour, Jersey JE4 8QJ.