



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS' INSPECTORATE

Interim Inspection Report including Early Years Foundation Stage & Regulatory Compliance Audit

30th November - 1st December 2010

"St Catherine's is highly successful in achieving its aim of providing an all-round education to prepare its girls to lead happy and fulfilling lives."



We are delighted to send you this copy of the Independent Schools' Inspectorate's Interim Report on St Catherine's, Bramley.

St Catherine's was visited in December 2010 as part of its cycle of inspections, the Interim Inspection being described by ISI as 'a two-day health check', designed to report first and foremost on the school's compliance with regulatory requirements.

The team inspectors then also turned their hands to a brief audit of the academic provision for the girls from age 5-18.

Our last full inspection in 2006 saw the School achieving Outstanding judgements, all of which have been achieved again this time, though it is worth noting that the terminology of the judgements has changed. The inspectors this time were required to select from the following categories: Excellent, Good, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory.

It is a mark of the strong initial impression made by the girls and staff on the first day of their visit that our inspectors were happy to proceed to complete their work, despite the fact that their second day saw us having to close the school because of the snow!

This is a report of which everyone involved can once again be rightly very proud: girls, teachers, support staff, governors, parents and alumnae. And so are we, who are privileged to lead this School on a daily basis and be energized by the commitment of everyone involved to the wonderful community that is St Catherine's, Bramley.

We hope you enjoy reading our Interim Inspection Report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Alice Phillips'.

Mrs Alice Phillips
Headmistress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kathleen Jefferies'.

Mrs Kathleen Jefferies
Head of Prep. School

Footnote: As part of this ISI visit, one of the four inspectors was deployed to undertake an intensive inspection of our provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)– our two Pre-Prep. I classes. This inspection procedure has recently been taken over by ISI from Ofsted. The EYFS report can be found on pages 8 and 9.



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Catherine's School

Full Name of School	St Catherine's School		
DfE Number	936/6004		
Registered Charity Number	1070858		
Address	St Catherine's School Station Road Bramley Guildford Surrey GU5 0DF		
Telephone Number	01483 893363		
Fax Number	01483 899608		
Email Address	schooloffice@stcatherines.info		
Headmistress	Mrs Alice Phillips		
Head of Prep School	Mrs Kathleen Jefferies		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Peter Martin		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	886		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	0-3 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 228
	3-5 (EYFS):	28	11-18: 630
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	726	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 10
Number of Boarders	Total:	160	
	Full:	64	Weekly: 96
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Jill Cochrane		
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	30 Nov 2010 to 01 Dec 2010		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in October 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced in September 2009 by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit

- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Catherine's aims to provide an all-round education, preparing girls for happy and fulfilling lives by providing consistently strong teaching, a wide range of activities and up-to-date facilities. By seeing each girl as an individual, and encouraging her to see herself similarly, the school seeks to give her confidence to develop her own talents fully, and to encourage a love of learning and the ability to think creatively and independently. A Church of England foundation, the school aims to promote Christian values and to encourage respect, courtesy and concern for others, fostering team work, community spirit, leadership skills and a sense of responsibility. The school is a charity governed by its trustees, who are appointed for their experience and expertise.
- 1.2 Founded in 1885 to provide a sound, liberal education for girls, St Catherine's is a day and boarding school for girls between the ages of four and eighteen, situated in extensive grounds in the village of Bramley, near Guildford. Girls under the age of five, in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), are accommodated in two classrooms on the ground floor of the dedicated pre-prep wing of the prep school. The head of the prep school currently deputises across the whole school in the absence of the headmistress.
- 1.3 To mark the 125th anniversary of the school's foundation, a new sports centre was opened in November 2010, and an assembly and performance hall is due to be completed in 2011. Since 2008, the prep school has not participated in national tests.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, 630 girls aged from eleven to eighteen were in the senior school, including 167 in the sixth form; 256 girls, aged from four to eleven, were in the prep school, including 28 in the EYFS. Of the 160 boarders, 64 boarded full-time and 96 weekly.
- 1.5 Entry to the school is selective. Standardised tests indicate that the ability of pupils throughout the school is above the national average. Day pupils mostly come from within a fifteen-mile radius of the school and come from a variety of backgrounds; boarders come from a wide variety of countries.
- 1.6 No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 130 pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, of whom 29 receive specialist learning support. About one in fifteen of the pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. Very few of these require additional support in English language in order to access the full curriculum.

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalents are shown in the following tables.

Preparatory School

School	NC name
Pre-Prep 1	Reception
Pre-Prep 2	Year 1
Pre-Prep 3	Year 2
Form I	Year 3
Lower II	Year 4
Upper II	Year 5
Lower III	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
Upper III	Year 7
Lower IV	Year 8
Upper IV	Year 9
Lower V	Year 10
Upper V	Year 11
Lower VI	Year 12
Upper VI	Year 13

Snow led to the school being closed for the second day of the inspection. Although a special programme for boarders was arranged, the inspection of normal lessons and activities was necessarily curtailed. All the regulatory checks were completed; judgements on other aspects are those that could be securely justified by the evidence assembled.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 As was recognised at the last inspection, St Catherine's is highly successful in achieving its aim of providing an all-round education to prepare its girls to lead happy and fulfilling lives. The quality of pupils' achievements is good and frequently outstanding.
- 2.2 At all levels, pupils display good knowledge and understanding across their subjects, and are able to apply their knowledge effectively. Their considerable creative skills are evident throughout the school, as was apparent in the imaginative display of 'street art' on the hoardings currently surrounding the school's major building project. They are particularly articulate and highly capable of presenting and discussing their ideas. Pupils of all ages reach excellent standards in a very large range of extra-curricular activities, and acquit themselves extremely well in a variety of competitions, as well as in music and drama examinations or performances.
- 2.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at both GCSE and A level have been excellent in relation to the national averages for maintained schools and good in relation to the averages for maintained selective schools. Performance in the International GCSE has been higher than international and national norms. These levels of attainment show that pupils make good progress in the senior school, as confirmed by standardised measures of progress. The progress made in the prep school is also good in relation to pupils' abilities, as evident from the girls' books and their performance in lessons.
- 2.4 Pupils throughout the school display excellent attitudes towards their learning and a high degree of motivation, both within and outside the classroom. They complete their prep effectively, although some boarders express frustration at the lack of speed of the internet connection available to them in school. They exhibit a high level of concentration in all that they do, whether observing a demonstration in biology or taking part in a choir rehearsal. They complete tasks they are set to the best of their abilities with the minimum of adult intervention. In both the prep and senior schools, pupils benefit from excellent curricular and extra-curricular provision, which is rated very highly by the girls themselves, as well as their parents. The house system provides opportunities for all pupils to participate in a large array of extra-curricular activities, from which they derive both enjoyment and feelings of pride and success. The commitment of the pupils was a key factor in the school achieving the Eco-Schools 'Green Flag' status. Girls at St Catherine's learn to manage their time well.
- 2.5 As at the last inspection, the quality of teaching is good and frequently excellent. Teachers in both the prep and senior schools are highly knowledgeable, supportive and committed to getting the best from their pupils. They plan their lessons well, choose appropriate resources and consider how they might incorporate thinking skills into their activities. They are evidently highly respected by the pupils, with whom they enjoy very good relationships. In the most successful lessons, teachers insisted upon precise language, and encouraged their pupils to predict outcomes and to challenge what they were told, thereby developing the intellectual capacity of the most able pupils. Throughout the school, teachers make excellent use of

questioning to elicit pupils' knowledge, test their understanding and develop their thinking.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.6 Pupils' personal development is excellent at all stages, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school is highly successful in meeting its aims to provide a safe and healthy environment, to foster the personal, social, spiritual, moral and cultural development of the pupils and to promote Christian values.
- 2.7 The strong focus on the value of the individual enables pupils to grow rapidly in self-esteem and confidence. Pupils in both the prep and senior schools are self-assured, enthusiastic and responsive. They participate readily in assemblies and chapel services, and reveal their well-developed ability to reflect on spiritual issues and their concern for the needs of others. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and show respect for the rights of others. Pupils are courteous and their behaviour both within and outside the classroom is exemplary. They eagerly take advantage of the ample opportunities at all ages to take on roles of responsibility, as for example within the house system or the school council. This facilitates the development of leadership skills and awareness of duties associated with good citizenship. Pupils' consideration and respect for their teachers and each other are evident and relationships throughout the school are warm and supportive. Pupils are proud of their school and keen to contribute to community life both within and outside the school. They actively support a broad range of charities at home and abroad. They develop awareness of the diversity of other cultures through the curriculum and a stimulating programme of visiting speakers and educational visits.
- 2.8 Pastoral care is excellent, based on the mutual respect between pupils and staff and the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their pupils. Strong support, both personal and academic, provided by well-trained and committed staff, ensures that pupils feel safe and secure. Bullying is not seen to be a problem by pupils, and throughout the school girls expressed their confidence in their teachers to resolve difficulties they might encounter. Boarding provision is good and this view is shared by pupils, who speak most positively of their experience of boarding. They feel safe and well supported, and enjoy the evening and weekend activities programme.
- 2.9 Pupils are aware of the need to take exercise and to eat well. The high quality of school meals, together with a very broad range of sporting and fitness activities, demonstrates the school's determination to promote a healthy lifestyle. Members of staff receive regular training in all aspects of pupils' care and safety, and a high proportion of staff have taken appropriate first aid courses. The medical rooms are well equipped and are effectively managed by a trained professional, providing effective care for pupils who are ill. All health and safety measures, including fire safety, are in place and are well managed. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately and conscientiously completed. A quarter of the pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire added comments that affirmed their strong appreciation of the school.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.10 As was the case at the time of the last inspection, the governance and management of the school are highly effective and constitute key factors in the school's success in achieving its aim to provide a high quality of education.
- 2.11 The governors are highly regarded throughout the school community. They are whole-heartedly committed to, and well informed about, the school. The structure of sub-committees enables them to provide good monitoring, and appropriate support and stimulus, in all key areas of school life. Governors take a close interest in child protection and health and safety, and annually review the policies and procedures. Particular nominated governors have special responsibility for monitoring these areas. The brief minutes of meetings do not fully reflect their conscientious fulfilment of these responsibilities.
- 2.12 The leadership and management of the school are strong, decisive and effective. The close collaboration of the heads of the prep and senior schools provides excellent cohesion and unity of purpose across the school, and the senior management structure established in both schools involves effective delegation of responsibility and shared decision making. Middle management operates well. Management responsibility and accountability are readily accepted and exercised effectively by pastoral and academic leaders in both parts of the school. Parents and pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires value the management of the school highly.
- 2.13 The recruitment of staff is rigorously conducted and recorded in a central register in order to ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded. Effective procedures are established for the induction, appraisal and professional development of staff.
- 2.14 The premises and accommodation are well suited to their use, well maintained, and of good and sometimes outstanding quality. For example, the historic chapel, the new sports centre, the Millennium Building, the prep school building and the grounds are all of excellent quality and enhance the educational experience of the girls.
- 2.15 Links established with parents are strong. Parents appreciate the ease of communication with the school and the prompt responses they receive. Reports to parents are informative, constructive and encouraging, and include the pupil's self-assessment. A new school website has further enhanced the ease of access for parents to school news, information and policies. For example, the excellent address given by the head girls for St Catherine's day on the life of Olave Baden-Powell, a woman of inspiration, is available in full.
- 2.16 Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are overwhelmingly pleased. Aspects attracting the highest satisfaction of parents are: the range of the curricular and extra-curricular programmes; the progress being made by pupils; the values promoted by the school; its governance and management; the high standards of behaviour; the quality of information provided to parents; the ease of communication. The school has a well-established and well-constructed policy for handling complaints which works well in practice, though is rarely exercised.
- 2.17 The school has successfully addressed the issues raised at the last inspection, having developed further its systems for the recording and monitoring of pupils' assessments and taken good measures to ensure that teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to enrich their lessons.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Implement plans, as outlined in the school development plan, to improve the speed of broadband connections.
 2. Finalise the nomination of a member of the governors' prep school committee to provide specific support and oversight for the EYFS.



The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) inspection takes place at the same time as a whole school ISI Interim Inspection, however it is much wider in scope. In addition to completing a thorough check on the School's compliance with the EYFS regulatory requirements, a full and rigorous enquiry is made into the educational and welfare arrangements for the pupils in the setting, namely our two Pre-Prep I classes.

A specialist lead inspector with particular responsibility for the EYFS spent the majority of the two-day visit within the Early Years setting to reach judgements on four broad areas. When making judgements within the EYFS setting, inspectors are required to select from the Ofsted categories: Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory or Inadequate.

We are delighted that our Early Years Foundation Stage provision was judged as follows:

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years provision:	Outstanding
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage:	Outstanding
The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage:	Outstanding
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage:	Outstanding

The findings of the Independent Schools' Inspectorate support our view that girls at St Catherine's Preparatory School are afforded the best start to their educational learning journey, which is both fun and a way of life here: *'Children love their school and enjoy learning.'*

Mrs Kathleen Jefferies
Head of Prep. School

Mrs Jill Cochrane
Deputy Head – Pre-Prep.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 The school's effectiveness in meeting the needs of the children is outstanding. The high ratio of adults to children allows each child to be recognised as an individual, and enables subtle adjustments to ensure rapid progress for all. Policies and procedures are thorough and are reviewed regularly. Strong partnerships are established with parents, specialists and outside organisations to promote education and care of excellent quality. Excellent staff team work and relationships sustain high standards and promote continuous improvement. The development plan is comprehensive and reveals careful planning and self-evaluation. Improvements in resources since the last inspection include interactive white boards and enhanced outdoor provision.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Regular risk assessments are made of all areas. All staff have relevant training in child protection, first aid and fire safety. Staff recruitment procedures are thorough. The school works well in partnership with parents, who are very satisfied with the school and the progress of their children. Management has clear vision and priorities. The governors' prep school committee monitors the EYFS as a department of the prep school, though no governor has specific responsibility for the EYFS. Very good assessment systems evaluate and review outcomes for the children. Teachers plan carefully to promote equality and tolerance. Strong professional development and outstanding resources are deployed effectively to achieve high quality outcomes.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The provision is outstanding. The classrooms and outside areas are well resourced. The educational programme is thoroughly planned and supports excellent all-round education. Regular planning meetings enable teachers to support children's development. Assessment systems are thorough. Children with specific difficulties are appropriately supported and guided to independence. Excellent relations between children and staff promote the children's welfare. The children are listened to carefully and their work is celebrated. All safeguarding systems are constantly monitored. Staff regularly examine all equipment to reduce the risk of hazards.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 Outcomes for all children are outstanding. Most are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS. Children love their school and enjoy learning. They make rapid progress in all areas, have a very good grounding in basic phonics and can count up to twenty. Personal development is strong. The children are confident and independent in school. They use ICT well. They learn to be active safely in timetabled lessons and outside. They have a good understanding of the needs for exercise and to eat healthily. Children feel very secure with the adults who care for them. The children are keen to participate and willingly take responsibility. They understand about respecting the feelings of others and work co-operatively, taking turns when using equipment.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and house assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Rodney Fox

Mrs Joy Gatenby

Miss Susan Hincks

Mrs Kirsten Jackson

Reporting Inspector

Headmistress, GSA school

Deputy Head, HMC school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector



Celebrating 125 years of girls' successful independent education



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