



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**St. Christopher's School**

**March 2022**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	St Christopher's School			
<b>DfE number</b>	202/6013			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	312999			
<b>Address</b>	St Christopher's School 32 Belsize Lane Hampstead London NW3 5AE			
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7435 1521			
<b>Email address</b>	secretary@stchristophers.london			
<b>Head</b>	Ms Sandrine Paillasse			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Nick Green			
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	242			
	<b>Reception</b>	25	<b>Juniors</b>	217
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1 to 4 March 2022			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 St Christopher's School is a non-denominational independent day school for female pupils which was established in 1883, becoming a charitable trust in 1972. The school occupies a large Victorian house in a quiet residential area of Hampstead and has two departments, Reception for pupils aged 4 to 5 years, and Juniors for pupils aged 5 to 11 years. The trustees form the board of governors.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new head and chair of governors.
- 1.3 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.4 The school aims to achieve high academic standards. It intends to encourage independent learning in a stimulating, child-centred environment where pupils are inspired and challenged. It seeks to ensure that creativity is integrated throughout the curriculum in an atmosphere of respect, freedom of thought and intellectual ambition, in which pupils develop into inclusive, courageous and principled young people, ready to embrace challenges and become change-makers.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.5 The majority of pupils come from families with business or professional backgrounds situated within a radius of five miles of the school. Standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 14 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia and attention deficit disorder, all of whom receive specialist support within the school. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 81 pupils, of whom 14 receive additional support for their English. The school has identified 34 pupils as the most able in the school's population and modifies the curriculum for them and for 44 other pupils due to their special talents in art, sport and music.

## 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 statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

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

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

### **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

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

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

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

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

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

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

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

#### Key findings

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

- Pupils are high achievers who succeed academically and across a wide range of co-curricular activities.
- Pupils demonstrate highly developed communication skills, confidently using these to challenge and extend their learning.
- Pupils have an excellent base of knowledge, skills and understanding, and display highly developed study skills, which they routinely apply to all their subjects.
- Pupils display exemplary attitudes towards their learning, working successfully and with purpose both as individuals and together.

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

- Pupils are self-confident and self-disciplined. They are resilient and work hard to achieve success in all they attempt.
- Pupils display a mature approach towards the decisions they make, routinely weighing up circumstances to be confident in their choices.
- Pupils demonstrate a high level of awareness of the non-material aspects of life. They are sensitive to the feelings of others and are intuitive in their attitudes towards the arts.
- Pupils are kind, respectful and tolerant. They value each other and work together with a keen sense of purpose and enjoyment.

#### Recommendation

3.3 The school should make the following improvement.

- Strengthen pupils' awareness of the creative possibilities of modern technology and their skills in applying these.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils make rapid progress across the full range of subjects in the curriculum, demonstrating a strong level of achievement both in their academic studies and through their co-curricular commitments. Pupils' attainment successfully reflects the school's aims to provide an inspirational educational experience which equips pupils with the confidence and life skills to succeed in the next stage of their education. In the years 2018 to 2022, almost all pupils gained places at highly selective senior schools

with almost 50% achieving scholarship and exhibition awards. There is no significant difference in attainment between different groups within the school with all pupils achieving the same high level of progress. Standardised test scores show that pupils of all abilities consistently improve their academic performance very well over time. This is because pupils are supported in their learning by effective provision made by senior leaders and managers and by high-quality resources. Pupils further benefit from thorough procedures for assessment and monitoring which are provided by school managers and effectively implemented by the teaching. A very large majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire are satisfied with the progress their children are making. An overwhelming majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire agree and say that they feel well prepared for the next stage in their education.

- 3.6 Pupils throughout the school eagerly participate in the school's co-curricular programme with most pupils attending two to three clubs every week. As a result, pupils successfully develop resilience and confidence as they gain new skills in the activities which are designed to support and enhance the academic curriculum. Pupils of all ages become more confident communicators as they engage with a range of modern foreign languages clubs, Latin club and participate in the debating club. They hone their motor skills as they participate in a varied provision of sporting clubs including judo, gymnastics, table tennis, running and ball sports such as netball, hockey and football, with younger pupils exploring nature in their outdoor woodland club. Pupils broaden their creativity appreciation through participation in drama and dance clubs, orchestras, a variety of musical ensembles and choirs, art and photography clubs, and digital animation club. They extend their critical thinking skills as they engage in mathematical games, chess and coding clubs. Pupils further develop these critical and creative skills through the activities offered in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) club. They learn successful testing techniques as they design, build, code and test in STEAM club where science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics merge in a fun, practical way. However, pupils are not always fully aware of the creative possibilities of modern technology or have the higher level of skills to be able to fully apply these.
- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate highly developed communication skills. They are articulate and display fluency and flair in their writing. Reception children spoke with clarity and enthusiasm as they explained to the class what they had brought in to show and share. They successfully applied new vocabulary and suggestions into their presentations to the delight of their peers. In a Year 5 Latin lesson, pupils demonstrated a confident level of ability to read in Latin, successfully translating adjectives with due regard to feminine and masculine endings while pupils in Year 2 displayed high regard to accurate pronunciation as they described hair and eye colours. Pupils in Year 3 entertained each other with rapid 30 second stories on subjects as diverse as *feet*, *porridge* and *seeds*, displaying ingenuity with plot, language and expression. Year 6 pupils adeptly discussed mathematical concepts which could be incorporated into their 'Maths Story'. Pupils effectively employ technical language encouraged by their teachers as they progress through the school. Excellent pieces of written work were in evidence across the whole school. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate very high levels of skill in their creative writing, using advanced vocabulary, complex syntax and effectively employing a wide range of techniques to colour their writing. Pupils in Year 4 competently analysed a comprehension text, identifying key elements of the passage and ably noting where the author had used emotive language to influence the reader. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other, and offer helpful, encouraging comments when working together. Throughout the school, pupils rapidly develop their communications skills supported by the atmosphere of praise and encouragement in their lessons.
- 3.8 Pupils show an excellent level of knowledge of their subjects. They understand the work they are doing and effectively apply their skills across all areas of their learning. Pupils in a Year 3 science lesson effectively discussed and discerned what forces were used for different motions while studying Earth as a magnet. In Year 1, pupils demonstrated accurate throwing skills as they carefully threw beanbags at the target spot. Year 6 pupils in their English lesson displayed great creative achievement when designing their imaginary island, recalling what they had learnt about volcanoes and archipelagos to

bring a touch of realism to their islands. In a Year 3 music lesson, pupils competently identified different instruments as they listened to Bizet's *Carillon*.

- 3.9 Pupils display excellent study skills and are highly motivated to succeed. They rapidly develop the habits of critical thinking and apply these in their lessons. Writing diary entries about survival in the Antarctic, Year 4 pupils rigorously assessed the skills they would need to survive and unfortunately lacked. Year 5 pupils reflecting on a science lesson, competently assessed data from experiments when melting different kinds of chocolate. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils demonstrated high levels of deduction as they analysed which characters were holding the power in their text and how this affected relationships between the characters. Pupils' strong development of knowledge and understanding is supported by well-planned lessons and excellent facilities.
- 3.10 Pupils display strong numeracy skills and competently apply these in other subjects. In a Year 4 mathematics challenge, pupils were adept at making squares out of tangrams, and then using the shapes to create animals. Younger pupils in Italian club accurately weighed out ingredients for their pasta making. Reception children were proud of their developed ability to use different strategies for combining quantities when adding up numbers. Year 5 pupils competently converted decimals into fractions and back again. Pupils confidently apply their numerical skills in other subjects to promote their learning as, for example, Year 6 pupils combining time with geometry as they used a clock face to work out acute and obtuse angles and tell the time. Year 1 pupils used their numeracy skills to keep a count of their scores when running, collecting and moving beanbags. In their science lesson, Year 4 pupils successfully used Venn diagrams to classify different living creatures.
- 3.11 Pupils are highly competent in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) and apply their skills very effectively across a range of subjects. In a Year 5 geography lesson, pupils created appealing travel brochures, competently capturing images on the clipboard and pasting into their brochures. Assessing the impact of their work, pupils effectively highlighted their captions with the colour of their choice. Pupils competently access online classrooms and use technology as a research and editing tool. Supported by well-planned teaching and excellent resources, pupils routinely use technology with competence to promote all aspects of their learning.
- 3.12 Pupils of all ages demonstrate exemplary attitudes towards their learning. They approach their studies with a sense of purpose and commitment and are resilient, diligent learners. Pupils understand the importance of taking charge of their own work and are proud of their achievements. In a numeracy lesson, Reception children displayed much determination and persistence in their tasks and were delighted to receive merits when they were successful. Year 5 pupils revelled in the opportunity to make outside covers for their life story books, successfully tackling the design work with energy and focus. Pupils appreciate the teaching approach which seeks to instil a love of learning and a desire to succeed. They take ownership of their learning with maturity and determination, encouraged by the support and high expectations of their teachers.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils display very high levels of self-confidence and self-awareness in their academic studies and in their lives beyond the classroom, fully in keeping with the school's aims. This quality is promoted by leaders' strong emphasis on developing personal qualities such as courage, resilience and good principles. Pupils understand how to improve themselves in all aspects of their lives and approach their school experience with a mature desire to be the best they can be. They are resilient and hard-working, readily participating in school life with confidence, supported by the encouragement they receive from their teachers and from each other. Pupils are kind and self-confident and understand the rights of each individual in their community to learn in a safe, happy environment. They are mature when they reflect on their academic performance, setting themselves challenging targets and persevering until they succeed. In their art topic, Year 4 pupils wrote about the difficulties they had

overcome when matching their depiction of animals with a poem. They identified competently the elements which had been most challenging. While preparing their assembly for World Book Day, Year 6 pupils offered sensible suggestions as to how they could improve their performance, demonstrating perseverance and creativity in their rehearsal. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in the co-curricular programme, gaining self-confidence as they accept new challenges, supported by the dedicated commitment of their teachers.

- 3.15 Pupils understand the importance of making decisions and taking responsibility for their lives. They demonstrate a mature understanding of how their decisions can affect their well-being and futures. For example, Year 6 pupils displayed a genuine sense of maturity as they sensibly discussed reasons for selecting their senior schools. In their music lesson, Year 3 pupils chose specific instruments to portray high-pitched sounds, low noises, and decided how to use them to create feelings of tension and suspense. Year 5 pupils spoke confidently of making the right decisions to resolve friendship issues based on the guidance and support they receive from their teachers. Pupils of all ages understand the importance of being part of a happy, kind community, and they are aware that their decisions may affect those around them. In discussions, Year 6 pupils spoke of the rights of every individual to learn and how their decisions to behave well in the classroom promote an atmosphere where each person is respected and free to learn. Pupils develop this strong awareness and ability to make good decisions through the strong pastoral system and individual tutor arrangements which support them throughout the school.
- 3.16 Pupils know how to lead healthy lives and understand how their decisions may affect their health and well-being. They understand the benefits of a well-balanced diet and take advantage of the healthy options of the lunch menus. Younger pupils eagerly explained the benefits of having a biscuit at break and fruit at lunch rather than two biscuits. Pupils are aware of how exercise can improve physical fitness and mental health and enjoy the many opportunities to engage in sports through lessons and clubs. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and every pupil responding to the questionnaire stated that they know to keep themselves safe online. Pupils participated fully in the recent school's online safety week with many creating effective short videos with the message *Think before you Click*. Pupils value their friendships and speak openly of how important it is to support each other. They talk of the 'sprinkle of joy which makes a friendship begin' and celebrated Children's Mental Health week by making friendship bracelets and sharing stories about being brave.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate a strong appreciation of the non-material elements of life and understand how these strengthen their self-awareness. Pupils develop their understanding of world religions and the meaning of spirituality in different cultures and traditions through their participation in their religious education (RE) lessons. They are empathetic and quick to appreciate the feelings of others. In a Year 3 religious education lesson, pupils demonstrated their understanding of the importance of Wudu as a cleansing ritual. They understood how Muslim children wish to be clean before they pray to the God who created them. Year 4 pupils explored the sensations created by colours, writing with feeling about the emotions which can be generated by the colour spectrum, equating yellow with happiness and purple with a feeling of calmness. Pupils confidently express themselves through music in orchestras, choirs and musical ensembles. They explore how it feels to be a different person in their drama and speak with maturity about their own feelings. Pupils feel well supported by the strong pastoral provision and learn how to appreciate themselves and others through their physical, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and mindfulness lessons.
- 3.18 Pupils have an outstanding sense of right and wrong. They understand the school's systems of rewards and sanctions, and behaviour in the school is excellent with minimal intervention needed from pastoral leaders. Pupils take ownership of their own classroom rules and have made a positive contribution to the development of the new behaviour policy for the school. Year 6 pupils demonstrate maturity in their understanding of the moral code which informs rules and explain with clarity their individual stance when they feel a rule or law should be questioned, such as segregation laws studied in history. Pupils understand when they have got things wrong and take responsibility for

their actions. Pupils are trusted to take positions of responsibility and responsibly fulfil their duties with commitment as school councillors, captains of their houses and charity ambassadors. Throughout the school pupils behave with kindness towards each other in keeping with the school ethos which promotes a clear understanding of moral choices and the value of working for the good of others.

- 3.19 Pupils display high levels of social awareness. They are genuinely supportive of each other and are proud of the welcoming, inclusive nature of their school. This is a tolerant community where pupils work and play harmoniously together. The vast majority of parents expressed themselves as satisfied with the strong teamwork and social skills their children develop while at school. Pupils in Year 6 presenting their assembly, demonstrated excellent collaborative skills as they weaved together their story of animals throughout literary history in a series of amusing, informative sketches. In Reception, children explored a song about a horse in striped pyjamas, gaining expertise in singing together collaboratively as two groups. In their design and technology (DT) lesson, Year 6 pupils demonstrated their skills in peer evaluation, offering helpful advice in a sensitive way as they examined models of the playground. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, success in learning about quarters was celebrated by a spontaneous dance. Year 5 pupils effectively collaborated in a research task based on the Hanoverian era. Pupils throughout the school enjoy opportunities to work together. They are supportive of each other and understand the value of sharing ideas to improve their own performance. They bring a positive approach to their studies, supported by a classroom ethos which encourages endeavour.
- 3.20 Pupils are proud of their school. They appreciate the richness of diversity, are sensitive towards each other and understand how much they can learn from each other. Pupils are proud of the welcoming, inclusive nature of their school and demonstrate a deep awareness of racism and diversity through their explorations of black history and through their PSHCE programme. Pupils are whole-hearted in their adherence to their code of behaviour *RESPECT* (respect, equality, sharing, purpose, enterprise, creativity and truthfulness). Almost all parents in their responses, state that the school actively promotes the values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Pupils of all ages demonstrate a high degree of respect for each other including those from backgrounds and cultures different to their own. They understand and celebrate the uniqueness of every individual in their community.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair and a group of governors, observed a sample of the co-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Pamela Johnson	Reporting inspector
Mr John Abbott	Compliance team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mrs Jane Huntington	Team inspector (Former head, ISA school)