

School inspection report

28 to 30 November 2023

Holy Cross Preparatory School

George Road

Kingston Upon Thames

Surrey

KT2 7NU

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders' succinct articulation of the school's Catholic ethos in the 'Holy Cross Way' permeates all aspects of school life. This supports pupils of all faiths to develop deep spiritual awareness and strong moral understanding.
2. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing and demonstrate the knowledge and skills to do so. They ensure that the school meets pupils' educational needs.
3. Trustees' oversight of the school's provision is highly effective. They monitor the school's progress against targets identified in the school's ambitious and detailed strategic development plan.
4. Leaders and managers have implemented a rich thematic curriculum that successfully engages pupils' interest by linking subjects together through dynamic and exciting cross-curricular themes. Teaching successfully challenges pupils' thinking as a result of detailed planning and thoughtful questioning.
5. Leaders monitor the appropriateness of the curriculum and the effectiveness of teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress because of the individual support that they receive from staff. Frequent opportunities to perform in public help pupils communicate articulately. They are confident and self-assured particularly when performing. Pupils have well-developed skills in mathematics, readily rising to the challenge of solving complex calculations and problems.
6. Leaders provide a broad range of activities outside of the formal curriculum. As a result of stimulating and enriching playground activities at breaktimes, and the wide range of opportunities in the extra-curricular programme, pupils develop strong social skills and maintain good levels of physical fitness. Activities and trips contribute to pupils' preparation for the next stage in their education.
7. A programme of physical education lessons and activities effectively develop pupils' physical skills and promote their good health. Pupils strengthen their understanding of how to maintain good mental health.
8. The management of facilities is highly effective. Leaders put in place appropriate health and safety measures, including those to mitigate the risks from fire, to support pupils' safety whilst on the school premises.
9. Leaders have implemented an appropriate programme of relationships education, which is effective in meeting the needs of pupils as they progress through the school. However, while the information leaders provided to parents about this programme was accurate, it has not always been entirely clear. This has led to some confusion among parents about the nature of the relationships education programme being taught.
10. Leaders' and teachers' high expectations and effective role-modelling, reflective of the ethos of the school, promote an inclusive culture. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of one another and those from diverse faiths and backgrounds. They make effective contributions to the environment in the school and the local community.

11. Safeguarding measures are effective. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and are appropriately trained to respond to any safeguarding concerns. Pupils feel safe and secure in school.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

- Leaders and managers should ensure parents receive clear information about relationships education.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders and managers successfully and effectively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
13. Leaders fulfil their roles effectively and consistently because they have the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills. They have a clear vision for the school's continued evolution, as seen in the detailed and comprehensive strategic development plan. Leaders maintain effective links with appropriate agencies to support pupils' wellbeing. For example, leaders utilise such links to keep up to date with local advice about best practice in safeguarding.
14. Leaders ensure that clearly written policies are implemented effectively by staff. A comprehensive programme of staff training supports ongoing development of their practice. Leaders regularly monitor teaching to ensure high standards are maintained and to identify areas for further improvement. For example, leaders introduced an effective French language programme about letters and the sounds they represent to improve pupils' pronunciation. Leaders in the early years hold regular meetings with early years staff to support their professional practice and development.
15. Trustees monitor and evaluate the impact of leaders' decisions on pupils' progress and wellbeing through clearly defined committees. They maintain an effective oversight of the school.
16. Risk management procedures are effective. A comprehensive risk assessment policy provides staff with clear guidance about how to minimise risks. Appropriate risk assessments are maintained for all aspects of school life.
17. Parents can raise concerns informally with staff who carefully record each case. Leaders manage concerns and complaints effectively and in a timely manner.
18. Leaders provide parents with detailed reports and regular updates on their child's progress. Other relevant information is made available to parents as required, including through the school website.
19. The school meets its requirements under equality legislation. It does so through the successful promotion of an inclusive ethos and an appropriate plan to widen access for any disabled pupils.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The school's rich thematic curriculum is well planned and effectively taught by teachers. Leaders systematically monitor the quality of teaching, including through regular lesson observations, to ensure that teachers evaluate pupils' work effectively and plan engaging and stimulating lessons.
18. Pupils develop linguistic and literacy skills which enable them to communicate articulately, read fluently and write successfully from an early age. Frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their performing skills enable them to speak confidently in public. Pupils develop effective skills in mathematics. They demonstrate secure number skills in the younger years and, in older years, can solve complex problems, above age-related expectations. Pupils develop secure subject knowledge in history and become able to identify what information can be drawn from different sources. In dance, pupils utilise their understanding of different moves and techniques to create routines quickly and confidently. In science, pupils effectively develop their knowledge, such as that about electric circuits, through clear explanations. Teaching develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding through well-chosen resources and by challenging pupils to explain their thinking. Pupils respond very positively to the school's dynamic cross-curricular themes, producing written work that is detailed and interesting.
19. Teachers use a range of effective teaching methods. For example, they give detailed and encouraging feedback which enables pupils to understand how to improve their work. Teachers provide a range of interesting tasks and extension activities with varying levels of challenge to enable pupils to make learning choices with confidence.
20. Most pupils' achievements are in line with or above age-related expectations. By the end of Year 6, most pupils gain entry to their first choice of senior school and many are awarded scholarships.
21. Leaders identify the needs and monitor the progress of pupils who have SEND regularly and effectively. Those with specific responsibilities towards this group of pupils regularly observe teaching and meet with staff across the range of subjects. Leaders and staff draw up and implement specific learning plans for individual pupils who have SEND. These result in individual and effective support for these pupils. As a result, pupils who have SEND are highly motivated and make rapid progress.
22. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are given highly effective support to reach independence in their learning as a result of focussed and skilful provision by staff.
23. The curriculum for children in the early years is appropriate to their age, interests and educational needs. Teachers' well-planned, activities, personalised for each child, enable children to engage actively with their learning, draw upon their interests and challenge their thinking. Children develop their understanding of number and addition including when they play games involving numbers and counting, forming numerals in sand and exploring coins and money. Children learn to match letters to the sounds that they make and to use this knowledge to write simple sentences. Staff in the early years evaluate children's development of literacy skills regularly and use this assessment information to inform their planning and teaching. Consequently, children in the early years make good progress.
24. Leaders provide a broad range of activities outside of the formal curriculum. As a result of stimulating playground activities at breaktimes, and the wide range of opportunities in the extra-

curricular programme after school, pupils develop their physical and social skills. Leaders organise a variety of trips, including residential trips abroad, which help pupils, including children in the early years, to build their resilience and develop life skills.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

26. The school's warm and welcoming ethos supports pupils' development of self-confidence and self-understanding.
27. Pupils develop confident physical skills and dexterity through a well-planned programme of physical education and the provision of a wide range of sporting activities. The suitable and age-appropriate programme of health and relationships education meets pupils' needs. However, leaders' provision of information to parents about the content of the relationship education programme, though accurate, is not always clear. This has led to some parental confusion about whether elements of sex education are included in the relationships education programme or not.
28. Leaders' succinct articulation of the school's Catholic ethos in the 'Holy Cross Way' permeates all aspects of school life. This supports pupils of all faiths to develop their spiritual awareness and moral understanding. Thoughtful and inclusive assemblies and teaching in religious education lessons enable pupils to deepen their understanding of spiritual and moral dimensions of life. Pupils understand what it means to have faith and readily celebrate cultures and religious traditions different to their own.
29. Teachers' effective implementation of the code of conduct means that pupils behave well and are courteous to one another in lessons and around the school. Where pupils experience friendship problems, they are supported to resolve their difficulties. As a result of an effective anti-bullying strategy, leaders successfully and quickly manage the rare incidents which arise.
30. Through careful modelling, staff ensure that children in the early years learn to manage their emotions and regulate their own behaviour. As a result of careful observations, staff strive to understand each child's behaviour and respond with appropriate next steps. This enables children to develop confidence in their own abilities and begin to show sensitivity to others' needs. Staff in the early years nurture children's physical development effectively through their provision of stimulating exploration and outdoor play activities.
31. Leaders maintain the school premises and accommodation to a high standard and ensure that staff implement health and safety practices effectively. Suitable precautions are taken to prevent the risk of fire. Appropriate arrangements and accommodation are in place to care for pupils who become unwell. Staff receive regular training in first aid and sufficient staff in the early years are trained in paediatric first aid. Pupils are appropriately supervised throughout the day with the effective deployment of staff. Leaders regularly monitor pupils' attendance and pupils attend well. Attendance and admission registers are suitably maintained.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 32. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

33. Leaders successfully promote an inclusive culture which encourages pupils to respect people from different backgrounds and to develop a clear understanding of fundamental British values, such as those of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. Pupils learn about and engage in democratic practice, such as by voting in elections for school council representatives.
34. Leaders set high expectations, which enable pupils to distinguish clearly right from wrong. Pupils show high levels of respect and courtesy to one another and to adults. They demonstrate awareness of others' needs and high levels of empathy towards each other. The PSHE programme enables pupils to relate their moral understanding to issues of human and children's rights and develop their sense of responsibility towards others.
35. Pupils carry out actions to support others through, for example, groups such as the Eco-Council. These groups contribute positively to the school and the local community by, for example, creating and maintaining a school vegetable garden. Pupil leaders demonstrate initiative and a positive sense of responsibility towards others when promoting particular causes and fundraising for local charities. The oldest pupils act as mentors to new Reception children through the 'Little Girl Big Girl' buddying programme.
36. The science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) curriculum enables pupils to develop economic understanding and effective entrepreneurial skills. For example, pupils establish their own micro-businesses to raise funds for charity. Consequently, pupils begin to develop secure, age-appropriate economic awareness. Pupils begin to learn about the world of work and types of careers in the PSHE programme when they explore different types of work and reasons for working, including those beyond earning a living. They are prepared well for the next steps in their education.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

37. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

38. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. The safeguarding team proactively support pupils and effectively manage concerns. They encourage pupils to share any worries that they might have. Trustees maintain an effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures, including through frequently undertaken detailed reviews.
39. The clear and detailed safeguarding policy reflects current statutory guidance and is implemented effectively by staff. All staff, trustees and volunteers receive safeguarding training as they join the school, and this is updated at regular intervals. Those with designated safeguarding responsibilities receive appropriate training for their role. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection procedures. They understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern and are alert to the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism and the need to monitor pupils' attendance. They have an appropriate awareness of the dangers of child-on-child abuse and how to respond should any concerns arise.
40. Leaders collaborate effectively with external agencies and follow locally agreed procedures. They seek and follow advice from local safeguarding partners. Referrals to children's services and the local authority designated officer are made in a timely manner.
41. The school maintains appropriate safeguarding records and ensures that these are held securely to maintain confidentiality.
42. Safer recruitment checks are completed for staff, volunteers and trustees and an accurate record of appointments is kept.
43. Leaders ensure that pupils have a thorough, age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. An appropriate filtering and monitoring system is in place.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 44. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Holy Cross Preparatory School
Department for Education number	314/6001
Registered charity number	1200167
Address	Holy Cross Preparatory School George Road Kingston Upon Thames Surrey KT2 7NU
Phone number	020 8942 0729
Email address	secretary@holycrossprep.com
Website	www.holycrossprepschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Holy Cross Preparatory School Kingston CIO
Chair	Sister Margaret Donovan
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Hair
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	286
Date of previous inspection	14 May 2019

Information about the school

45. Holy Cross Preparatory School is an independent day school for female pupils located in Kingston Upon Thames in Surrey. The school has a Roman Catholic foundation and is a charitable trust, whose trustees provide governance. The school opened a new pre-school facility in September 2021 and the proprietorship of the school was placed into the school's own charitable trust in August 2022 under the existing chair of governors.
46. There are 51 children in the early years comprising one Nursery and two Reception classes.
47. The school has identified 29 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
48. English is an additional language for 166 pupils, of whom 12 receive additional support.
49. The school states its aims are to help each child to develop spiritually, personally, academically and physically, in order to prepare them for successful entry to senior school. It aims to do this by recognising each child's individuality, within a caring school community, which fosters self-discipline, self-worth and respect for others. It seeks to develop pupils' enjoyment and love of learning by providing a broad, balanced and modern curriculum, which enables pupils to develop personal responsibility, tolerance and collaborative skills. Through partnership with parents and the wider community the school aims to enable pupils to recognise, understand and respond to the needs of those less fortunate than themselves through charitable works.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 to 30 November 2023

50. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

51. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other trustees
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

52. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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