

School inspection report

8 to 10 May 2024

St John's Priory School

St John's Road

Banbury

Oxfordshire

OX16 5HX

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. In line with the stated school's aims, leaders provide an inclusive learning environment where pupils are nurtured and cared for. Pupils are respectful and well-behaved, displaying the school's values of courage, honesty, respect and perseverance.
2. Proprietors oversee the school through regular meetings with senior leaders but do not always demonstrate the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles effectively. They have not fulfilled the safeguarding requirements for filtering and monitoring the school's online provision.
3. The curriculum is well planned and resourced, and delivered in engaging ways. Teachers provide mostly effective lessons, resulting in good progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Early years provision is of a consistently high standard, where staff deliver a well-planned and creative curriculum that provides children with a stimulating environment in which to grow their talents.
4. Behaviour is managed effectively. Leaders identify any emerging trends in behaviour and implement appropriate interventions. Staff use their weekly meetings to monitor and ensure clear lines of communication on any emerging issues.
5. The social and economic education provided supports pupils' positive contributions to society. Teachers provide age-appropriate guidance through personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education lessons, which are supported by themed assemblies. Pupils appreciate and respect equality and diversity and are well prepared for their next stage in education.
6. Pupils learn to respect others and value different faiths, lifestyles, and views. They actively contribute to their local community through various events and initiatives and have developed a wider knowledge of society through educational visits and visiting speakers at the school.
7. Staff undergo regular training to help them identify and report any safeguarding concerns. They maintain detailed safeguarding records and store them securely. Leaders also work effectively with relevant external agencies, including requesting advice and referring matters to their local designated safeguarding officer (LADO) when necessary. The school maintains a suitable single central record of appointments and carries out appropriate checks; however, an error was identified and corrected during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- all the requirements of statutory guidance relating to safeguarding are met, in particular that suitable filtering and monitoring systems are implemented to safeguard pupils and adults.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that marking is consistent across all subjects to support pupils' understanding of how to take appropriate next steps in their learning;
- ensure that their knowledge and understanding of statutory documentation is consistently updated in order to develop a more rigorous oversight of online filtering and monitoring systems.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders promote the school's aims and ethos of courage, honesty, respect, and perseverance. These values foster a positive school culture where pupils feel valued, cared for, and understood for who they are. Leaders work with external agencies to support the educational and welfare needs of the pupils in their care. Records are securely stored and detail a comprehensive account of all actions taken.
9. Proprietors provide oversight for the school through regular meetings with the headteacher and termly sub-group meetings, including welfare, teaching and learning and health and safety. Leaders collaborate with external agencies to support the safeguarding needs of the pupils in their care. Records are kept securely and provide a comprehensive account of all actions taken.
10. Although leaders and proprietors effectively manage staff training and many aspects of safeguarding, there is no monitoring of online activity, and staff have unfiltered access to the school's online provision. Proprietors have not had suitable oversight of this requirement.
11. Leaders have designed and delivered a suitable accessibility plan and fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring equal access and opportunities for all pupils.
12. In the early years, leaders effectively promote the wellbeing of the children. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed in the setting and that all staff are appropriately trained. Children are suitably supervised, and appropriate staffing ratios are followed.
13. Staff identify, evaluate and mitigate risks. They receive support from leaders to address any potential issues and implement appropriate control measures.
14. The school maintains open communication channels for parents and staff, ensuring that necessary information about school management, policies, procedures, and initiatives related to pupil wellbeing is available on the school's website. Leaders regularly update parents on their children's progress and achievements. They also provide the local authority with the required information about students who have education, health, and care (EHC) plans.
15. There is an appropriate complaints policy in place. Leaders adhere to this policy. They respond promptly to parents' concerns and understand the importance of clear communication within an agreed timescale. All concerns are suitably recorded, any required actions are undertaken, and lessons learned are evaluated.

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

16. Standards are not met consistently with respect to the safeguarding of pupils, and the implementation of a suitable filtering and monitoring system.
- 17. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Pupils are provided with an age-appropriate, broad, and balanced curriculum. Teachers plan lessons carefully and cover the curriculum content outlined, making good use of resources. They have a good understanding of the subjects that they teach. They use this knowledge and effective questioning to check and develop pupils' understanding and oracy skills. Pupils exhibit pride in their work, are resilient and engage positively in their learning, including tasks that they complete independently.
19. Leaders ensure that a thoughtful core curriculum is in place for pupils, alongside a well-planned and taught provision for the creative subjects. This leads to pupils producing high quality work and exhibiting confidence in their learning. For example, this is evident in art, as seen at the whole school art exhibition enjoyed by visiting parents. Pupils confidently explain their artwork using appropriate subject vocabulary. Similarly, pupils express themselves in their drama lessons, for example, a year 4 class improvised and collaborated as they created their group adverts.
20. The curriculum for children in the early years is well planned and supports children to make progress across the full range of their learning. Well-trained adults have a thorough understanding of pupils' needs and adjust their provision accordingly. Adults use assessment effectively to identify when children need extra help and support. Through planned and play activities, adults help children to develop new vocabulary, language and communication. By the end of their time in the early years, children are appropriately prepared for Year 1.
21. Pupils make good progress and learn well. Where pupils have SEND, their needs are clearly identified in their individual education plans. In most cases, staff adapt their lessons to support pupils' individual needs effectively. For example, pupils were well supported to access challenging programming tasks in computing, meaning that all pupils were able to make good progress.
22. An appropriate assessment framework is used to address the needs of individuals and track pupils' progress. Pupils reflect on their own learning and develop their self-awareness by contributing their own assessment of progress made. In some areas, marking and assessment is not entirely consistent and pupils are less clear about the next steps which they need to take in order to make progress.
23. Leaders have designed a programme of clubs and activities that broaden pupils' interests and are enjoyed by those who attend. For example, drawing and mindfulness focus specifically on mental wellbeing strategies, while activities such as equestrian, basketball, and Judo support physical health. These are supplemented by a programme of educational visits and residential experiences to enrich pupils' experiences and develop their self-confidence and independence.

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

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have warm and supportive relationships with adults and peers. Children enjoy positive friendships and learn to be aware of the needs of others. They access a wide range of engaging activities in both the indoor and outdoor environment that helps them to develop their social, physical and personal development. Staff have a robust and systematic approach to health and safety in the early years setting, which enables children to thrive in a safe environment that promotes their physical and mental health.
26. Leaders make sure that all pupils can access a range of physical education and games. The school uses specialist facilities, including those at a local senior school, to provide access to sports coaching and weekly swimming lessons. The co-curricular programme promotes mental health through drawing and mindfulness activities and develops pupils' physical health through activities such as judo, basketball and the recent addition of an equestrian club.
27. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship curriculum promotes pupils' understanding of different faiths, values, lifestyles and the importance of health and wellbeing. The curriculum is well planned and well taught by staff. An age-appropriate relationship education programme helps pupils to explore healthy relationships in a safe environment that allows them to deal with sensitive and important topics. For example, Years 5 and 6 develop their understanding of risks associated with body image misrepresentation and how substances can harm their healthy bodies.
28. Leaders use a well-established reward system to acknowledge good work and behaviour. Pupils are praised at their weekly assemblies as their merits and house points are celebrated alongside class awards for acts of kindness and courtesy. Staff help pupils to resolve their conflicts and develop their strategies for managing relationships, on rare occasions when they need help to do so.
29. An effective anti-bullying strategy is in place. Staff are well trained. They recognise and respond to bullying and carefully record all incidents. Leaders identify any emerging trends in behaviour and implement appropriate interventions. Staff use their weekly meetings to raise awareness of concerns, however minor, and share the agreed strategies for monitoring and support.
30. Leaders ensure that the provision and maintenance of premises, including accommodation for pupils' medical needs and first aid, meet health and safety requirements and provide a safe environment for pupils. Staff supervision of pupils is appropriate, including the youngest children in the early years. Staff receive regular first-aid training and pupils and adults have suitable access to qualified first aiders during on-site and off-site activities.
31. All admissions and attendance records are maintained appropriately. Where pupils arrive or leave, the necessary details are communicated to the local authority, including pupils who arrive or leave at non-standard transition points. Staff understand and adhere to their duty to monitor and report children missing from education.

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. Pupils understand the importance of being honest and kind to each other and know right from wrong. Pupils interact happily across the different age groups, at break times, in the dining room and through different activities. Pupils embrace opportunities to take on responsibilities. House captains devise and deliver competitions, and prefects carry out their duties respectfully, such as when escorting younger children around the school in an attentive and considerate manner.
34. Pupils value being a voice for change and democracy in their school through a range of different opportunities. The youngest children carefully consider their vote for the end-of-day story by placing counters alongside their preferred choices. The school council introduces pupils, as they get older, to the democratic voting process about different decisions in how the school is run.
35. Pupils learn to respect others, and value different faiths, lifestyles and views. They encourage and foster kindness and inclusivity. Leaders diligently research and invite appropriate visiting speakers who enhance school assemblies. For example, 'Dogs for Good', where pupils eagerly engage in learning about the important role of these dogs in the lives of people who have disabilities.
36. Adults provide many opportunities to the youngest children in the Nursery and Reception classes to develop their social skills. They teach children to talk about how they and others show feelings. They learn about their own behaviour and the importance of good behaviour. They make friends, take turns, listen to adults, and are prepared appropriately for the move into Year 1.
37. Pupils' economic knowledge is developed through initiatives such as the bank's 'Money Sense' programme, where pupils learn about links between jobs and money, discover how banks work and find out how to pay for items in different ways.
38. Pupils actively contribute to their local community through various events and initiatives, which include supporting their local libraries, planting trees with the council, and engaging with care homes. Their wider knowledge of society is further enhanced through educational visits, including visits from local politicians and their experience when visiting the Houses of Parliament.
39. Leaders plan dedicated sessions for older pupils to help with their transition to senior schools and work closely with a local senior school to provide pupils with education experience in a senior school setting. In addition, pupils benefit from support and guidance for senior school entrance examinations.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

41. Staff and proprietors undergo regular safeguarding training and updates. The safeguarding policy is reviewed annually. School leaders promote pupil safety by implementing safeguarding procedures in many areas of their work. However, leaders have not implemented online filtering for staff users, and the monitoring of pupils' and staff members' use of the school's online provision is ineffective.
42. There is regular training for staff, including an induction programme for new staff and volunteers. This training provides staff with the necessary understanding of safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff are knowledgeable about different forms of potential harm including those from online activity.
43. Staff identify and report any safeguarding concerns. Detailed safeguarding records are maintained and stored securely. Leaders work effectively with relevant external agencies, when needed, including requesting advice and referring matters to their local designated safeguarding officer.
44. Senior leaders are well trained in the safer recruitment of adults working with pupils. Senior leaders oversee all staffing appointments and ensure that the necessary checks are completed appropriately and recorded accurately. The proprietors and headteacher provide regular oversight of the record of appointments to ensure that adults are appropriate to work with pupils, however, during the inspection, an error was identified and corrected in the single central record.
45. Pupils are confident to seek help when needed and receive age-appropriate education on how to stay safe, including online safety. Pupils understand how to report any concerns which they may have, including directly to the headteacher.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

46. Standards are not met consistently with respect to the arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. Arrangements do not always have due regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The school has not implemented a suitable filtering and monitoring system for pupils' online activity.
- 47. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Safeguarding

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
7(a)	arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
7(b)	such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

School details

School	St John's Priory School
Department for Education number	931/6009
Address	St John's Priory School St John's Road Banbury Oxfordshire OX16 5HX
Phone number	01295 259607
Email address	sbm@stjohnspriory.co.uk
Website	www.stjohnspriory.co.uk
Proprietor	Mr Giorgio Mystkowski and Mr Karl Durham
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Jenkin
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	88
Date of previous inspection	26 to 27 February 2020

Information about the school

48. St John's Priory School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged 3 to 11, based in Banbury, Oxfordshire. The school is a limited company, and the school's governance is provided by the two proprietors, who are also the company's directors. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2023. The school comprises three sections: The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for children aged 3 to 5 years, pre-prep for pupils aged 5 to 7 years and prep for pupils aged 7 to 11 years.
49. There are 35 children in the early years, comprising 24 in Nursery and 11 in Reception class.
50. The school has identified 16 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan.
51. English is an additional language for three pupils.
52. The school states it aims to be an inclusive school. It actively seeks to remove the barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude individual pupils or groups of pupils. The school seeks to promote equality of opportunity and achieve this through the attention it pays to the different groups of pupils within the school.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

8 to 10 May 2024

53. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

54. 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 governors
- 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
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

55. 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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