



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

St James Prep School

October 2019



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School's Details

School	St James Prep School			
DfE number	205/6400			
Registered charity number	270156			
Address	St James Prep School Earsby Street Olympia London W14 8SH			
Telephone number	020 7348 1794			
Email address	office@stjamesprep.org.uk			
Head	Mrs Catherine Thomlinson			
Chair of governors	Mr Jeremy Sinclair			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	221			
	EYFS	31	Juniors	190
Inspection dates	08 to 10 October 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St James Prep School is an independent day school for pupils aged between 2-11 years. It was founded in 1975 as part of St James Schools and moved to the site in Kensington Olympia in 2000. The school shares the site with the St James Senior Girls' School.
- 1.2 St James Schools are part of the Independent Educational Association Limited which is a registered charity and private limited company by guarantee. The governors are trustees of the charity and directors of the company. The headmistress took up her appointment in September 2009.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced a new nursery with the EYFS.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to provide a vibrant, creative climate for learning which inspires, challenges and supports the children to achieve their best. It also seeks to develop spiritual understanding, a strong moral compass and to foster an appreciation of stillness and well-being.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Most pupils live within a 5-mile radius of the school and come from professional families reflecting the wide ethnic mix of the local community.
- 1.6 Nationally standardised data provided by the school indicates that the ability profile of the school is above average. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 18 pupils as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) which includes dyslexia, hearing impairment and cerebral palsy; thirteen of these pupils receive additional specialist help.
- 1.7 English is an additional language (EAL) for 31 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers and the learning support team. Data used by the school has identified 15 pupils as being academically able and gifted, and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports 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. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was 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 report of which appears later in this document. The 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 regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management.

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 full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#), [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 associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 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 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 **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

- 2.9 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.10 **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

- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.13 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include 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. They also include 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.15 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.17 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.

2.18 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

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

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- The quality of the pupils' academic and other musical, artistic and sporting achievements is excellent.
 - Pupils have well-developed skills in all areas of their learning.
 - Pupils' communication skills are highly developed and they apply these skills effectively to other areas of their learning.
 - The pupil's higher order thinking and learning skills are well developed.
 - Pupils have a genuine love of learning which is evident in the atmosphere around the school.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- The pupils have a deep understanding how decisions they make effect their well-being.
 - Pupils have profound spiritual understanding and awareness and can appreciate calm and peace.
 - Pupils make confident and well informed choices about their academic studies and make excellent contributions to the wider school life through their contributions to the school council.
 - Pupils exhibit a high standard of behaviour and good manners towards each other and members of the wider community.
 - Pupils embrace and include all children regardless of backgrounds and cultural diversity.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:
- Build on the excellent start that all children make in the EYFS by increasing opportunities to challenge more able pupils in the lower part of the school.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievement is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils attain high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum through teaching that utilises strong subject knowledge. Throughout the school, pupils display an extremely positive attitude and a love of learning, which is underpinned by both senior leaders and governors who successfully achieve their aims to provide a vibrant climate for learning which inspires, challenges and supports the pupils to achieve their best. The pupils are inquisitive, willing to challenge themselves and not afraid to make mistakes. This willingness to learn by experience is underpinned by the school's own curious learner programme (ACE). This was seen when a junior pupil independently produced a model of a rugby world cup stadium and researched the different flags that were needed. Pupils understand how they can improve their written work if they have not met the lesson objective. They enjoy taking on the responsibility of setting their own targets for continuous improvement through the use of a target sheet in the front of their exercise books. Pupils demonstrate a strong development of their physical skills in physical education by showing excellent progress through the different stages in gymnastics.
- 3.6 The school does not take part in national curriculum tests, but the available evidence from scrutiny of the school's own assessment data, leaver's destinations, pupils' written work and lesson observations, indicates attainment to be above the national age-related expectations for their age. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make excellent progress through the effective support mechanisms that are in place. Senior pupils and children in the EYFS make rapid progress

across all ability levels in lessons due to careful planning including the effective use of questioning, use of some subject specialist staff and provision of appropriate accessible resources. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education at the end of Year 6 when they transfer to a range of secondary schools.

- 3.7 Pupils' communication skills are highly developed and they apply these skills effectively to other areas of their learning. Pupils communicate with a quiet confidence when performing in public, as seen in an assembly where pupils articulated the meaning of the different types of harm that they may face in the world. Pupils spontaneously offer comments without adult intervention, for example when EYFS children discussed reasons for birthday celebrations. Pupils are extremely keen to participate and share their thoughts with their peers and members of staff. They participate actively in assemblies, where they are strongly encouraged to respond to the themes presented by the staff. They are extremely articulate and display considerable maturity in discussion with both adults and their peers; they confidently express their thoughts, opinions and ideas from the youngest age. Pupils have an extensive range of vocabulary for their ages which they can apply to different situations. This is supported by the diverse range of assembly topics, the focus on the stories and teachings of Sanskrit and scripture, the emphasis placed on philosophy and the importance placed on reading by senior staff. Pupils listen attentively to stories read by staff in class each day. Their enjoyment of books, evident through their well present book reviews, is promoted through visits to a well-resourced school library. Pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work; the consistency and quality of handwriting is excellent.
- 3.8 Pupils' achievement in numeracy is highly developed. They make rapid progress across all abilities by applying previously learned knowledge to solve challenging problems. The youngest children in the EYFS are provided strong foundations in numeracy facts, and key vocabulary, and quickly develop their use and application of numerical skills. Some junior pupils do not always make the same rapid progress in mathematics and science due to the lack of challenging tasks. Senior pupils applied their numeracy skills in swimming when they had to work out average times and the improvement made as a percentage. Pupils with SEND effectively apply their numeracy skills to real life situations. They confidently discuss how to apply different methods to work out the change they should receive when buying things in a shop. Senior pupils have opportunities for self-assessment in mathematics lessons and their excellent study skills enable them to achieve highly; pupils in these classes make rapid progress across all abilities by effectively applying previously learnt knowledge to solve problems.
- 3.9 Pupils display strong skills in information and communications technology (ICT), particularly in ICT lessons. They are stimulated by the use of technology and keen to apply these skills to other parts of the curriculum. Pupils enthusiastically discuss how they can apply their ICT skills when creating stop-motion animations. They have a sound understanding of coding skills to create computer games through an extra-curricular club. They enjoy the additional challenges that they are set in the coding club to test their ICT skills. These skills are used effectively in many parts of the curriculum, for example when senior pupils used technology to research important figures from history or pupils designed their own software in an extra-curricular coding club; however, the use of ICT is not yet used effectively across all subjects.
- 3.10 Pupils have highly developed study skills and can analyse data and material confidently across different curriculum areas because of the positive learning environment created by the staff. Pupils regularly demonstrate higher order thinking skills and ask pertinent questions to further their understanding. They are able to draw on previous knowledge and use a range of resources in order to further their learning. They can hypothesise and draw conclusions, explaining why or why not their hypothesis was correct. Pupils are able to draw on knowledge from previous learning, for example as seen with younger pupils in a history lesson where pupils used their knowledge of transparency gained from their science lessons to explain why cellophane was a good material to use to create a stained glass window. Senior pupils demonstrate the ability to reason when explaining why their hypothesis was either correct or incorrect when looking at the behaviour of creatures in the outdoor environment

and were able to predict how and why their behaviour may differ. Pupils understand how feedback from teachers helps to support their learning, and they recognise the benefit of finding out the answers for themselves. Pupils respond to teachers' marking by adding their own comments to show how they will improve. They discuss strategies for improvement accurately and record this in a target sheet in the front of all exercise books. Pupils value the use of effort and attainment grades given by staff, which are monitored by senior leaders. During discussions, pupils commented that they know what to do to improve their performance further.

- 3.11 Throughout the school all pupils, including those with SEND and/or English as an additional language, have extremely positive attitudes to learning which are instilled through high expectations and a supportive environment that recognises and celebrates effort as well as success. Pupils rejoice in celebrating the successes of their peers as seen in the weekly celebration and commendation assembly. In a junior music lesson, some pupils worked in a group to lead singing in parts and then demonstrated this to the other half of the class. Pupils can work independently of the teacher. For example, in mathematics, older pupils worked collaboratively with other children on their table to solve a problem when they were unsure of the solution. Pupils always work highly effectively together in pairs and in small groups as well as being highly productive when working independently. Children display independence in their learning as seen in the nursery when children were self-selecting activities to carry out each morning.
- 3.12 Pupils achieve highly in a range of sporting and creative activities in addition to their academic achievements. They have been successful in a good number of regional sporting and academic competitions including success in a national chess competition. Pupils show initiative when setting up their own clubs as seen with a group of female pupils who created a football team to play in a tournament. Pupils value the confidence they gain and the collaboration with their friends when they are involved in the school play and other drama productions. Pupils display an excellent range of musical abilities in the school choirs, bands and music ensembles. Pupils produce a high standard of artwork. They have a strong sense of pride when entering the weekly art competition and look forward to seeing which pieces of artwork have been displayed. They enjoy to see their work presented in assembly and for the winners to have their work up on the school noticeboard.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupil's levels of spiritual understanding are extremely high across all ages in the school. The school's aims of valuing stillness and fostering the virtues of truthfulness, generosity, kindness and being your best are prevalent throughout the school. Pupils display high levels of personal development for their ages. They are calm, reflective and focused on the task in hand. This is evident throughout the school with 'the Pause', which promotes reflection and stillness, giving pupils an opportunity to prepare for what is to come. Pupils convey a true sense of purpose through their connection with stillness and quiet reflection. They are quietly confident, as seen in their communications with adults and their peers. They are extremely resilient, yet they know when to ask adults for advice and help. In discussions, pupils commented that they are encouraged by staff to resolve issues that arise at break times for themselves which helps to develop independence. Pupils display a 'can-do' attitude in all aspects of their school life, believing they can achieve. In EYFS, children sat calmly listening to others explaining about their birthdays and showed respect whilst waiting to have their own opportunity to share ideas. Pupils can empathise with their peers when learning about different disabilities through pupil led presentations to the class.
- 3.15 The pupils have a deep understanding of how decisions they make effect their well-being. For example, in the school council, the pupils organised a plastic bottle top collection to highlight the impact of plastic waste on the environment. Pupils make positive decisions about their own learning which enables them to make excellent progress. For example, senior pupils opt to take part in a range

of after-school core subject clinics in preparation for 11+ exams. They involve themselves fully in the democratic process with enthusiasm and a sense of purpose when electing members of the school council.

- 3.16 Pupils' levels of moral understanding are extremely high, reflecting a key aim of the school strongly promoted by governors and school leaders. Pupils discuss the system of law-making and the importance of being law-abiding members of the community. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, they take responsibility for their own behaviour towards others. Pupils exhibit a high standard of behaviour and good manners towards each other and members of the wider community, as recognised in the questionnaire. They appreciate that incidents have consequences and readily respond to the positive, supportive guidance from the staff. Senior leaders and staff promote positive behaviour through regular assemblies, personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and effective classroom management. Pupils' behaviour across the ages is excellent and sanctions are rarely required. Pupils show an understanding of the need to follow the rules in order to prevent others from getting hurt. For example, younger pupils explained the need to walk sensibly in the corridors to prevent accidents. Pupils have a strong appreciation for the non-material aspects of life. Senior pupils discussed the importance of the school's eco committee when trying to make an impact on plastic pollution in oceans. They understand that their small actions can make a big difference to a global problem as seen in a philosophy lesson when pupils commented and responded to images of a man picking up rubbish from a beach and what they could do to help. The pupil's desire to contribute to the wider community led to them presenting an assembly on saving the world. They have profound spiritual understanding and awareness and can appreciate calm and peace. The children are reflective and self-critical in their views and display mature aesthetic, cultural and spiritual awareness.
- 3.17 Pupils enjoy making a positive contribution to the house system within the school and they have a sense of pride for their own individual house. They celebrate in the successes of the other members of their house and strive to achieve points as part of the house cup. Pupils form strong relationships with their peers. They positively articulate their feelings about their friendships and identify how to resolve issues when they arise. Pupils speak affectionately of the 'buddy system' where older pupils provide positive role models for junior members of the school. Pupils show a strong sense of community and the need to contribute effectively to the wider community. The choir performed carols at a local church and retirement home. Pupils contribute extremely positively to the lives of others through their work with charities. Pupils have a positive impact on the local area. For example, a group of senior pupils helped to tidy litter and plant trees in the local park. Their efforts led to them writing to the local council resulting in the introduction of a new bin. Pupils work effectively together in a school based catering project where they plan, prepare and cook a range of meals for their peers.
- 3.18 Pupils embrace and include all children regardless of their background or culture. They have a clear understanding of cultural differences and celebrate them with great joy and thoughtfulness. Pupils demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning about other cultures through a range of assemblies, through PSHE, music, art and Sanskrit. They display an understanding and tolerance of people from different religious backgrounds, which is supported by educational visits to different places of worship. Pupils can appreciate the different food types from other cultures through themed lunches and presentations from guest speakers.
- 3.19 Pupils enjoy staying fit and healthy, and they demonstrate a willingness to be physically active. All parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school encourages their child to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils value the importance placed on staying fit through their physical education lessons and sports clubs. In one lesson, older pupils explained how to stay safe when playing team sports. During break and lunch times, pupils enjoy the freedom of being able to play a range of active games within the playground. The school council organised a 'walk to school' day which has now become an annual event, demonstrating their understanding for good health, and how this can contribute to lowering local pollution levels. Pupils understand the importance of following a healthy and balanced diet. They are aware of the different food types and talk about why they should not always

eat junk food. Pupils know that they should choose a balanced meal from the vegetarian based daily menu. They appreciate the need to choose a piece of healthy fruit at break times. During discussions and through the questionnaire, pupils indicated that they have a clear understanding of the importance of staying safe online, which is supported through the teaching of ICT and PSHE.

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 governor who chairs the prep school committee, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Mr Jason Hyatt	Reporting inspector
Mr Alastair Thomas	Compliance team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Helen Chalmers	Team inspector (Headmistress, ISA school)