

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

St Joseph's Preparatory School

November 2019



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School's Details

School	St Joseph's Preparatory School			
DfE number	861/6000			
Registered charity number	254312			
Address	St Joseph's Preparatory School Rookery Lane Trent Vale Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST4 5RF			
Telephone number	01782 417533			
Email address	enquiries@stjosephsprepschool.co.uk			
Acting Headteacher	Mr Daniel Hood			
Proprietor	The Congregation of Christian Brothers			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	103			
	EYFS	14	Pre-Prep	27
	Prep	62		
Inspection dates	12 to 14 November 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St Joseph's Preparatory School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged between 3 and 11 years. It is part of a group of five preparatory schools in England. It was founded by the Congregation of Christian Brothers, who are the trustees of the school, supported by a local governing body.
- 1.2 The school is divided into three departments: EYFS for pupils aged 3 to 5, pre-prep for pupils aged 5 to 7, and prep for pupils aged 7 to 11. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed outdoor learning areas for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and pre-prep, and updated the school hall.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide a stimulating but relaxed environment so that pupils are motivated to enjoy their work. The school's vision is to provide a caring Christian community, a place in which individuals can develop fully, contributing as happy and caring members of a school community which values their unique talents, whilst learning to live as well-mannered, self-disciplined and confident individuals.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of cultural backgrounds. Most live close to the school. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 23 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia and speech and language delay, all of whom receive additional specialist support. Two pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Five pupils speak English as an additional language, four of whom receive additional support for their English. The school has identified four pupils as being most able in the school's population, 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. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. 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. 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 full regulations 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, 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 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. 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.

2.14 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 good.
- Pupils show a high level of understanding and skills relative to their age.
 - Pupils' knowledge and skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are highly developed.
 - Pupils handle number with confidence and competence.
 - Older pupils' progress is sometimes limited by a lack of pace and opportunity for extension tasks and project-based work.
 - Pupils' skills levels in sport, music and drama are higher than those expected for their age.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils demonstrate considerable empathy to members of the school and wider community.
 - Pupils' behaviour is excellent.
 - Pupils demonstrate an outstanding respect for their own and other cultures and religions.
 - Pupils exhibit a strong appreciation of non-materialistic aspects of life.
 - Pupils have excellent collaborative skills and enjoy working in groups.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
- Strengthen older pupils' progress by extending the opportunities for extension tasks and ensuring pace in all lessons is rapid.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests, but the available evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and leavers' destinations, and the school's own assessment data, show attainment to be above in relation to national age-related expectations. Assessment data provided by the school indicate that most pupils make good progress over time from their starting points. Progress is most rapid in the pre-preparatory department. Pupils with SEND make excellent progress as senior leaders ensure they are well provided for with suitable additional support from staff who understand their individual needs well. Pupils of different abilities and needs make good progress. In the most effective lessons, pupils make excellent progress through the teachers' use of comprehensive planning and challenging, well-directed activities. In some lessons for older pupils, there is a lack of pace and extension tasks, with the result that some pupils, including the most able, do not make sufficient progress. School leaders are aware of this and are already working on strategies to ensure all pupils make effective progress. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the school is effective in meeting their children's educational needs. Year 6 pupils move on to a good range of selective and non-selective senior schools, for which they are well prepared. Some of the most able pupils gain academic, sports and drama scholarships to senior schools.

- 3.6 Across the curriculum, pupils show a high level of understanding and skills relative to their age. EYFS children successfully develop language, mathematical, social, physical and creative skills in their learning in both play-based and more formal situations, through a good range of opportunities which includes games, songs and outdoor play. In the EYFS, children have opportunities for investigative and problem-solving activities due to the introduction of a new outdoor play area. As a result, they develop their ability to think for themselves, identify problems, make decisions and devise their own solutions, fully satisfying a recommendation of the previous inspection. Younger pupils achieve success in literacy and numeracy because of effective planning and well-directed individual support for those with SEND. Pupils of all abilities develop their physical skills to a high level due to enthusiastic staff who use praise and positive encouragement effectively. Pupils' good progress is supported by a whole school marking scheme which is successfully used across all age groups and subjects. Pupils perform at consistently high levels in drama with 25 pupils gaining merit or distinctions in recent external speech and drama examinations. These excellent creative skills in performing arts are strongly enhanced by the specialist teaching provided.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent speaking and listening skills, communicating confidently and articulately across a range of subjects. This stems from the range of opportunities given to all to participate in the classroom, take part in the extensive speech and drama programme and perform in dramatic productions. Pupils, including those with SEND, write with a high level of fluency and interest. Younger pupils use their excellent knowledge of letters and sounds to read and spell to a level beyond that expected for their age. For example, Year 1 children recognised rhyming words from their endings. They demonstrated considerable enjoyment and engagement when challenged to write new words. In a lesson on *The Prince and the Pauper*, Year 4 pupils used effective reasoning skills and sensitive vocabulary when writing about the coronation of Edward VI. Year 6 pupils analysed their diary entries about being at sea, then spoke confidently in groups and to the class about the different writing methods employed. The teachers' expectations of high standards of behaviour enable pupils to concentrate and listen well to instructions.
- 3.8 From the EYFS upwards, pupils' attitudes to their work are positive. They enjoy learning for its own sake and derive satisfaction from working hard and doing their best. Pupils enthusiastically grasp the opportunity to work together with a partner or in a small group, and they produce good collaborative efforts. Staff positively support them, with extensive verbal feedback, excellent marking and encouraging written feedback of a particularly high standard. Pupils organise their resources for the day efficiently before lessons begin and show initiative in organising themselves and managing their time effectively during lessons and activities. Pupils show good levels of enthusiasm in their physical activities outside the classroom. They display determination and perseverance when taking the many and varied opportunities provided through the outdoor activity and sporting programmes. For example, in a physical education (PE) lesson, Year 6 pupils demonstrated teamwork and resilience as they worked together enthusiastically on a carousel of challenging table-tennis activities. Motivating and encouraging staff use praise effectively to engage and support all pupils.
- 3.9 Throughout the school, pupils handle numbers with confidence and competence. Younger children in EYFS were able to count jigsaw pieces whilst children in Reception confidently distinguished between two-dimensional geometric figures. In a Year 2 science lesson, pupils were able to predict and investigate the possible correlation between pupils' heights and the length of their feet. Year 5 pupils demonstrated mathematical agility and a fluent understanding of mathematical terminology when comparing fractions, percentages and decimals. Pupils' mathematical skills develop well because of the enthusiasm and stimulation provided by the teaching and the opportunities given to pupils to apply these skills across different subjects, including science and ICT.

- 3.10 Pupils are highly competent users of ICT and apply this well to support their learning across other subjects. All pupils from Year 1 onwards gain a high level of skills through discrete ICT lessons and cross-curricular computing tasks. From their first lessons they learn how to stay safe and use ICT to support and extend their learning. From Year 3, pupils are introduced to coding, developing their logic and programming skills to a high level. Year 5 pupils displayed excellent levels of understanding to debug, correct syntax and re-programme a maze game that had a series of errors. Children in EYFS access interactive whiteboards independently and use them effectively to support their mathematical understanding, for example when dragging ladybirds with the correct number of spots into the same numbered house. Pupils develop excellent ICT skills from well-planned lessons, the encouragement of knowledgeable staff and the considerable investment in resources the school has made. This fully satisfies a recommendation of the previous inspection.
- 3.11 From an early age, pupils develop good study skills. They apply their knowledge confidently to new situations. In nursery, children discussed the design of a rocket before using large wooden blocks to build their creation. Year 1 thoughtfully analysed the work of Monet, understanding that in art it is sometimes best not to follow the rules. In a number of lessons across the curriculum, older pupils became restless due to a lack of challenge and suitable open-ended tasks. In these lessons the teaching is thorough and covers the required ground but sometimes a lack of structured activities resulted in limited progress for some pupils.
- 3.12 Pupils' skills outside the school's normal programme of lessons are good. Specialist teaching and extra-curricular clubs enable pupils to develop their sporting, musical and dramatic skills at levels higher than those expected for their age. Pupils have competed at county level in hockey, cricket, and won the ISA Midlands U11 Cross-Country Championships. Pupils gained several medals at the recent National Prep School Athletics Championships and secured sports scholarships to independent senior schools. Many pupils learn a musical instrument and a number gain success in their external examinations. Pupils gain high levels of confidence along with outstanding speaking and listening skills through the school's extensive speech and drama programme, recently introduced and championed by the school's senior leaders. The vast majority of parents who completed the questionnaire agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' confidence is enhanced by the recognition they receive in assemblies attended by pupils, parents, staff and governors.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are happy, open, and friendly and this has a very positive influence on how they conduct themselves. They are confident, considerate and demonstrate excellent empathy in relation to other members of the school community. Children in the EYFS persevere with tasks and express their interests and opinions with ease and confidence. For example, a group of Reception children worked diligently cutting and sticking shapes in order to create rocket pictures. Pre-prep and prep pupils show high levels of resilience in their approach to both academic and extra-curricular activities. For example, younger pupils worked hard in science club when investigating the dunking properties of different biscuits. In a Year 3 English lesson, pupils worked effectively in pairs to overcome challenges when removing clauses and adjectives from sentences. They said that they found it easier in a team as they could make mistakes, feel supported and carry on with the challenge. The school's code of conduct, an agreed set of values embraced by the whole school community, has a significant impact on the development of the pupils' understanding of themselves. Older pupils stated that they often work harder as part of a group as others are relying upon them, and younger pupils listened enthusiastically, waiting patiently to take their turn. As a result, pupils' self-esteem and self-awareness is excellent. Pupils deal maturely with failure. For example, senior pupils described how they continue to keep trying despite setbacks in sport, and are encouraged by their teachers to develop resilience and to strive for improvement. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school successfully supports their children's personal development and meets their children's pastoral and welfare needs effectively.
- 3.15 In all areas of school life, pupils make excellent decisions. Children in the EYFS choose which activities to engage in, and they are encouraged to pursue their own interests in the classroom. Older pupils are able to make choices about appropriately challenging tasks in lessons and which clubs and activities they will attend. Pupils of all ages have high expectations of themselves and of others, meaning that excellent behaviour is the norm. Pupils' decision-making skills are highly developed. They become increasingly aware that the decisions they take contribute to their success and well-being, such as bringing the right equipment for sport and being aware of their food intake at home and in school in order to eat a better diet to improve their physical and academic performance.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate a strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life, in successful realisation of the school's aim to educate its pupils in a caring, Christian community. Senior leaders and staff encourage an appreciation of ideas about God, and of learning, and this is evident in the pupils' excellent spiritual understanding. Older pupils spoke with sensitivity about the beauty of the night sky following an overnight residential trip to a local castle. Younger pupils were able to reflect on the story of the paralysed man, whilst also offering other examples of miracles and relating them to their own lives. Pupils of all ages sing and pray calmly and thoughtfully in assemblies, which provide an opportunity for quiet contemplation, often focusing on concern for others.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate outstanding appreciation of their own and other cultures. In interviews, younger pupils demonstrated a knowledge of the history of Stoke and its links to the pottery industry. Senior pupils spoke confidently about famous local potters, and all pupils took part in the Spode Festival of Clay. Pupils demonstrate excellent understanding and respect for others' religious beliefs and practices, both within the curriculum and during assemblies where pupils explore thoughts, values and experiences of people from a range of different religious and cultural backgrounds. During *Multi-Cultural Week*, all pupils learnt about the traditions and culture of other religions. Year 5 gained an appreciation of Sikhism, making a model of a gurdwara and listening to a presentation from a visiting speaker. The vast majority of pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school actively promotes respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils' knowledge of a wider range of cultural experiences is strengthened through artefact boxes for different religions, and through the religious studies and personal, social and health education curricula for older pupils.

- 3.18 Pupils understand and respect the rules of the classroom from their first days in the school, and are encouraged to take full responsibility for their actions. Pupils' sense of right and wrong is strongly embedded, they act responsibly as individuals and work together as part of the whole class. The youngest pupils know the school rules and understand that some behaviour is unacceptable and know that saying sorry is a good response. Year 2 pupils made promise boxes containing pledges about behaviour and helping others. Younger pupils write their own class rules and sign a star to agree to follow them. All pupils care for each other and for their school surroundings. All staff treat pupils with respect, and this is reciprocated with high levels of politeness and good manners.
- 3.19 Children in the EYFS work extremely well together solving problems and sharing when on the same task. During independent learning, one group of EYFS pupils worked together to predict which size ball would roll quickest down a piece of drainpipe into a tank of water. Pupils of all ages demonstrate strong collaborative skills, working together positively to achieve common goals, such as when Year 5 pupils worked productively with each other to make decisions on linking fractions, percentages and decimals in mathematics. Year 3 pupils worked successfully in pairs using laptop computers to research for a project on badgers, whilst a group of more able pupils investigated in teams, solving clues to find out who had stolen some missing gingerbread in a puzzle set for them. Pupils help one another in lessons and in extra-curricular activities, with positive relationships between all members of the community being a strength of the school.
- 3.20 Pupils of all ages have an excellent understanding of what they can do to help members of the school community, such as older pupils enjoying being prefects in a variety of roles, including caring and nurturing younger pupils in the nursery. Without guidance, Year 6 pupils covered a duty for an absent prefect, clearing and stacking tables and chairs after lunch. Pupils have a highly developed appreciation of the needs of the wider world. For example, members of the active *eco-warriors* group take pride in making school-wide changes including creating displays and talking to the school about the environment and opportunities to save energy by closing doors and switching off lights. Pupils form outstandingly positive relationships with each other and enjoy collaborating and supporting each other on communal enterprises. They work well together such as when contributing ideas and artwork for a refugee education centre and collecting food for deprived families in the local community during harvest festival. Pupils identify strongly with the needs of the local community, creating posters to encourage responsible dog ownership in the local area and writing successfully to the local authority to ask for more rubbish bins close to school. For example, children in Reception painted uplifting messages on stones that were then left in the local park. Pupils are encouraged to voice their opinions and articulate their feelings about how to enhance their school through an effective school council which is active in representing the pupils' voice. This is due to the willingness of senior staff to react to pupils' opinions, such as the addition of new football goals and the installation of a mirror in the pupils' lavatories
- 3.21 Pupils know how to stay safe online through clear guidance given in ICT lessons, form time and assemblies. Pupils embrace a healthy lifestyle positively because the school places healthy choices and exercise as a priority; these are complemented by presentations from visiting speakers including a doctor and dentist. Older pupils spoke articulately about different food groups and the need to have a varied diet in order to stay fit. They also understood the part exercise plays in preventing certain illnesses. Many pupils adopt a healthy lifestyle by choosing from the school's extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including ballet, climbing and gardening. Caring leadership and staff ensure all pupils are very clear about who they should speak to at school if they are unhappy. Pupils' outstandingly positive and trusting relationships with staff are a feature of the school.

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 a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-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

Mr Dougal Philps	Reporting inspector
Mr James Gregory	Compliance team inspector (Director of operations, HMC school)
Miss Claire Bailey	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)