

St John's Preparatory and Senior School

The Ridgeway, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 5QT

Inspection dates

28 February–2 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leadership and management are inadequate. School leaders have failed to ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Health and safety and risk assessment policies are not implemented effectively.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare and the sixth-form provision are inadequate. The senior school premises and site are unsafe for pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteachers' vision for pupils to become 'brave thinkers' defines the spirit of the school. It has an extremely positive impact on pupils' personal qualities, learning and progress.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging work for pupils. As a result, pupils make excellent progress in their studies and attain high standards in examinations.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are courteous, friendly and have good relationships with each other and with adults.
- The early years provision is outstanding. Children develop and learn well as a result of highly effective adult support in a rich learning environment.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of learning opportunities across the age range.
- The international students' programme in the sixth form is led and managed effectively. All sixth-form students are very well prepared for higher education.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - health and safety and risk assessment policies are reviewed, and implemented effectively so that the site is maintained to an acceptable standard and pupils are safe
 - roles and responsibilities for site maintenance are reviewed, so that everyone is clear about who is responsible for what and staff can be held to account for any failings
 - effective procedures are in place for regularly reviewing the safety of the site
 - the recommendations of fire safety inspections are acted upon immediately
 - where recommendations of the fire safety inspections are difficult to implement because of the nature of the site and the challenges presented by a listed building, that leaders follow through with more drive, resilience and determination, so that all recommendations are met
 - school leaders understand and meet all the independent school standards.
- Improve the safety and welfare of pupils, including sixth-form students, by ensuring that:
 - fire safety signage is correct, visible and consistent across the school
 - rubbish and broken equipment is disposed of promptly
 - resources and supplies are stored appropriately
 - equipment used by school staff is put away securely when not in use
 - all portable electrical appliances are tested before being used in school
 - out-of-bounds areas for pupils inside the building are locked
 - out-of-bounds areas for pupils in the school grounds are locked, clearly signed and safe.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers check systematically that pupils have understood what they are learning.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- the proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b))
- the proprietor must ensure that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11)
- the proprietor must ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12)

- the proprietor must ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and

promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraphs 16, 16(a), 16(b))

- the proprietor must ensure that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25)
- the proprietor must ensure that they comply with the standard about the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils, so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- School leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- The premises of the senior school are not maintained to a safe and appropriate standard. Rubbish such as broken desks and heaters are left lying around in areas where pupils have access. Equipment in use by site staff is not put away securely. The door to the basement, the cleaners' cupboard and the mains electrical cupboard are unlocked. Fence panels and doors are left propped up against fences and outbuildings. Leaders do not appropriately restrict pupils' access to dilapidated outbuildings. Security and signage around the site, including the area by the pond, are not sufficient to indicate hazardous and unsafe areas that are out of bounds.
- Numerous recommendations from a fire safety inspection in January 2016 have not been actioned. These include the provision and repair of fire resistant materials along escape routes and the provision and testing of emergency lighting. There is poor or incorrect signage in parts of the building. The storage of equipment and materials in and outside the building and in the basement presents a serious fire hazard. A qualified electrician has not tested the portable electrical equipment in use on the premises. Record keeping relating to fire drills, evacuation and alarm testing is haphazard. Some records are held by contractors and not by the school. School leaders have not ensured that staff roles and responsibilities and procedures for checking the site are effective. School leaders acknowledged these issues during the inspection; they were open and honest, and took full responsibility for the failings. There is no doubt that the maintenance of the listed building, which was built at the time of the French Revolution, and the large estate, presents the proprietors with a huge challenge. Nevertheless, it remains their responsibility to meet that challenge and to ensure that the independent school standards are met and above all that pupils' welfare and safety are assured.
- The headteachers' vision for the school inspires staff and pupils. The ethos of the 'brave thinker', being courageous in learning and life, has been firmly established in the spirit of the school over many years. Pupils are hugely complimentary about the school, the headteachers and staff. Staff are highly committed and unanimously proud to work at the school. This ethos unites staff and pupils and has a strong positive impact on pupils' personal qualities and academic success.
- Leadership of teaching is highly effective. Subject and senior leaders visit classes regularly and scrutinise pupils' written work. During the inspection, in joint visits to classes, senior and middle leaders made astute observations about how well pupils were learning. They make accurate judgements about pupils' progress over time. Subject leaders have regular meetings with senior leaders to discuss the curriculum, teaching and pupils' progress. Staff have training to develop their teaching skills and say that they are well supported.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school and covers all the required areas of learning. It enables pupils to develop knowledge and skills rapidly in all subjects. Activities in, for example, science and geography, are up to date, relevant and capture pupils' interest. Pupils have opportunities to develop their expressive performance skills to a high level. They have access to state-of-the-art sports facilities for physical education. These all have a positive impact on their learning and skills.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of fundamental British values are promoted very effectively. The provision, including in global citizenship and current affairs, is well planned and reviewed regularly so that it meets the needs of pupils across the age range.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- School leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards relating to the welfare of pupils and the maintenance of the premises are met. Consequently, pupils are not safe.
- The single central record of staff recruitment checks meets requirements and is kept diligently. School leaders have kept themselves up to date with changes in guidance and legislation for safeguarding and child protection. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and meets requirements. Leaders and staff are trained and understand their responsibilities in reporting and progressing concerns.
- School leaders have taken and acted on advice from the safeguarding committee. They are developing a strong safeguarding culture in almost all aspects of school life, including the curriculum and how pupils are taught to keep themselves safe.
- School leaders and administrators make sure that international pupils are well cared for by their host families. Host families are vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service. The school works successfully in partnership with the guardianship company to ensure that the placements are successful, and that these pupils are integrated effectively into British culture and school life.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. Teachers have high expectations for pupils and set challenging work. As a result, pupils make exceptionally strong progress. This is evident from the quality of their written work in books and the quality of their responses to teachers' questioning.
- Teachers create a very encouraging learning environment in classes. Consequently, pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are attentive, concentrate well and have excellent work habits. They organise their folders and books well and develop excellent note-taking skills in the upper school.
- Teachers enable pupils to think deeply about their learning and pupils' mental productivity is high. For example, in a Year 11 English class, pupils were asked to give an opinion on a poet's gender from an example of their work. Pupils justified their opinions well, referencing other poets as well as features of language. Once the gender of the poet was revealed, the discussion switched to whether their original view still had validity in analysing and evaluating the poem.
- Teachers plan interesting activities that enthuse and challenge pupils. In the preparatory school, pupils used atlases to work out how far their food travels and the cost factors involved in transporting lamb from New Zealand.
- Teachers' questioning skills are almost always effective. They use a range of question

types that probe pupils' understanding and deepen learning. Teachers give pupils time to reflect and compose their answers and pupils listen to each other's responses thoughtfully. However, teachers do not always check systematically that all pupils have understood the work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. School leaders have not ensured that pupils are safe on the senior school site, so this has a negative impact on their welfare.
- Pupils get on very well together and are very respectful of each other. Many pupils told the inspectors that the school was like a family.
- Name-calling, including racist and homophobic name-calling, is extremely rare and is always dealt swiftly with by teachers. Pupils are confident that they can go to any adult if they need help and that the headteachers are always available to talk to them.
- Pupils have regular lessons in how to keep themselves safe on the internet. Pupils understand about having secure passwords to protect their personal data and identity. They also understand the consequences of using inappropriate images, including the consequences for their future employment.
- Pupils are self-confident, with highly developed personal and social skills. This is as a result of the school's ethos and the range of opportunities available to them. Performance opportunities in music and drama contribute particularly well to pupils' personal development. Inspectors visited a rehearsal for the senior school production of 'Guys and Dolls' and were very impressed with the high level of performance skills and the way that pupils of all ages worked together.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in classes is excellent and has a strong impact on their progress. There is never any disruption to learning because teachers set very high expectations for pupils.
- Pupils' conduct around the buildings and grounds is impeccable. School leaders put a high priority on politeness and good manners and pupils respond very positively to this. They are mature, friendly and welcoming; they are keen to show their school at its best to visitors.
- Pupils' attendance is well above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- In 2016, as in previous years, pupils' attainment was well above the national figures in assessments at the end of key stages 1, 2 and 4. Pupils' starting points in all key stages are above average, but their attainment continues to rise as a result of outstanding teaching.
- At key stage 1 in 2016, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard was well above the national figure in reading, writing and mathematics. At key stage 2, almost all pupils achieved the expected standard in all three subjects combined. This compares with just over half of all pupils nationally. Outcomes for current pupils in the preparatory school are outstanding. All pupils are working at age-related expectations and many are working above these expectations.
- At key stage 4, work in pupils' books shows that they make exceptionally strong progress as a result of outstanding teaching. Pupils' attainment is well above average in English and mathematics and across the range of subjects. School leaders carefully monitor pupils' attainment in tests and provide additional support to help pupils catch up if necessary.
- The most able pupils make excellent progress. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and the work ethic of the school combine to ensure that these pupils achieve their full potential.
- Pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are very well developed across the age range. This has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and learning.
- Pupils make rapid progress in their skills and knowledge in science. Even young pupils are confident in planning investigations, setting their hypothesis and designing a format to record results. In the senior school, teachers link investigative skills to challenging concepts, which develops students' understanding very effectively. Pupils' numeracy skills and graph work in science are strong.
- Pupils' creativity is nurtured effectively and pupils attain high standards in music, drama and art.
- Careers guidance is effective. Pupils can talk about their own career aspirations and how the school supports them to achieve these. They use software packages to research and interrogate different careers. Trips and visits are arranged so that pupils can find out more about higher education studies. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- School leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met for the early years provision. Children are well cared for and safe. Staff are well trained and teachers and teaching assistants plan activities together to ensure the highest quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

- School leaders have acted effectively on the area for improvement from the last inspection to provide an outdoor area for children. This area is designed with a range of opportunities for children to learn and explore. Children can discover things for themselves and play different roles in their shop and kitchen using their well-developed language skills. They are curious and observant, particularly when using the large magnifying glasses in the nature corner. Children learn well from each other, and they share, take turns and help each other solve problems. Some children were squirting water accurately into containers. They were able to describe to others how to do this successfully. School leaders are planning to make better use of the extensive grounds to extend the outdoor play area.
- Teachers' checks on children's skills and aptitudes when they enter the school show that children enter with attainment that is typical or above for their age, in all areas of learning. Most children recognise the names of letters and the sounds they represent. A small minority can write their own sentences without help. Almost all children know small words and can match these to pictures. All children count forwards and backwards with ease and there are some who accurately understand that numbers correspond to how many objects they have.
- As a result of high-quality teaching, children's understanding of mathematical concepts, and their language skills, phonics knowledge and handwriting are exceptionally strong. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children behave extremely well. There are no records of children displaying poor behaviour or immaturity when working with others. They listen and sustain attention when working as part of a whole class or independently. Children self-register in the mornings and quickly settle into class routines. Healthy snacks are available for them to select throughout the day.

Sixth form provision

Inadequate

- The sixth-form provision is inadequate. School leaders have failed to ensure that all the independent school standards are met and that students are safe on the senior school site. This has a negative impact on the quality of the provision for sixth-form students.
 - In 2016, sixth-form students made very good progress overall in their A-level courses and attainment in mathematics, physics and chemistry was outstanding. However, students did not attain equally well across the range of subjects.
 - Sixth-form leaders have responded well to this variation across subjects. They are using a new assessment system to analyse students' progress data on entry into the sixth form and throughout their two-year course. This has enabled them to identify swiftly students who need additional support. Sixth-form leaders work effectively with subject teachers to make sure that students understand what they need to do to improve. Work in students' folders indicates that they are now making more rapid progress across all subjects.
- The international students' programme in the sixth form is led and managed effectively.

The school makes sure that students are safe in their host families. Students are well integrated into British culture and the life of the school. Some international students have struggled with the language demands of sixth-form academic studies in the past and this has had a negative impact on their outcomes. However, school leaders now monitor students' progress in English more carefully and bespoke support programmes are designed for individual students. International students are on track to meet the international English language requirements for entry to their chosen university courses.

- Students enjoy being members of the sixth form. They say that the work challenges them and that teachers always expect them to do their best and provide strong support and encouragement. They are strong role models for younger pupils.
- The high standards and school ethos ensure that students have high aspirations for future study. Students are confident in their applications to universities and say that the school supports them very well throughout the process. Visits to higher education institutions are an established part of their programme and students told inspectors about the inspirational lectures they had attended. In 2016, all students secured places at their preferred university.

School details

Unique reference number	102065
DfE registration number	308/6062
Inspection number	10012824

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	506
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	97
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Mrs C Tardios and Mr A Tardios
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Mrs C Tardios and Mr A Tardios
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,240 to £12,060
Telephone number	01707 657294
Website	www.stjohnsseniorschool.org.uk
Email address	stjohnssc@aol.com
Date of previous inspection	3–4 July 2012

Information about this school

- St John's Preparatory and Senior School is an independent day school in the London Borough of Enfield. The school has a broadly Christian ethos. The school aims for pupils to become 'brave thinkers', so that they are prepared for adult life socially as well as academically.
- The headteachers of the preparatory and senior schools are also the joint proprietors. The

school does not have governors.

- The proprietors have formed an informal advisory group of consultants, known as 'the safeguarding committee' to give school leaders advice on a range of issues.
- The school occupies several buildings that have been converted for educational use, on two sites, about a mile apart. The preparatory school is located in a large house set in four acres of land. The senior school site is a large listed building in 24 acres of land. There are numerous additional buildings, some old and others much more modern.
- The school admits international students from the People's Republic of China into the sixth form. At present about half the sixth form are international students. The school uses the services of a specialist guardianship company to provide host families for the students.
- The school website meets requirements.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected in July 2012.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in all year groups and across a wide range of subjects. Several visits to lessons were made jointly with senior and middle leaders.
- Groups of pupils spoke to inspectors about their views of the school. Inspectors also talked informally with pupils at break- and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ work in books and folders to see how well they are learning.
- Inspectors met with the headteachers and proprietors of both parts of the school. Other school leaders and administrators also met with inspectors to discuss the impact of their work.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a member of the school’s informal advisory group and met with another member. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the guardianship company and held a telephone conversation with the duty designated officer for safeguarding in the London Borough of Enfield.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school’s website, documentation (including leaders’ evaluation of the school’s performance), policies, safeguarding records and records of pupils’ progress and attainment.
- Inspectors took account of the 43 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the 44 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and one additional response by email.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jo Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Milan Stevanovic	Ofsted Inspector

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