ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

19 to 21 November 2024

St Faith's School

6 Trumpington Road

Cambridge

Cambridgeshire

CB2 8AG

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

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders have suitable knowledge and skills and use them appropriately to ensure that the Standards are consistently met and that pupils' wellbeing is effectively promoted. Governors support and challenge the leadership as appropriate, maintaining effective oversight of school policies and procedures and ensuring suitable and prompt action should this be required.

2. Effective self-evaluation enables the leaders and governors to identify ways to develop the school, such as improving the use of data collected to support practice in key areas. Leaders monitor teaching effectively to ensure consistency in planning and delivery in line with their aims for the school's development. Pupils are suitably prepared for their next stages in education.

3. The school's broad curriculum is effective in supporting pupils' learning and is continually adapted in line with leaders' self-review to ensure it continues to meet pupils' needs. Leaders have established a well sequenced curriculum in the early years, that covers the required areas of learning and enables children to practise skills and develop learning effectively.

4. Lessons are well planned. Teachers make effective use of resources and engage pupils in varied and well-selected lesson tasks. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. Skilful questioning enables teachers to check pupils' understanding, challenge their thinking and adapt lessons so that pupils make good progress.

5. Effective dissemination of assessment data, combined with teachers' knowledge of pupils' attainment, ensures lessons are planned to meet the different needs and abilities of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they make good progress from their starting points.

6. An effectively planned and delivered personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, which includes relationships and sex education (RSE), meets pupils needs. It promotes pupils' knowledge of the values underpinning British society, encourages respect for cultural diversity and introduces pupils effectively to early careers and economic education. All these aspects are further explored in the wider curriculum to embed understanding, and prepare pupils effectively for experiences in wider British life.

7. Recently reviewed behaviour policies and practices set high expectations and encourage the development of good manners, positive behaviour and kindness and for pupils to aim to be 'their best selves' in line with the school's values. Leaders provide individuals involved in low level poor behaviour with effective guidance and support. However, the use of data to identify and respond to trends and patterns of behaviour, for example within particular year groups of pupils is not yet as effective as possible.

8. Pupils contribute positively to their own community. They learn about and develop a sense of social responsibility, in line with the school's vision and focus on the importance of service.

9. Staff are appropriately trained to identify and report any safeguarding concerns. These are swiftly acted on by the safeguarding team to ensure pupils' safeguarding needs are met. Leaders ensure staff recruitment procedures are conducted in line with current statutory requirements. Pupils understand and use the many different mechanisms to share any worries and are supported effectively by the school pastoral team.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

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

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- strengthen the use of data gathered about pupils' behaviour to identify trends and patterns in the behaviour of different groups of pupils and provide any additional behavioural support that is required.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The school's mission, vision and values are effectively communicated alongside the school's ethos with its focus on kindness, community and developing appropriate 'learning habits'. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing and demonstrate the appropriate knowledge and skills to ensure that the Standards are consistently met.

11. Governors monitor policy implementation effectively through regular visits to the school, discussions with pupils and staff and through scrutiny of leaders' reports to the various committees. This ensures procedures for health and safety, safeguarding, and promoting pupils' wellbeing in all areas are effective. Sub-committees report to the St Faith's School committee, who in turn report to the Foundation governors, providing effective oversight of and support for leaders' actions, and ensuring that leaders fulfil their responsibilities and enable the school to comply with relevant legislation and applicable guidance.

12. Leaders and governors ensure that a comprehensive approach to managing risk is taken and that risk assessments are regularly monitored and reviewed. Depending on their roles and responsibilities, staff are appropriately trained to identify and plan to mitigate for risk, in so far as possible. The suitable policy is effectively supported by appropriate risk assessments in areas such as the early years setting and its day-to-day management and for trips and activities. Leaders have used recent self-evaluation to enhance the school's ability to ensure that, when required, individual risk assessments for pupils are put in place and implemented effectively.

13. The detailed school development plan, established through ongoing reflection of practice, is continually reviewed and amended to ensure its effective implementation and intended outcomes in line with the school's vision. For example, as a result of their evaluation, leaders have provided staff training in understanding neurodiversity, provided further individual training for some staff in mental health first aid, and reviewed the provision of resources and planning to support the teaching of inclusion. Leaders ensure effective links with external agencies are in place to further promote and support pupils' wellbeing.

14. Leaders monitor the implementation of the school's teaching and curriculum policies effectively, through observation of lessons and review of pupils' work, ensuring pupils make good progress. Rigorous self-evaluation has led to a focus on a common approach to lesson planning and feedback to pupils that motivates pupils to improve their work and enables them to understand how to make further progress.

15. The required information is provided and available to parents on the school website. Parents are provided with regular reports about their child's attainment and progress. Leaders ensure that any education, health and care (EHC) plans are regularly reviewed and that the local authority is provided with information relating to these as necessary.

16. A suitable accessibility plan, which is kept under regular review, is implemented. Leaders implement their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and ensure practice considers the needs of current pupils and that access is improved for the benefit of any pupils who have disabilities. Leaders ensure that no pupils are discriminated against by the provision.

17. There is a suitable complaints policy in place. Any parental concerns are responded to promptly and the policy is adhered to in practice. Leaders keep a meticulous, detailed and secure record of complaints and any actions taken in response to these.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. The curriculum covers all required aspects of learning and includes comprehensive modern and classical language and engineering programmes. The day-to-day timetable of lessons is augmented by academic enrichment days (AcE) where longer time is spent developing specific interests and skills. The curriculum is planned methodically and effectively to enable pupils to develop a wide body of relevant knowledge and skills.

20. Teachers plan lessons using their clear understanding of pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their areas of expertise. This enables them to design interesting, challenging and ambitious activities and give clear instructions, so that pupils understand what they have to do and are interested and engaged in their learning. Teachers use questions effectively to check pupils' understanding, identify pupils who may need further support, and to challenge and encourage deeper thinking, including from those with higher prior attainment. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points

21. Lesson activities are planned to support the school's vision of encouraging specific 'learning habits'. The consistent use of language associated with the school's 'eight learning habits' provides pupils with a language to evaluate their attitudes to learning. Pupils become learners who can justify opinions, think more deeply, are ambitious, curious and creative in their responses. Lessons are planned to encourage collaboration, when appropriate to the task, so pupils become adept at listening attentively to each other and sharing ideas and opinions.

22. Teachers use their observations and assessment to ensure tasks are tailored to meet the needs of pupils. Teachers' feedback and marking enable pupils to actively review work and understand how to improve it further.

23. Pupils who have SEND make good and sometimes rapid progress. Their needs are quickly identified, and appropriate support is organised by the leader of provision for pupils who have SEND. Teachers deploy teaching assistants effectively to support them in providing targeted work or by providing individual or small groups support out of class as required.

24. There are a number of pupils in the school who, whilst having functional English, speak English as an additional language (EAL). Appropriate support, such as through word banks for subject specific vocabulary are used effectively when required, so this group of pupils can access activities confidently and make progress with their English.

25. Lessons are planned to use the wide range of suitable resources and specialist equipment effectively, including to develop pupils' subject specific skills of enquiry and research in areas such as science and engineering. Pupils gain a comprehensive understanding of appropriate investigative approaches, and of the 'engineering process'. Teachers use technology effectively in subjects such as music to enable pupils with a range of abilities to work independently, deepen their knowledge and understanding, and make good progress.

26. Early years staff model language effectively and plan work to link to reading books. Children are interested in reading for themselves and begin to explore how to use vocabulary widely when speaking. 'Small world' resources are provided linked to children's interests. This encourages the children to make up verbal stories about the toys and engage with one another in imaginative play. A focus on letters and the sounds they represent enables children to become adept at identifying

letter sounds correctly. Children use sounds to correctly form words when writing at a level consistent with their ability. Children with high prior attainment write in simple sentences with increasing accuracy. A high proportion of children reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception year.

27. Pupils have access to a wide variety of clubs and activities after school, with some subject -surgeries - at lunchtime that add to pupils' learning and help them develop more confidence in the specific subjects. Leaders monitor pupils' selection of and participation in clubs to check the effectiveness of the extra-curricular provision. Pupils develop their interests and creative and sporting skills further, explore new opportunities or participate in clubs offering opportunities to have fun with their friends.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. The PSHE and humanities programmes develop pupils' understanding and appreciation of a variety of faiths and cultures. Within humanities, pupils compare traditions, customs and values and gain knowledge and respect for other faiths. Pupils are encouraged to make appropriate moral choices. The school uses lessons and assemblies to encourage pupils to explore and reflect on ethical themes, such as what can be learnt from subjects such as history and literature about rights and responsibilities, equal treatment and the development of democracy over time.

30. Staff nurture the growth of self-confidence and self-esteem in pupils. Teachers use positive reinforcement effectively in writing and when speaking to pupils. They encourage pupils to value their successes and praise others for theirs. Children in the early years are gently enabled to express their feelings, encouraging increased self-knowledge and confidence. Older pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem are further developed through the many opportunities to perform and speak in front of others.

31. The extensive sport and physical education programme and range of sport clubs, enables pupils to be physically active. Science and PSHE lessons develop pupils' understanding of what is necessary for a healthy lifestyle and why it is important. Early years staff have well-established routines and plan suitable activities to encourage children to wash their hands regularly and learn why it is important to brush teeth. Teachers ensure activities are suitably planned to build fine motor control. Teachers' planned use of the large play equipment and outdoor environment enables children to develop their balance and large motor co-ordination.

32. The RSE curriculum ensures pupils learn about age-appropriate themes relevant to forming positive friendships and relationships, such as what makes a good friend, the relevance of listening to different points of view and the importance of speaking out. Pupils learn about the impact of homophobia and the role and responsibility of bystanders in helping to stop or prevent bullying. Tutor time provides further opportunities for pupils to ask questions in a supportive setting. The programme is well suited to the needs of older pupils as they gain confidence in discussing potentially sensitive topics, including in single-sex groups when appropriate. Behaviour management is effective overall. School leaders promote a culture which focuses on kindness, caring for others and being respectful so that pupils behave well, understand the consequences of their choices and enact the school's ethos. Most of the few reported concerns relate to minor infringements of the school's expectations of behaviour. More serious incidents, including bullying, are rare, swiftly reported, with resulting action recorded to ensure further monitoring of individuals and support for those concerned. The use of 'time out' responses to negative behaviour encourages pupils to think about the consequences of inappropriate actions. Staff use the newly introduced monitoring systems effectively to communicate and record concerns. -. However, these systems are not yet used as effectively as possible to identify any patterns and trends in the behaviour of groups of pupils for example, within particular year groups, which would enable more targeted provision of support if required.

33. The school premises contain suitable facilities and are effectively maintained. Health and safety procedures are effective and regularly monitored. Fire safety equipment is suitably installed and regularly checked. Procedures for safe evacuation are suitably practised. Any actions recommended

by external assessors, or from governance and leadership monitoring, are promptly acted on. Leaders provide staff with appropriate health and safety and fire safety training.

34. Staff are effectively deployed, including in the early years to maintain the required ratios, so that pupils are supervised effectively, both in lessons and during leisure time, or on school activities and visits.

35. The effective provision of first aid, suitable procedures for the storage and administration of medicines, and the appropriate facilities where pupils can receive care, support the pupils' physical wellbeing. Suitably trained staff, including early years staff trained in paediatric first aid, provide effective and immediate care if a pupil is unwell or needs first aid.

36. The admissions register and attendance records are suitably maintained, and appropriately monitored by leaders in accordance with current statutory guidance. Leaders ensure appropriate liaison between administration and teaching staff to address any absenteeism. They inform the local authority of any pupils leaving or joining the school at non-standard transition times.

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

37. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

38. The schools' vision to encourage social responsibility, promote inclusion and respect for diversity is successfully embedded both into the curriculum and wider aspects of school life. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum to embed teaching about equality and diversity across the range of subjects to ensure that pupils are taught to respect and be tolerant of all. Themes such as the importance of respecting diverse views, human rights, and the impact of slavery, racism, prejudice and extremism are part of the cyclical PSHE curriculum. Pupils' understanding of these issues is further developed in assembly themes or through subject curriculums, where texts or important historical figures are chosen to celebrate and explore diversity. In addition, pupils compare musical and artistic achievements from around the world.

39. Through carefully planned activities children in the early years learn to develop their social skills, through sharing the provided resources and by engaging in shared imaginative play. By practising these skills, interacting with staff, visitors and their friends, children learn how to co-operate, work and play together effectively. Leaders make effective use of the 'eight learning habits' as a focus for language used in lesson planning and in assembly themes, to ensure that pupils develop effective social skills for successful future life, such as collaboration and considerate thinking.

40. Pupils contribute to their own community by responding to surveys informing school development and, through the school council and eco committee, actively suggesting ideas designed to improve the school. Older pupils act as role models for younger ones when taking up roles such as buddies or prefects.

41. Teachers enable pupils to serve the wider community through making links with local institutions and charities. Pupils raise money, support local charities, use their musical skills to entertain and pick litter to help improve the environment. The bi-annual visits organised by staff to the -partner school in South Africa benefits not only the pupils who visit in cultural exchange but the wider school in contributing to and seeing the direct impact of service to and with others.

42. The PSHE curriculum develops pupils' age-appropriate awareness of potential careers. Teachers plan lessons about the skills related to areas of work that interest pupils and encourage them to develop team building skills, and to reflect on their dreams and ambitions. Careers guidance includes effective use of visiting speakers to give pupils wide and balanced information about possible careers. Senior pupils are supported by tutors to write personal statements. Tutors help pupils identify skills they have and those which need further development in preparation for life in senior school. AcE days for pupils in Years 6 to 8 sometimes focus on developing skills and preparing for secondary education. Pupils participate in mock interviews, preparation for entry examinations to selective senior and grammar schools, and a dedicated careers fair so that by the time pupils leave the school they are well prepared to make informed choices for their futures.

43. Teachers develop pupils' economic understanding effectively. Pupils learn about how taxes and interest rates work and develop budgeting skills, which they apply to fundraising activities. The PSHE curriculum includes themes such as the impact of gambling, financial exploitation and how debit and credit cards work.

44. PSHE teaching about themes such as the rule of law and role of Parliament are supplemented by work in other subjects, educational visits and information from visiting speakers, such as local magistrates. Pupils learn about and develop an understanding of different British institutions and services and their impact on and importance to British life. They are effectively prepared for responsibilities and opportunities in British society as a whole.

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

45. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

46. Leaders and governors regularly review the school's safeguarding policies and practice to ensure their effectiveness. They make use of annual audits to ensure that rigorous procedures in line with statutory requirements are in place to protect pupils from harm. The governor with safeguarding responsibility supports and challenges the safeguarding team effectively, reporting back to the St Faith's School committee, who in turn report to the 'Foundation board' to ensure suitable oversight of policy implementation. All governors complete appropriate safeguarding training.

47. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe including when online. Pupils have access to a number of mechanisms to report any concerns and know how to use the procedures effectively. Staff respond swiftly and provide appropriate support whenever pupils raise concerns.

48. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are suitably trained to carry out their role. They ensure a proactive safeguarding culture across the school. Staff receive regularly updated safeguarding training from their induction onwards, and the safeguarding team check their understanding effectively. Staff follow the effective procedures to report any concerns, including any about adults working in the school, including low level concerns. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibility respond to safeguarding concerns effectively and provide appropriate support for any pupils affected by safeguarding issues.

49. Governors ensure that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place and regularly tested. Staff monitor pupils' use of the school computers and internet and mitigate any risk.

50. The safeguarding team liaise in a suitably timely manner with external safeguarding partners, seeking advice where appropriate, to ensure appropriate support for pupils as the need arises. There are a variety of record keeping and reporting processes in place. Safeguarding records are suitably detailed and organised and meet the requirements of current statutory guidance. They are reviewed by leaders to monitor pupil welfare and ensure the appropriate support is in place.

51. Leaders ensure that all recruitment checks are carried out in line with statutory requirements before staff commence work and that these are appropriately and accurately recorded on the single central record of appointments (SCR). The chair of governors regularly monitors the recruitment process, including through review of the SCR.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	St Faith's School
Department for Education number	873/6002
Registered charity number	1144035
Address	St Faith's School 6 Trumpington Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB2 8AG
Phone number	01223 352073
Email address	info@stfaiths.co.uk
Website	http://www.stfaiths.co.uk
Proprietor	The Leys and St Faith's Schools Foundation
Chair	Sir Matthew Rycroft
Headmaster	Dr Crispin Hyde-Dunn
Age range	4 to 13
Number of pupils	555
Date of previous inspection	12 to 15 October 2021

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Information about the school

53. St Faith's School is an independent co-educational day school. It was founded in 1884 to meet the educational needs of children of Fellows of Cambridge University. In 1938 it formed a joint foundation with The Leys, an established Methodist school. Whilst St Faith's and The Leys are independent of each other, the two schools work closely together. The Trustees of The Leys and St Faith's Foundation have proprietorial responsibility for both schools. However, day-to-day governance and oversight of St Faith's School resides with the St Faith's School committee, whose members are all 'Foundation' trustees.

54. There are 46 children in the early years in three Reception classes.

55. The school has identified 70 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

56. English is an additional language for 63 pupils.

57. The school states its aims are to provide an inspiring and academically rigorous day school education for pupils aged 4 to 13, with a broad and balanced curriculum. It intends to equip pupils for diverse and meaningful futures through a tailored approach to education, with an emphasis on inclusivity and social responsibility. The school seeks to value kindness and to understand that happy children fulfil their potential. The school aims for its academic provision to be underpinned by eight key learning habits and excellent pastoral care. The school has a Christian ethos but intends to welcome families of all faiths and beliefs.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	19 to 21 November 2024

58. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

59. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- 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 facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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

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- 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.
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- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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