



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Material Change Inspection Report

St Nicholas School

November 2022

School's details

School	St Nicholas School			
DfE number	881/6023			
Registered charity number	310876			
Address	St Nicholas School Hobbs Cross Road Old Harlow Essex CM17 0NJ			
Telephone number	01279 429910			
Email address	office@saintnicholasschool.net			
Headteacher	Mr Terence Ayres			
Chair of governors	Mr Robert Ellice			
Age range	2 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	483			
	EYFS	60	Lower School	161
	Middle School	132	Upper School	130
Date of inspection	4 November 2022			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Saint Nicholas School is an independent co-educational day school. It is a registered charity, administered by a board of governors. The school comprises four sections: a non-registered Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting, for children aged 2 and above in pre-school and Reception; the lower school for pupils in Years 1 to 5; the middle school for pupils in Years 6 to 8; and the upper school for pupils in Years 9 to 11. The school has identified 35 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for two pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. The previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in January 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase its capacity from 472 to 550 pupils. The inspection included review of the arrangements to open a newly acquired and refurbished building. This is intended to accommodate a registered EYFS setting for children aged 3 months to 2 years. The inspection focused on the school's request to extend its age range as well as its capacity but does not serve as a registration inspection for the EYFS. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 3, paragraphs 18–21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23–29 (premises and accommodation)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school meets the standard and is likely to continue to do so following the opening of a newly acquired building and the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.4 The school's safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that there are many adults to whom they could report any concerns with confidence. When pupils express a concern prompt and appropriate action is taken. The school has robust systems in place to monitor and filter use of the internet and pupils state they are well educated about online safety. Any misuse of technology, including on social media in or out of school, is handled effectively.
- 2.5 The school has an effective safeguarding team in place, led by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and including deputies from the lower school and the EYFS. All have suitable advanced level training. The newly appointed manager for the nursery is undergoing appropriate training. The DSL for the school is the designated lead for the EYFS. All staff in the school are suitably trained. In discussions, staff demonstrated a secure understanding of their training and expressed a commitment to creating a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Staff understand procedures for referring any concerns about pupils, including any cases of child-on-child abuse. They understand that very young children cannot always communicate their concerns and that therefore behavioural signs are very important. Staff are suitably aware of the staff code of conduct and of procedures to communicate any low-level concerns or allegations against staff. The school keeps appropriate centralised records of concerns and of any referrals to local agencies.
- 2.6 Governors are appropriately trained in safeguarding. The safeguarding governor maintains a close relationship with the DSL and senior leaders and is kept suitably informed of any safeguarding concerns. The safeguarding policy is reviewed and carefully considered by governors annually.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11]

- 2.7 The school meets the standard and is likely to continue to do so following the opening of a newly acquired building and the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.8 The school has an appropriate health and safety policy which it implements effectively. The newly refurbished building is well designed to prioritise the health and safety of all those who will use it. This includes ensuring that it meets requirements for electrical safety and for ensuring security. Safe entry procedures are in place. Careful plans have been prepared to prioritise safe arrivals and departures for children in the EYFS in this separate area which is placed well away from the main school. Arrangements for health and safety are effectively monitored by governors who also ensure that staff are appropriately trained. Records are kept effectively and current practice to ensure health and safety is secure.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12]

- 2.9 The school meets the standard and is likely to continue to do so following the opening of a newly acquired building and the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.10 A suitable fire safety policy is implemented effectively. Staff and pupils have a clear awareness of fire safety arrangements. The school trains fire wardens and appropriate fire evacuation procedures are practised regularly. Pupils confirm that they know how to exit buildings safely. A fire risk assessment has been arranged for the newly acquired building imminently and carefully placed fire extinguishers and signage are planned to be in place by then.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]

- 2.11 The school meets the standard and is likely to continue to do so following the opening of a newly acquired building and the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.12 Arrangements for the supervision of pupils are currently appropriate for their ages and needs, including for children aged two and above. A suitable policy outlines supervision procedures and weekly rotas operate for breaks, lunchtimes and after school. The school currently has sufficient staff to supervise the additional numbers of pupils proposed.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]

- 2.13 The school meets the standard and is likely to continue to do so following the opening of a newly acquired building and the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.14 The school has an appropriate policy for risk assessment and an effective approach to managing risk. This includes risks associated with premises and accommodation, including the newly acquired building. Risks associated with the movement of vehicles around the school site and also any off-site trips in which pupils participate are assessed effectively. Suitable actions are identified to mitigate any risk identified. Staff confirm that they are trained in carrying out risk assessments. They have a secure understanding of the necessity to be risk aware.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21]

- 2.15 The school meets the standards and is likely to continue to do so following the opening of a newly acquired building and the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.16 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and proprietors and school leaders and managers have a secure understanding of the recruitment process. The single central register accurately records staff recruitment checks.

Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23–29]

- 2.17 The school meets the standards and is likely to continue to do so following the opening of a newly acquired building and the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.18 Current premises at the school provide suitable accommodation and are well maintained. There are sufficient toilets, showering and washing facilities. Drinking water is provided. Classrooms and outdoor areas are suitably lit and acoustics are suitable, including in the newly-refurbished building. In this building, suitable plans are well advanced to ensure the premises and any associated outdoor areas will be suitable for the needs of staff and children who will use them.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.19 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

- 2.20 The school meets the standards and is likely to continue to do so following the opening of a newly acquired building and the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.21 Senior leaders and governors demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently. Regular and thorough reviews of systems and structures in the school and careful planning for the newly acquired building ensure that the school actively promotes pupils' wellbeing.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

- 3.1 It is recommended that the request for a material change in the number of pupils from 472 to 550 be granted together with the use of the newly refurbished building. The school has planned the refurbishment of this building with appropriate care and it is likely that it will provide suitable accommodation for the children and staff who will use it. Additional staffing is effectively planned to ensure the wellbeing of the pupils when numbers increase.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors and a member of the governing body. She visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. She scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspectors

Mrs Kate McCarey

Reporting inspector