



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST ANTHONY'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Anthony's Preparatory School

Full Name of School	St Anthony's Preparatory School		
DfE Number	202/6181		
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Email Address	gill.hooper@stanthonysprep.co.uk		
Headmaster	Mr Paul Keyte		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Graham Able		
Age Range	5 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	269		
Gender of Pupils	Boys		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 204
	3-5 (EYFS):	0	11-13: 65
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	269	
Inspection dates	9 Nov 2010 to 10 Nov 2010		
	6 Dec 2010 to 8 Dec 2010		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Anthony's Preparatory School is a Roman Catholic day school for boys. The school aims to promote the teaching of the Catholic faith and to provide an understanding and respect for the beliefs of others. The aims focus on creating an environment that is informal yet structured, in which pupils achieve high standards in all aspects of school life, and on working in partnership with parents. The school is owned by the educational company Alpha Plus Group which has oversight of the school, and undertakes the legal requirements of governance. A local Pastoral Board is appointed to foster the Catholic education and links with the community offered by the school.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1898 as a family run preparatory school for boys. It moved to its present site in Hampstead Village in 1952, occupying two large Victorian houses in adjacent roads in a suburban setting. The direct links with the founding family continued until the school became part of the Alpha Plus Group in 2009. In the last year, considerable refurbishment and modernisation have taken place, including the establishment of whole-school information and communication technology (ICT) facilities.
- 1.3 The school has two forms in each year, with 269 pupils currently on roll: 132 in Junior House (Year 1 to Year 4) and 137 in Senior House (Year 5 to Year 8). The majority of boys join the school in Year 1, and a small number join in Year 2 or Year 3. Places are offered on the basis of assessment tests and, where applicable, a reference from the previous school. The ability profile of pupils is above the national average, according to nationally standardised measures.
- 1.4 Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, including the professions, business, the diplomatic service, the arts and the media. A high percentage of families are Catholic. Families of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds and faiths are welcomed into the school community. Seventy-four pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and of these, fifty-two receive support. Eighty-one pupils have English as an additional language, all of whom are assessed as fluent users of English and therefore do not currently receive language support.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils' achievements are excellent, fulfilling the aims of the school: pupils benefit greatly from the informal yet structured environment. Pupils are highly successful in winning places and scholarships to a range of selective schools. Pupils make good, and often better, progress through the broad curriculum, including the rich experience of languages. They benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities and from a wide range of educational visits and residential trips offering physical challenges. Teaching is successful in preparing pupils for life in their future schools. The tracking database of pupils' ability profiles and results supports a strong link between academic monitoring and pastoral care.
- 2.2 The spiritual development of the boys is excellent. They are thoughtful; they express their faith clearly, and show consideration and respect for one another's views. Pupils develop a strong moral code and are well developed socially, displaying good manners and respect for every member of the community. Cultural development is excellent, through the wealth of languages learned and through the sharing of pupils' varied home backgrounds and travel experiences. Celebrating the religious traditions of other faiths as well as the traditional Christian festivals contributes to a broad spiritual experience for all pupils.
- 2.3 The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent. The staff know their pupils extremely well, and take great care to help them take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school and to guide them in an appropriate direction. The school has excellent policies and procedures in place to promote the welfare, health and safety of its pupils and all regulatory requirements are fully met.
- 2.4 Governance is highly effective; the proprietor has respected and supported the distinctive Catholic ethos and education that are the hallmark of the school. The leadership and management of the school are good, with a number of significant strengths. The informality which characterises the ethos of the school has been maintained while sustaining the academic rigour that is a key to pupils' success and their excellent personal development. The good links with parents identified at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. In responses to the parental pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated highly positive views of a number of key aspects of the work of the school, including the progress pupils make and the quality of the curriculum.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.5 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Provide staff training to develop to full effect the skills and expertise needed to use the ICT provision.
 2. Improve the system for reporting progress to parents.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The pupils' achievements, attitudes and skills are excellent, fulfilling the aims of the school: pupils benefit greatly from the informal yet structured environment and achieve high standards.
- 3.2 Pupils respond well to a wide-ranging curriculum that offers many challenges. Pupils of all ages speak with confidence and as they grow older become articulate and thoughtful in discussions in class. They listen well and read with pleasure; in Year 2 pupils greatly enjoyed taking turns to read a story to the class. Pupils write confidently and achieve high standards in writing and poetry. Creative enjoyment in art and in design and technology results in excellent work. Pupils develop the skills of logical and independent thinking; many lessons are structured to encourage pupils to think for themselves. Pupils become competent mathematicians and are able to apply their skills. Year 8 pupils successfully recorded data from a geography field trip. Pupils have good ICT skills and with new facilities available in school, opportunities are being developed for these skills to be used across the curriculum. Pupils in Year 7 confidently worked independently to research and make a computer based presentation to the class using the interactive white board (IWB). Pupils are enthusiastic language learners. Year 5 showed their vocabulary and bartering skills in role play in a Mandarin lesson. Pupils work well independently and co-operatively in pairs or small groups. The boys enjoy taking part in a range of sporting and physical activities.
- 3.3 Pupils' attainment is excellent, judged by work seen in their books, in class and in displays of work in all areas of the school. Pupils are extremely successful in entrance examinations to a range of highly selective independent senior schools and a number of candidates have won academic and other scholarships in the last three years.
- 3.4 Pupils are judged to make good, and often better, progress in relation to their abilities both in lessons and over time, as seen by the work in books and in the development of individual pupils' artwork from the beginning to the end of term. Careful monitoring using the tracking system shows that pupils with LDD and those identified as gifted make good and often excellent progress. Pupils participate enthusiastically in sporting and drama activities and productions.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.5 The curriculum is highly effective in its coverage of the required areas of learning and well beyond, particularly in the rich provision of language teaching, with French and Mandarin introduced in Year 1, and Arabic, Latin and Greek available for older pupils. The curriculum is well structured to enable pupils to succeed in their entrance examinations and to provide a broad education. It is suitable for all ages and abilities; appropriate provision is made for pupils with varying needs and fully supports the aims of the school. The development of the enrichment work for the most able pupils is enhancing their learning through well-directed extension classes. One example of the many challenges provided for pupils is the headmaster's weekly question to which pupils respond thoughtfully. The boys rise to and enjoy the opportunity to harness their knowledge and to think creatively and independently.
- 3.6 The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities; pupils say they enjoy taking part and value the range of these experiences. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of visits relating to their learning. Residential trips which include physical challenge are greatly enjoyed.
- 3.7 Links with the local community have been forged through the relationship with a parish and participation in services, both special to the school, and regular Masses. The Pastoral Board, which has been developed in conjunction with both the proprietor and the Diocesan education board, provides strong support in the development of the Catholic ethos and education in the school and in the relationship with the parish.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.8 High quality teaching ensures that the education of pupils meets the aims of the school in nurturing their faith and achievement of high standards in an informal yet structured environment. Teaching is highly successful in preparing pupils to succeed in their entrance examinations and for life in their future schools. Excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils. Staff understand the needs of their pupils. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. The best lessons, which are carefully planned to ensure varied tasks, make full use of imaginative resources and challenging questioning. Pupils learn to make choices and to develop their responses independently. The new IWBs are being used in some lessons to provide exciting resources or challenging tasks, but as yet, not all staff are confident in the use of this new technology. Lesson planning does not yet always include an analysis of when and where ICT will be used in order to make the best use of the new provision.
- 3.9 Teaching is planned to make good use of teaching assistants when needed. Setting and grouping arrangements support pupils of different abilities. Pupils with LDD receive further support in one-to-one or small group sessions, some of which take place before or after school, enabling pupils to benefit fully from the curriculum. In some lessons, specific tasks are set to help pupils with LDD or to extend the most able pupils. In addition, staff are able to offer individual support or challenge in the small classes.
- 3.10 Marking is conscientious and pupils appreciate the use of merit marks, effort marks and helpful comments. Marking does not always indicate how pupils could improve their work, or follow up where suggestions are made to ensure that pupils improve.

- 3.11 The tracking database of pupils' ability profiles and results on the school intranet is now available to all staff in their roles as teachers and form teachers, and is helping to ensure a strong link between academic monitoring and pastoral care. The use of the tracking system is currently being extended to include detailed target setting, with pupils directly involved.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent, fulfilling the aims of the school. There is a whole-hearted commitment to encouraging individual development. Relationships within the school community are characterised by strong respect and mutual care shown by staff and boys alike.
- 4.2 The spiritual development of the boys is excellent. Pupils are thoughtful; they express their faith clearly, show consideration and are respectful of one another's views. A Year 4 class showed sensitivity in considering the Annunciation, when they offered their interpretations of how Mary and Joseph might have felt about their future. Assemblies offer challenge to pupils to think about and form their own ideas on topics as diverse as cyber safety, the "three most important questions", the Sacraments and coping with change. The school day ends with a quiet moment of prayer and reflection, part of the calm and supportive ethos.
- 4.3 Pupils develop a strong moral code. A sense of respect permeates the school. The boys have a good sense of right and wrong, and learn to take responsibility for their choices. The regular anti-bullying review provides a positive approach. The pupils are confident that there is little bullying and that incidents are dealt with well. The pupils and parents organise a range of events for charity, supporting projects in India and Nepal, and organising coffee mornings after Mass in the local church, and mini bazaars at school. The boys have raised substantial amounts for the Haiti appeal, the Coram charity for children, the Child Bereavement Charity and Westminster Children's Society, showing that they appreciate the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves.
- 4.4 The boys are well developed socially, displaying good manners, responsible behaviour and courtesy. In Junior House, the merit system that results in a gold badge and a photo on the 'Wall of Fame' encourages the boys to do their best and achieve. Older boys look forward to taking on responsibility, whether as head boy or prefects in Year 8.
- 4.5 The cultural development of the boys is excellent. Pupils have many opportunities to appreciate their own culture through visits to historical sites and the theatre, and their own performances are celebrated. *Groove a While*, the end-of-term performance organised by Year 8 pupils, is a treasured tradition. Pupils experience many other cultures through the languages learned and they share their experiences of diverse home backgrounds and travels. They celebrate the religious traditions of other faiths, for example producing cards for Hanukkah as well as the traditional Christian festivals, contributing to a broad understanding of a number of backgrounds for all.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.6 The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent. The staff know their pupils extremely well and take great care to help them take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school. Tutor periods are used well, to exchange news and monitor both behaviour and academic progress, with particular guidance for any approaching examinations. Form teachers liaise effectively with subject teachers and the heads of Junior or Senior House, maintaining comprehensive pastoral notes. A weekly pastoral staff meeting ensures that all staff are well informed of any issues. The form tutors play an active role in liaison with parents over academic progress or behaviour. The boys are confident that difficulties will be dealt with effectively; they know that they can post a concern either in the Senior House mail box in the lobby or, for example in Junior House, in "Claire's mail". Pupils in Year 5 said that the teachers are very supportive, and that they are also encouraged to sort things out for themselves. Older boys retain their contact with Junior House, where they have lunch, and become role models for the younger boys.
- 4.7 The school has effective policies and procedures to promote good behaviour, to guard against harassment and bullying, and to deal constructively with any unacceptable behaviour. The Catholic ethos of the school strengthens good relationships in all areas of school life, encouraging pupils to be aware of the needs of others. In personal, social, health and citizenship education work about bullying, pupils learn to think about how to behave.
- 4.8 The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and is implemented successfully, with all staff receiving appropriate training. All necessary measures have been taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are excellent and highly effective, including comfortable provision for pupils who are ill. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. The school has an appropriate plan in place to improve provision and educational access for pupils with statements of special educational needs or disabilities.
- 4.9 Pupils are encouraged to learn to eat healthily. Food is prepared from fresh ingredients and the lunch menu includes healthy choices. Pupils learn about the importance of taking exercise, and enjoy taking part in sporting activities. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is highly effective and fully supports the aims and ethos of the school. The structures within the Alpha Plus Group, the new proprietor, have ensured that responsibilities of governance are clearly delineated. Throughout the period of change of ownership, Alpha Plus has respected and supported the distinctive Catholic ethos and education that are the hallmark of the school. The board of governors, informed by the directors of Alpha Plus, is responsible for the legal requirements relating to safeguarding, for regulatory compliance and for the resolution of complaints, and these requirements are fully met. The directors of Alpha Plus, who regularly visit the school, inform the management board, in conjunction with reports from and meetings with the headmaster.
- 5.2 The board has detailed knowledge of the work of the school and supports it through financial backing. This has resulted in extensive refurbishment work to the buildings and carefully planned resourcing, in particular a comprehensive ICT system for management, for teaching and for pupils' use. In addition, the group supports and enables the work of the management of the school through a wide range of expert services, including health and safety, and staff training. A rigorous system of review, evaluation and planning created with the directors of Alpha Plus has resulted in a comprehensive school strategic plan, with perceptive priorities for the future development of the school to support the next stage of development.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 Leadership and management are good, with a number of significant strengths, and fully support the aims of the school, firstly in the teaching of the Catholic faith and fostering understanding and respect for the beliefs of others, and secondly, in creating an informal yet structured environment in which pupils achieve high standards in all aspects of school life. The informality of the school's ethos has been maintained without losing the academic rigour that is key to pupils' success, and these two aspects serve as foundations for the excellent personal development of the boys.
- 5.4 The new headmaster, working with the well-established senior leadership team, has created a vigorous vision for the school, building on the strengths and faith which have been established over many years. The strategic plan, based on careful self-evaluation and covering key aspects of the work of the school, sets out the priorities for the next phase of development and progress, with indications of how these targets will be met. Much of the work is already underway and in some cases has begun to have results. For example, the new ICT infrastructure is being used to develop and support the school tracking system, with target setting for individual pupils. The plan also identifies the need to clarify and strengthen some management roles in order to improve consistency in planning.
- 5.5 Working in conjunction with Alpha Plus, the team has comprehensively reviewed and updated policies and procedures, including those for the safeguarding of children. The senior leadership team uses a well-established system of appraisal for monitoring standards, and all staff receive regular and appropriate training in child protection, and health and safety, in addition to training to support their teaching and pastoral roles in school.

- 5.6 Through the recent changes, the leadership and management have succeeded in motivating the staff, who are highly supportive of the ethos of the school, and in maintaining their commitment to the welfare and the education of the pupils in their care.
- 5.7 The school has thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, including volunteers, supply staff and proprietors.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.8 The good links with parents identified at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained through a period of considerable change for the school. In responses to the parental pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated very positive views of a number of key aspects of the work of the school. In particular, they expressed great satisfaction with the high standards of behaviour achieved, and the worthwhile attitudes and views promoted. Parents said that they are pleased with the progress made by their children, and the range of subjects and experiences offered by the school, and that they feel standards of pastoral care are high.
- 5.9 In questionnaire responses, a number of parents expressed concerns about the help provided for pupils with LDD or for those who are gifted and talented. From their comments, it was clear that this related primarily to the gifted and talented pupils. The inspection found that the school makes careful identification of LDD, involving parents at an early stage, and that both one-to-one and small group lessons are very well directed to support pupils' needs. There is similarly careful identification of gifted and talented pupils, monitoring of their progress and enrichment provision both in and outside school. One example of this provision is the work undertaken in extension classes in a number of subjects that take place before or after school. Further provision is an area of current development in the school.
- 5.10 Parents receive all the required information about the school and its policies. Some parents expressed concern about the provision of information regarding pupils' progress. The present reporting system is under review by the school. Traditionally, two reports (one short and one full) are provided and regular parents' meetings take place each year for all age groups. The full reports give a clear picture of what has been taught and of pupils' attainments. However, inspection findings support the views expressed by the parents and endorse the current review by the school to investigate and establish a fuller system. Homework diaries provide useful day-to-day information and in some cases are used well for communication between parents and staff. The school's website, parents' handbooks and newsletters all add to the information available for parents.
- 5.11 Some parents thought that the school does not provide enough extra-curricular activities. However, in the pupils' responses, they said that they think there is an excellent range of activities and the inspection found that the range is good, and includes drama, hobbies, clubs, sport, and recently, chess, as regular events.
- 5.12 A significant proportion of parents indicated that they would like more opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. The school is already reviewing the ways in which parents could be further involved, but many opportunities are offered, including participation in the regular school Masses at the parish church and attendance at performances in the school. The parents' charity committee provides social events for parents as well as raising considerable sums for the school's chosen charities.

- 5.13 The majority of parents said that they receive timely responses to their questions and that concerns had been dealt with well. The inspection supported this view, finding that there are both informal and formal processes in place that are used successfully. Since taking up his post at the beginning of the year, the headmaster has offered informal meetings on Saturday mornings to parents who wish to meet him, and the Junior House staff are available in the playground at the end of the school day to chat to parents. These represent good opportunities to deal informally with concerns. The formal complaints procedure meets requirements and is properly followed if required.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with representatives of the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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