



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

OUR LADY OF SION SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Our Lady of Sion School

Full Name of School	Our Lady of Sion School		
DfE Number	938/6030		
Registered Charity Number	1121398		
Address	Our Lady of Sion School Gratwicke Road Worthing West Sussex BN11 4BL		
Telephone Number	01903 204 063		
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Email Address	enquiries@sionschool.org.uk		
Head	Mr Michael Scullion		
Chair of Governors	Mr Mark Spofforth		
Age Range	2½ to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	487		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (236 boys; 251 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	2	5-11: 109
	3-5 (EYFS):	37	11-18: 339
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	487	
Head of EYFS Setting	Mr James Summers		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	23 Nov 2010 to 24 Nov 2010		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in September 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to 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 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.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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 Our Lady of Sion School is an independent co-educational school with a Catholic foundation, governed by nine governors and trustees, three of whom are Sisters of Sion. Its lay head was appointed in 2000. It is one of a family of schools around the world and seeks to promote respect, tolerance and understanding. It aims to help young people of all faiths and backgrounds to reach their highest potential in all aspects of school life, in a caring atmosphere. It encourages staff and students to engage in the wider community and to address issues vital to the well-being of its own and the wider society. The school's ethos is "Consideration Always". Since the previous inspection, the process of incorporation has been completed, resulting from the mutual agreement of the governing body and the Sisters of Sion. Major refurbishment of both the junior and the senior schools has also taken place.
- 1.2 The school educates pupils aged from 2½ to 18 and is located close to the centre of Worthing. The nursery shares a site with the junior school, which is a short distance from the senior school. Since the previous inspection there have been major building and site improvements, a substantial upgrading of facilities for information and communication technology (ICT), and changes in the school's management structure. A new bursar joined the school in 2010.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 487 pupils on roll, including 39 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), two of whom are under the age of 3, but who attend for only very brief periods each week. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs but the school has identified 22 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). Most pupils are native English speakers who live in the local Worthing area, though some travel from neighbouring towns such as Littlehampton and Hove. No pupils receive specialist learning support from the school. Six pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), none of whom receives language support. The ability profile of the junior school is above the national average, with a fairly wide range of abilities represented, but most pupils being of above-average ability. In the senior school to GCSE, the ability profile is above the national average, with only a few pupils being of below average ability. Data are not available on which to make a judgement on the ability of pupils entering the sixth form.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' overall achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills is good. The school fulfils its aims well and the progress of the pupils over time is good. The experience of children in the EYFS and junior school offers a firm foundation for entering into the senior school. Pupils of all ages from the nursery onwards develop high levels of skill in literacy, numeracy and using ICT. They articulate ideas and opinions in lessons and in registrations, as when Year 11 pupils discussed their forthcoming Advent assembly. They make good use of ICT in presentations and to support their learning, for example in Year 5 when children produced brochures. Pupils apply numeracy skills well in subjects such as science and geography. Pupils in Year 2 demonstrated very good numeracy skills in a mathematics lesson, and were then able to explain what they had done clearly and articulately. Their creativity is evident in vibrant displays around all parts of the school, including the nursery, the junior school and the senior school. Those interviewed by inspectors were articulate, listened carefully and responded thoughtfully, showing respect for the opinions of others.
- 2.2 Pupils at the school achieve personal successes in a range of areas such as music, maths challenges, speech and drama, dance and golf; they also achieve well in group activities such as the Junior Festival Choir. On leaving the school, most proceed to their first choice of university.
- 2.3 Standards are above average overall. In the junior school, standardised tests in English and mathematics are above the national average. Over the past three years for which national data are available, from 2006 to 2009, results in GCSE and A level have been above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the average for maintained selective schools. Performance in IGCSE mathematics has been above worldwide norms and in line with United Kingdom norms, where the benchmark is higher.
- 2.4 Progress is good at all levels for both girls and boys. Test data in the junior school shows that pupils make good progress over time. The results at GCSE are good in relation to the pupils' abilities, including those with LDD or who are recognised as being gifted or talented (G&T). In the absence of ability profile data for the sixth form it is not possible to form a statement of progress here. However, 81 per cent of grades awarded at A level were A* to B last year, enabling almost all students to go on to their first choice of university.
- 2.5 Pupils of all ages have excellent attitudes to their learning. They are keen to answer questions, work effectively both independently and in groups, and frequently show enjoyment, as in a Year 7 English class discussing the supernatural, or a Year 4 history lesson on the Armada. Their books reflect their personal effort and the pride they take in producing thorough, well-organised and carefully presented work.
- 2.6 The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced, offering appropriate opportunities to pupils of all abilities at all stages of their school life. Pupils are screened for LDD, and some children have educational psychologist's reports. Whilst teachers are informed of the needs of pupils with LDD and have access to relevant reports, the school currently has no specialist support available for these pupils. A suitable range of extra-curricular activities is provided and, in those observed, pupils were

clearly enjoying themselves in areas as diverse as a nativity play rehearsal, dance, table tennis and flute choir. Pupils are positive about the options available to them.

- 2.7 Teaching is good overall; some aspects are excellent. Teaching in over 70 per cent of lessons observed was either good or excellent and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching encourages pupils to do things for themselves, providing them with the confidence to do so. Teachers have excellent knowledge of both their pupils and their subjects, and plan their lessons well. In the best lessons, effective questions, a brisk pace and a variety of activities all contribute to effective learning. Relationships in the classrooms are excellent, with pupils of all ages working purposefully together and enjoying their learning. Almost all pupils reported that they thought their teachers helped them to learn; as one junior school girl put it: "My teacher is fantastic and makes learning fun." However, not all marking or comments in reports provided useful guidance for how pupils might improve further, and in some less successful lessons a slow pace, or a lack of prompt help, limited pupils' progress.
- 2.8 Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced new systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and all teachers contribute to the collection of attainment data. These systems are not yet consistently embedded. For example, whilst cognitive ability tests are carried out in Years 5, 6 and 9 and when pupils enter the senior school, only some departments use these results to track the pupils' progress to GCSE.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.9 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent and the school is justly proud of the care it gives to all pupils. Pupils of all ages are confident, happy and enthusiastic learners. Their individual needs are the focus of pastoral care and this enables pupils to feel valued and respected. In turn, they value and respect those around them and are aware of the needs of others.
- 2.10 Pupils are consistently reminded of the importance of being good citizens through a programme of assemblies, charitable events, trips and visits. "Consideration Always" underpins the life of the school.
- 2.11 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Pupils of all ages flourish in the supportive atmosphere which permeates the school and pupils understand they are fortunate. Their spiritual development is enhanced by regular visits from the local priest, by assemblies and activities taking place in the school chapel, and by such events as the carol services held in the local church. The pupils' sense of spirituality in the juniors is enhanced by the practice of saying grace together before lunch and by sharing prayers at the end of the day. Their awareness of a variety of faiths is nurtured through the curriculum and enhanced by both assemblies and displays around the school.
- 2.12 The moral development of the pupils is excellent and this contributes to the excellent behaviour observed. Both in their questionnaires and in discussions, pupils said that there was virtually no bullying in the school and felt confident that, were it to take place, it would be dealt with effectively. There is a strong understanding of right and wrong in pupils of all ages. They are involved in an extensive range of fund-raising and charitable activities, and many older pupils take part in voluntary service.

- 2.13 Social development and awareness are also excellent. Opportunities abound to develop social awareness and tolerance, together with self-awareness and confidence. All pupils, from EYFS upwards, are encouraged to take responsibility and willingly do so. Junior school pupils were observed helping in the nursery, and the form prefects enjoy their role supporting younger pupils. Older pupils now benefit also from the reintroduced Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- 2.14 Cultural development is good. Pupils understand their own and other cultures through a wide range of experiences in music, drama and art. Pupils participate enthusiastically in events and enjoy links with a variety of local organisations and institutions.
- 2.15 The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are well looked after. Suitable policies and procedures are in place and the school has satisfactory procedures to guard against fire. Risks are assessed both in school and on trips, and healthy eating is encouraged. The school has appropriate facilities for looking after those who are unwell and a good number of people qualified in first aid is available to help them. Attendance and admissions registers are well maintained. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding procedures, as is the governor with responsibility for this.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.16 Those who govern, lead and manage the school are passionate about the Sionian ethos of the school and are committed to upholding the aim of "Consideration Always".
- 2.17 The governing body is in the process of making changes to the way it operates. Its members bring a good range of experiences and expertise to the school and they take their responsibilities seriously. They are involved in development planning and some governors are allocated specific areas of responsibility such as health and safety. They undergo necessary training and are kept informed about the school from visits during the school day, meetings with staff, presentations and reports. They preside over a happy and successful school, which is highly valued by both parents and pupils. Governors discharge the statutory duties placed upon them, including those for the safeguarding of pupils.
- 2.18 Sound leadership and management enable the school to flourish. Achievement and high standards of personal development are strongly fostered and the school's Sionian ethos lies at the heart of its successes. Appropriate measures are in place to check the suitability of staff, governors and helpers, and the centralised register complies with regulations.
- 2.19 To date, the school has made insufficient use of self-evaluation and planning processes to bring about improvement. Whilst the appraisal scheme seeks to promote teaching quality, there is little peer observation or discussion to encourage the sharing of best practice. Attention has been given to the issues raised in the previous inspection and some progress made, but more remains to be done, as the school is aware. Detailed department development plans which reflect the priorities of the whole-school development plan are not uniformly in place, and the implementation of policies is not always monitored, resulting in different practices co-existing across the school, for example in terms of assessment. A good body of data now exists to help teachers track the progress of students and this is beginning to be used effectively, although not always consistently. The lack of specialist

support for those with LDD makes it more difficult to co-ordinate support for these pupils.

- 2.20 Since the previous inspection, facilities have been improved and they support the pupils' education well. An all-weather pitch provides a useful outdoor space for sport, and the nursery benefits from an additional entrance space where parents can wait for their children. The provision of ICT has expanded, enriching the learning opportunities of pupils.
- 2.21 The school has good relations with parents, guardians and carers. Communication with parents is good, with a large number of policies on the website for the benefit of parents of both prospective and current pupils. School reports are detailed and thorough, but a few focus on topics covered, rather than on the pupils' achievements in them, and there is sometimes a lack of specific advice about how to make progress. The transition at the end of Year 9 from Sion grades to GCSE grades, which use similar letters, is not fully understood by all parents.
- 2.22 Good measures are in place for handling concerns and the very few received are resolved quickly and effectively.
- 2.23 Parents responding to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent described Our Lady of Sion School as: "A happy, caring school with happy, caring pupils." They felt well informed about their children's progress and believed that key policies were readily available. They were particularly positive about the attitudes and views promoted by the school and the standards of behaviour within it. They felt their children were offered an appropriate range of subjects and a good variety of extra-curricular activities. A minority of parents expressed concern about the support provided for children with particular learning needs. The fact that no specialist support for these pupils is available in school upholds this concern.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that departmental development planning reflects, clearly, the whole-school planning priorities, and that progress towards plans at all levels is monitored in a timely manner.
 2. Make better and more consistent use of assessment, tracking and target-setting procedures so that all pupils, including those with LDD, are supported effectively.
 3. Use regular peer observations and discussions within and across departments to share best practice in all sections of the school, including the EYFS.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good. The needs of the children are well met through careful planning, focused individual assessments of each child's learning needs and excellent relationships between parents, carers, teachers and children. The learning environment motivates the children and all are encouraged to select activities which help them to learn and develop through play and exploration. Their progress is regularly monitored and recorded, with good feedback provided for parents and carers. Healthy practices are encouraged and children know, for example, that it is important to wash hands before eating to eliminate germs. Safeguarding procedures are effective and promote the children's welfare. Opportunities exist to share good practice, but these are capable of being developed further to enhance self-evaluation, continued professional development and the development of the EYFS.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 The effectiveness of the leadership and management is good. Required policies and procedures to promote equality and diversity are in place and are implemented. The uniqueness of every child is valued and all are helped to learn and develop. Those looking after the children are suitably qualified and the school carries out appropriate checks prior to appointment. The school engages well with parents and other agencies, particularly the local authority, and all contribute to the development of the children. Children are provided with a good range of resources, used effectively, whilst good planning allows an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Self-evaluation guides planning, but this does not include peer observations across nursery and reception.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The quality of the provision in the EYFS is good. Individual focused observations enable the team to plan effectively to meet children's individual needs. The reception class has recently introduced a new process of observation and assessment as part of the child's learning journey. Adults are highly skilled at forming positive relationships and are effective in supporting children's communication skills and language for thinking. Staff regularly question and support children, encouraging them to make connections across the curriculum. There is outstanding evidence of this in the Reception class. Activities are well planned and there is continuity of teaching methods across the team to promote positive attitudes to learning. Children enjoy their learning and engage enthusiastically with tasks. Activities in the Nursery class are organised to ensure a balance of independent and small group activities and make highly effective use of the environment. Children's experiences are enriched by the inclusion of music, movement and physical education. Appropriate risk assessments for rooms and activities are in place and a healthy environment is maintained. Children are looked after safely and are

informed about healthy eating. As the school does not provide food for the children, food choices are made by parents and carers.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 Outcomes for children are good and they make effective progress across all areas of learning. Children learn to make choices between activities and resources and concentrate well. They are happy, enthusiastic and self-motivated. Clear safety rules are understood by the children and they respond eagerly, listening carefully to instructions. Hygiene practices throughout the provision are good, with children understanding the importance of washing hands before meals because of germs. Children develop excellent communication skills and are confident in using ICT; for example, Reception class children independently use the computer and children in the nursery are supported with independent use of the interactive whiteboard. They make effective progress in numeracy, with children in Nursery learning about number in role play activities such as choosing items in a shoe shop, where they measured their feet and compared the number with those written on the shoes. In Reception, children used terms such as 'one more' in an activity and counted independently up to twenty. Children develop speaking and listening skills through their discussions of topics and all children in reception write their names and understand that words have meaning for reading. A wide range of role play activities ensures that children develop skills for the future, make connections, explore and discover.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors/the proprietor/a governors' representative/governors, 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

Mrs Patricia Taylor

Mr Keith Walton

Mr Richard Yeates

Mrs Dawn Nasser

Reporting Inspector

Second Master, HMC school

Head, IAPS school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector