



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

BURY CATHOLIC PREPARATORY SCHOOL

16 TO 17 NOV 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Bury Catholic Preparatory School			
DfE number	351/6000			
Registered charity number	509280			
Address	Bury Catholic Preparatory School Arden House Manchester Road Bury Lancashire BL9 9BH			
Telephone number	0161 764 2346			
Email address	head@burycatholicprepschool.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Emma Howard			
Chair of governors	Mr Andrew Harrison			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils	101			
	Boys	45	Girls	56
	EYFS	30	Juniors	71
Inspection dates	16 to 17 Nov 2016			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and grade descriptors from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mr Graham Gorton	Reporting inspector
Mrs Finola Stack	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Geraldine Yandell	Team inspector (Head of junior school, ISA school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Bury Catholic Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between three and eleven years. It is situated close to the centre of Bury in the north-west of England, and serves Bury, Bolton, Rochdale, Rossendale and Manchester.
- 1.2 The school was founded by a religious order in 1943 as a preparatory school for girls. In 1972 it became a private limited company and a registered charity, set up by parents. The limited company is named Bury Catholic Preparatory School and still administers the school through a board of directors, also referred to as the governing body. Members of this board include parents of current and past pupils. The current headteacher took up post in February 2016 and a new head of early years was appointed in September 2016.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to educate all children in a secure and loving environment, working together to ensure that they provide the positive experiences of success that give confidence and motivation for future learning. It aims to develop a set of spiritual and moral values promoting honesty, tolerance, integrity, respect and good judgement, thus equipping children with the necessary life skills and experiences to become responsible, participating citizens.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional and business families, and a variety of ethnic backgrounds which reflect the population in the area. Most live within a five-mile radius of the school. Two pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, they require support for language and communication difficulties, and cognition and learning. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for thirty-three pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. One pupil receives additional EAL support. Data used by the school have identified thirteen pupils as the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for three other pupils because of their special talents in sport or music.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.5 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in September 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- In Years 1 to 6, develop a consistent system to provide a clear picture of pupils' ongoing progress, to enable staff to act quickly to rectify any weaknesses and match tasks precisely to pupils' varying abilities.
 - Develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the whole school to support pupils' learning.
 - In the Early Years Foundation Stage, develop additional covered areas outside to enable children to learn there in all weathers.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils of all abilities achieve highly and make rapid progress.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning. They are highly effective in applying their skills from one area of learning to another.
- Pupils display outstanding communication skills from an early age.
- Pupils have exceptionally enthusiastic attitudes to learning, demonstrating initiative and independence. They are most successful when working collaboratively.
- Pupils' ICT skills are not fully developed to support their learning across the curriculum.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils have a deep spiritual understanding underpinned by the school's Catholic foundation.
- Pupils enjoy working with one another which they do most successfully, supporting one another at every opportunity.
- Pupils have a strong moral code which is reflected in their exemplary behaviour around the school.
- Pupils display a significant deal of respect for one another, whatever their cultural backgrounds, religion or traditions.

Recommendation

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Ensuring that all pupils develop a wide range of ICT skills.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Across the school, pupils of all abilities achieve highly and make rapid progress. Attainment is above and in some cases well above the national average, as indicated by the available evidence as well as results in standardised tests and in the EYFS profile scores. This level of achievement reflects the high quality of teaching, which is planned carefully to meet the individual needs of the pupils. In the EYFS, children respond enthusiastically to a wide variety of activities which are structured to excite and engage, focusing fully on key aspects of their development. Expert questioning from teachers encourages children to reason from an early age. In the rest of the school pupil achievement is supported by lessons which are well structured, providing many opportunities for pupils to demonstrate and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils' academic development is maximised through the careful and thorough assessment and tracking programmes which have been introduced and successfully implemented since the previous inspection, in response to a recommendation at that time.
- 3.3 Pupils respond well to the school's methods for individual target setting, measuring of progress and the setting of clear learning objectives for each lesson. As a result, pupils know how they are progressing and value the input from their teachers. Pupils respond positively to careful and detailed marking of their work and oral feedback from their teachers which clearly identifies how they can improve. The inspection found many examples of this, such when clear direction and support from teachers in the lessons observed spurred the pupils on to redraft their writing in order to improve the content and quality. Pupils also support one another's learning through assessing each other's work. For example, pupils in English confidently assess and evaluate each other's work against the key areas of focus for the lesson.
- 3.4 Pupils develop a wide variety of subject skills, and they demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning. These outcomes are supported by the detailed and varied curriculum. Pupils' achievements are enriched by a wide range of trips and visits to places of interest. The youngest children in the EYFS increase their knowledge of the local area by visits to places such as a supermarket, a pizza restaurant and a pantomime performance. Older pupils relish the learning opportunities afforded by their involvement in visits to local museums and through historical days such as one providing them the experience of a Second World War evacuee. Further experience and knowledge is gained through an excellent variety of speakers who visit the school. Pupils relished the learning opportunities provided through Aspirations Week, when parents from a wide range of workplaces came to share their experiences with pupils. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, an overwhelming majority of parents and pupils felt that the range of subjects available is suitable.

- 3.5 Pupils are highly effective in applying their skills from one area of learning to another. For example, mathematical skills are readily applied in science and pupils demonstrate their literacy skills through their writing in geography and history, often by incorporating a variety of writing styles for different purposes. This is supported by the use of a curriculum which successfully integrates all subject areas at certain times of the day and the highly successful independent learning projects. Subject areas such as history, geography, drama and art are successfully woven together to captivate the interest of pupils and make learning more meaningful. Children in the EYFS relish the opportunities to learn outside of the classroom, whether through the specific programme set in a woodland environment or at the school in the covered areas adjacent to their classrooms. This is an improvement in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection.
- 3.6 In their questionnaire responses a very small minority of parents felt that teaching does not always enable their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future, and that their children's educational needs are not always met effectively by the school. Inspection evidence including discussion with pupils, a thorough scrutiny of their work, lesson observations and interviews with staff, demonstrates that the pupils' needs are fully met. The small class sizes enable the staff to know their pupils well, and they take every opportunity to maximise learning opportunities. A few parents also indicated that they do not receive helpful information about their children's performance and progress. Many informal opportunities exist, but those in a formal sense such as set consultation times throughout the year for staff and parents to discuss pupils' achievement and progress are more limited.
- 3.7 Pupils of all abilities display outstanding communication skills from an early age. They are eloquent and listen respectfully to the views and opinions of others. Through activities such as drama, pupils develop their speaking skills and they perform confidently in front of others. Pupils work well together in pairs or groups and demonstrate the ability to work independently. Their writing, particularly their creative writing, is of a high quality and demonstrates a firm grasp of the rudiments of grammar and a mature use of vocabulary. Pupils write with empathy and sensitivity to the subject matter such as when retelling the experiences of soldiers in the trenches in the First World War in a poignant and heartfelt fashion, successfully conveying their feelings. Older pupils can successfully draft and refine their written work. Pupils demonstrate a strong grasp of mathematics. From an early age they are skilled at manipulating numbers and they successfully apply these in other subject areas. In the EYFS, children confidently counted the number of objects that would cause a plastic boat to sink. Older pupils use their mathematical skills confidently in areas such as coding in ICT and whilst analysing data in geography. They are competent, adventurous mathematicians and are able to work independently, pursuing specific lines of enquiry.
- 3.8 Throughout the school, pupils are generally adept at using ICT as these skills are promoted more widely in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection. They develop a good understanding of useful ICT applications, and are beginning to use these skills successfully in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils' experiences are inconsistent in areas such as data handling and analysis, and the broader use of commonly used programs.

- 3.9 Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate high order thinking skills and have the ability to work through problems in a methodical and meaningful way. Work in areas such as science demonstrates how pupils hypothesise successfully and learn from their findings. They are eager to experiment and understand that making mistakes is an significant part of the learning process. Pupils willingly take risks in their learning due to the supportive environment throughout the school provided by staff. They take up many of the opportunities for increasing independence in their learning.
- 3.10 Pupils reflect productively on their learning through the many opportunities provided for them by the skilled staff. They concentrate very well and are persistent in finding solutions to problems. Pupils' success at the point of transferring to a senior school, sometimes with scholarships, confirms their excellent achievement. Their success in a wide range of pursuits such as art, singing, sport and drama reflects their extensive portfolio of talents. They enjoy the good range of extra-curricular activities which caters for their physical, artistic and intellectual needs. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They enjoy attending school, which is reflected in their willingness to work collaboratively and support one another. Pupils are always eager to demonstrate what they know and can do. Their enthusiasm is apparent for all to see and is a key factor in their achievements across school life.
- 3.11 The excellent achievements of pupils are due to the high quality of leadership and management across the school. As the pupils confirm, school leaders are passionate and strive to ensure that every pupil is provided with the necessary understanding, skills and knowledge to be successful.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils are happy, confident young people who have a desire to always try their best. They love their school, and their enthusiasm for everything they undertake is palpable. Pupils feel good about themselves due to the excellent support and encouragement that is provided by all the staff. From an early age they are encouraged to make informed choices and they understand how to manage risks. In the EYFS, children's personal development is excellent. Younger children play together happily, sharing and taking turns. The youngest pupils demonstrate an attitude which focuses on having a try at everything that is offered. All pupils are mature in their views and appreciate the impact that their decisions will have on themselves and others. They are instinctively kind, thoughtful and considerate. The outstanding personal development of the pupils is underpinned by the school's excellent arrangements for pastoral care. This is fully in line with the aims of the school to provide the highest possible standards of pastoral care, which promotes the necessary life skills and experiences for pupils to become responsible, participating citizens.
- 4.3 Pupils have a deep spiritual understanding. The school's Catholic ethos permeates through all of their actions. Their involvement in the act of collective worship exemplifies their sense of community. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective, and express a strong sense of appreciation for areas such as art, drama and singing. They enjoy working with one another, which they do most successfully. Pupils support one another across the age groups, demonstrating understanding and sensitivity towards each other. In interview, the key message expressed by pupils was that the most important aspects of life were not about material wealth and possessions but in how everyone supports one another. This belief is evident not only through the course of their studies, but through their participation in projects that support their communities.
- 4.4 As pupils move through the school they develop a secure understanding of the need for good behaviour and resilience. When faced with a difficulty or when challenged in class, pupils display strong perseverance. They are always keen to try their best. Around the school, pupils are articulate and confident in their dealings with visitors, staff and other pupils.
- 4.5 Pupils have a strong moral code which is reflected in their exemplary behaviour around the school. In their questionnaire responses, every parent felt that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Pupils respond positively and enthusiastically to the school's rewards and sanctions system. It focuses on positivity, and the pupils strive to ensure that their actions and deeds are rewarded. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the manner in which the school openly celebrates their achievements and effort. They are aware of the consequences of their actions. Pupils reflect on their approach to school life and have the skills to adapt to changing circumstances. They have an excellent understanding of the rule of law and of systems in Britain. Through their studies, pupils understand the parliamentary system and how laws are made and upheld. They are competent in forming and expressing their personal views, such as when debating current affairs.

- 4.6 Pupils understand the importance of staying safe. They respond positively to the support, care and information provided to them by the school in areas such as safety online, and to the aspects of the curriculum that develop this understanding. For example, the youngest pupils learn about issues such as fire safety and policing from visiting speakers. In lessons, older pupils learn about the potential dangers surrounding smoking, drugs and alcohol misuse. When using computers, pupils are aware of how to stay safe by reporting any activity with which they feel uncomfortable. They have a clear understanding of online dangers when using the internet. Pupils are confidently knowledgeable about how to maintain a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and healthy eating. Their good health both mentally and physically is extremely well promoted. This positive picture is supported by parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, who unanimously felt that the school does all it can to ensure their children learn in a healthy and safe environment.
- 4.7 Pupils display a great deal of respect for one another, whatever their cultural backgrounds, religion or traditions. Their appreciation of one another is explicit and comes naturally. Pupils see themselves as part of a happy, close-knit family where everyone is valued. In their questionnaire responses, all parents felt that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils are excellent citizens. They believe that they have an important part to play, both in the life of the school community and in supporting others in the wider world. This is demonstrated through their participation in a large amount of fundraising initiatives and the links that they have with the local community. These include the school's charitable support of a Catholic mission. Pupils not only raise funds but learn and appreciate how the work of the Catholic church supports the lives of others around the world. Pupils of all ages including those in the EYFS benefit enormously from participating in local events, such as the annual Remembrance Day service at the local cenotaph.
- 4.8 Pupils readily take on positions of responsibility and make excellent contributions to school life. They contribute expertly through forums such as the school council and eco-council. Councillors are elected by their peers and take these roles most seriously. They realise the importance of having the ability to contribute positively to make their school a better place. Pupils look after one another, and the older pupils are excellent role models for the younger members of the school community. Pupils demonstrate this at break times, where an air of supportive fun prevails.
- 4.9 Pupils are keen to take advantage of all the opportunities on offer, and as a result they develop strong personal skills. These skills enable them to be fully prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils approach this transition with confidence and characteristically enthusiastic attitudes. They demonstrate a wide range of personal qualities which stimulates the great pride that is evident among everyone in the school community.