



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

LORETO PREPARATORY SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Loreto Preparatory School			
DfE number	358/6014			
Registered charity number	250607			
Address	Loreto Preparatory School Dunham Road Altrincham Cheshire WA14 4GZ			
Telephone number	0161 9288310			
Email address	headteacher.loretoprep@btconnect.com			
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Norwood			
Chair of governors	Sister Jacinta Davenport			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils	168			
	Girls	168	Boys	0
	Day pupils	168	Boarders	0
	EYFS	27	Prep	141
Inspection dates	23 to 24 November 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 unmet 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 with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. 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

Mrs Louise Harwood

Reporting inspector

Mrs Angela Culley

Team inspector (Head, ISA school)

Mr Peter Nicholson

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Loreto Preparatory School is an independent Catholic day school for girls aged between 3 and 11. It is owned by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, commonly known as the Loreto Sisters, a worldwide organisation founded in 1609 by Mary Ward. The Institute is a registered charity. The school is managed by a governing body. The Provincial Sister is a governor and appoints the headteacher and other governors. The current headteacher was appointed in 2012.
- 1.2 The school originally catered for Catholic girls aged from 5 to 18, including boarders. In 1972, the preparatory department moved to new, purpose-built accommodation near the grammar school. At this time, Loreto Preparatory School and Loreto Grammar School were established, each with its own governing body. Since the previous inspection, the school has refurbished several teaching areas and updated resources. The school comprises an EYFS department, an Infant section for Years 1 and 2 and a Junior section for Years 3 to 6.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's primary aim is to provide an environment that enables children to live by the principles of the gospel and in the tradition of the Catholic faith, upholding the values of Mary Ward. These values are excellence, internationality, truth, justice, sincerity, freedom and joy. This broad aim underpins the objectives of the school, which include equipping pupils with the skills to enable them to contribute positively to society as honest, tolerant, adaptable and compassionate citizens. The school also seeks to help pupils to reach their full potential in all aspects of the curriculum and thus to become happy and confident with an enduring love of learning.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional or business backgrounds, all generally living in the surrounding area. About three-quarters of the pupils are of white British origin, while a quarter come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds; 21 countries are represented in the school. The school has identified 11 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which includes dyslexia, all of whom receive additional specialist support. No pupils have an educational, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 41 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. One of these pupils requires specialist support. The school has identified 12 pupils as being the most able of the school's population, and the school provides enrichment projects for them as directed by the gifted and talented co-ordinator.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Ducklings	Nursery
Prep 1	Reception
Prep 2	Year 1
Prep 3	Year 2

Prep 4	Year 3
Prep 5	Year 4
Prep 6	Year 5
Prep 7	Year 6

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in September 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Increase the use of open-ended tasks in teaching to develop further pupils' abilities in independent and investigative work.
 - Extend monitoring by subject co-ordinators to include mutual observation across subjects and age groups to share best practice in teaching and learning.
 - Implement existing plans in the EYFS to further extend outdoor learning by including multi-sensory experiences.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Children receive an excellent start in the EYFS and make rapid progress, particularly in their personal, social, writing and reading skills.
- Pupils of all ages demonstrate exemplary attitudes towards learning.
- All ability groups make at least good progress in all subjects, due to strong teaching and careful monitoring of progress and standards.
- The pupils' communication skills and collaborative work are of a high order.

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

- Pupils develop a deep love of and respect for the Catholic faith.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is impeccable.
- The pupils' levels of self-esteem and confidence are high, due to the reassurance they gain from the values espoused in the school's aims.
- Pupils view the school as a family and show great respect for each other's culture, opinions and beliefs.

Recommendations

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

- Extend the opportunities for the creative and performing arts.
- Provide more opportunities for the pupils to develop their leadership skills.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The school does not take part in national curriculum tests, but the available evidence shows the attainment to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils of all ages and abilities make at least good progress across all subjects due to the measures put in place by the leaders and managers of the school to achieve the aspirational aims of the school. These measures include ability grouping in English and mathematics from Year 3 and, in addition, the provision for those with SEND, EAL and the most able. The standard of work evident by the time the pupils leave school is well above the nationally expected levels in English and mathematics and most pupils are successful in gaining places, against strong competition, at selective schools for the next stage of their education.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, children rapidly develop strong communication skills. They enjoy conversing with each other and adults and express themselves effectively, showing sensitivity for listeners' needs. This is strongly supported by adults who plan engaging opportunities for children to participate in relevant speaking and listening activities and give them time to decide what they want to say. The EYFS environment is calm and unhurried and, consequently, children feel comfortable and safe and are willing to initiate discussions. The children's reading and writing skills are advanced due to the systematic synthetic phonics sessions, delivered in a fun and appealing manner using captivating resources such as *Felicity the Fairy and her wand*. Children become increasingly confident in their abilities as adults seek to enrich every learning opportunity. For example, at the start of a registration session, children were encouraged to say hello in nine different languages and to sing happy birthday in six. Learning is seamless throughout the day. Children display a positive, happy attitude towards every lesson, immersing themselves in activities with pleasure. They take ideas from formal sessions and weave them into their play, using the multi-sensory resources inside and outside the classroom, as suggested in a recommendation from the previous inspection.
- 3.4 As pupils progress through the school they build on this excellent start in the EYFS and begin to develop superior speaking and listening skills and mature debating skills. The whole-school teaching policy to use paired work frequently in each lesson to discuss and share ideas underpins the pupils' excellent communication skills. Younger pupils keep conversations going by giving reasons and explaining choices. Older pupils use language effectively for different purposes, for example, to persuade, negotiate or question; they know when other people haven't understood, and they try to help by giving more information or saying it differently. This skilful use of the spoken word is transferred to the page, and written work in all subjects shows a very high quality of writing. Whether it be a formal letter in English, a reflective composition in religious education (RE), or a factual essay in science or the humanities, pupils write in an appropriate style with an excellent understanding of age-appropriate spelling, grammar and syntax. In interviews with inspectors, the girls enthusiastically described the imaginative resources used by teachers to support their writing skills, such as sentence bags, quiz trays and skill burst sessions. As well as using discussion as a tool for learning, teachers demonstrate secure and extensive subject knowledge, both of which support pupils' enquiry and debate.
- 3.5 Work in lessons is suitably planned to match the range of ability and therefore all pupils make at least good progress. Pupils throughout the school consistently experience challenging and fast-paced lessons. Since the previous inspection, the leadership has established a whole-school commitment to raising teaching standards through good professional development, peer observation and weekly work scrutiny, which also checks adherence to the marking policy.
- 3.6 All pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their teachers are supportive and helpful and that the school gives them the opportunity to make good progress. Almost all pupils agreed the lessons are interesting and that the marking helps them to improve their work. Parents were equally positive in their opinion of the quality of the curriculum and teaching, with many commenting on the personalised learning support offered to their daughters.

- 3.7 The pupils' desire for challenge is evident in practical subjects such as mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). In interviews, older girls spoke enthusiastically about the algebraic puzzles which are set to test their determination to solve them. Their work shows clarity of thought and mathematical skill in processes and in problem-solving, such as observing patterns in a tetrahedron. Younger pupils successfully apply number skills in science, as when making a bridge to support a car. Pupils enjoy their computer studies and would like to do more. Their skills are transferred successfully across subjects where they undertake projects across the curriculum and demonstrate strong ICT skills to research and present their work. In the EYFS, children explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, and enjoy experimenting with design and colour, as well as making music and dance. Through Years 1 to 6, some of this spontaneity in art, music and drama work is lost due to over-direction by the teachers. Displays of the pupils' work around the school reveal limited expressions of individual, imaginative creations.
- 3.8 Pupils are successful in a variety of individual and team events, performing particularly well in regional cross-country and athletics competitions. The available programme of sporting activity is considerable and includes badminton, swimming, netball and gymnastics. Pupils appreciate this breadth of provision and express their enjoyment of team participation and the opportunity to compete. All pupils learn a musical instrument and the school's ensembles and orchestra frequently perform to a variety of audiences. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 sing in the school choirs. The standard of their performances is high; the choirs produce a delightful tone with excellent intonation and phrasing.
- 3.9 Throughout the school, the pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are highly motivated and their behaviour is excellent. They are aspirational for themselves and each other, working well collaboratively and independently. It is apparent that they want to learn and enjoy learning. They persevere when they find something difficult and are determined to succeed. The ethos of the school underpins their attitudes to work in that it instils self-discipline and a strong work ethic. The pupils are spurred on to try hard by highly supportive teachers in a nurturing environment where opportunities and possibilities are viewed as limitless. The school's positive response to the previous recommendation, to increase the planned use of open-ended tasks, has contributed to the belief held by all the girls interviewed that learning has no full-stops and that they are drivers, not passengers, in all their lessons.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school's aims and mission statement provide a clear structure for pupils to explore and reflect on their personal attributes, and the close observance of the values of the founder results in the development of excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural qualities in all the pupils. In the EYFS, children show a strong sense of personal identity by confidently expressing their ideas, likes and dislikes. Adults support their growing self-awareness by recognising and enjoying children's successes with them and by providing them with opportunities to reflect on their achievements and their own gifts and talents. Children trust their teachers and feel safe. Consequently, they are willing to try new activities and attempt new challenges. They play and work co-operatively and are good at taking turns and fulfilling responsibilities. For example, the helper for the day collects and returns the class register and remains eager to discharge further duties as required. Children take this role very seriously. They engage readily with the moral and spiritual guidance offered through the EYFS, the whole-school collective worship, and daily prayer and reflection.
- 4.3 Pupils have a strong understanding of their responsibility for their own learning. In interviews with inspectors, they stressed the need to have personal goals and to check the success criteria regularly for a given task. They respond positively to feedback and appreciate the different ways in which teachers assess their work and progress. They value other people's ideas and are willing to help others with their learning. Pupils develop self-knowledge and resilience, and they recognise, in a positive manner, the variety of achievements that they can accomplish. For example, they recall moments of pride and say they use those memories to encourage them when they are struggling, such as during a cross-country run. Pupils' growing self-awareness is strongly supported by the RE and assembly programmes and, throughout the school, teaching encourages pupils to reflect on their current situation and set targets for the future, thereby helping them to develop an insight into their potential.
- 4.4 Pupils are very comfortable within the school's spiritual life and display a natural empathy and enthusiasm for it. The daily liturgical practice, together with the shared values embodied within the Catholic faith as expressed through the charism of the Sisters of Loreto, give the girls a solid foundation on which to build their spiritual lives. In their responses to the questionnaire, pupils expressed their appreciation for the 'Loreto family' and many commented on the friendly and caring ethos that the school possesses. They value their friendships greatly and enjoy the fellowship and collaboration they experience in all areas of the curriculum. Strong partnerships characterise the pupils' personal development. From the early days in Nursery, girls are encouraged to talk to each other, sharing their thoughts and ideas and listening to each other with respect. As they grow older, the use of partner work, 'think, pair, share' activities and group tasks encourage the development of excellent collaborative skills. The girls firmly believe that 'together is better'.
- 4.5 Every pupil gains a strong sense of moral justice and responsibility for themselves and others, and a wholehearted respect for right and wrong. This is a result of leaders and managers infusing all policy-making decisions with the values and aims of the school. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages them to behave well and to respect other people. In interviews, pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of the sanctions used by teachers in the event of misbehaviour, and reported that they are rarely necessary. Each class corporately formulates its own rules and signs them to confirm their commitment to upholding them. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 read and analyse the school mission statement each year and compose their own understanding of it. Assemblies reinforce moral behaviour at all levels and the excellent arrangements for pastoral care provide highly effective support and guidance to the pupils. Pupils express their utmost appreciation for the care shown to them by their teachers, who, they say, are always there for them. The staff are excellent role-models and successfully inspire their pupils to aim for the highest standards in work, conduct and manners. Almost all parents who responded to the

questionnaire agreed that the school meets their daughter's pastoral and welfare needs effectively. A very small minority of parents said the school does not deal well with bullying. In interviews with pupils, selected by inspectors from all year groups, pupils expressed complete confidence in their teachers and the leadership to sort out the few altercations which occur in school. They also feel strongly that pupils counter instances of bullying through their commitment to the positive and supportive ethos of the school. Records, comprehensively kept and carefully monitored by leaders and managers, support their view.

- 4.6 Pupils understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils view exercise positively and relish the many opportunities to take part in sport, dance and physical education lessons. They can describe what happens to their bodies when they exercise. They are discerning over what influences their mental well-being, citing the importance of friendship in making them happy. They frequently express the satisfaction they feel when success follows trial and error and they feel sustained by their faith in the love of God. Through the curriculum, they understand the principles behind healthy eating, although this is not always reflected in the packed lunches the pupils bring to school. Pupils appreciate the importance of being responsible digital citizens by showing the same behaviours online as they do offline. Leadership is actively involved in reinforcing online safety messages by arranging visiting speakers to address the pupils and inviting parents to e-safety evenings.
- 4.7 Pupils make best friends from a broad range of cultures and countries and diversity is celebrated throughout the school. In their RE studies, pupils explore assumptions, such as variations in lifestyle, and recognise the importance of equal opportunities. They know that people's responses to ideas and events may be determined by age, religion or culture. They demonstrate concern for others and describe initial thoughts on human rights. Pupils of all ages embrace the uniqueness of everyone.
- 4.8 Pupils show an awareness and empathy for those less fortunate than themselves by raising considerable amounts of money for different charities. Older pupils describe how their responsibilities increase with age and can explain the concept of community, knowing the variety of communities they simultaneously belong to. They care deeply for the younger children and are excellent role models for the Loreto values, as seen at the 'family' lunch tables. Although they are willing to take on different roles and responsibilities, opportunities to develop leadership qualities are limited in terms of pupils using their own initiative to organise and lead enterprises which reflect their own ideas or interests. Pupils are well prepared for life in secondary school. They can work well independently or in groups, are highly motivated and understand how they can learn from mistakes. They are developing essential talents for life in that they can identify and demonstrate various skills such as co-operation, communication skills, ICT skills and teamwork; they can challenge others' ideas constructively and work with others to reach a common goal.