

St Richard's School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	844/6003
Unique Reference Number (URN)	117005
URN for social care	SC143282
Inspection number	362167
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2010
Reporting inspector	David Speakman
Social care inspector	Dawn Taylor

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2010



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.³

Information about the school

St Richard's is a co-educational day and boarding Catholic preparatory school for pupils aged between three and thirteen years. There are currently 125 boys and girls on roll, 96 in the preparatory school and 29 in pre-preparatory department. Two thirds of pupils are boarders. Children from all denominations are welcome and a small minority comes from European countries. Twenty one pupils receive additional support through provision for special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly for dyslexia. None has a statement of special educational needs. Early Years provision is in a Nursery class and a Reception class. The school was founded in Malvern in 1921 and moved to its present site in 1968. It was privately owned until 2005 when it became a charitable trust with a board of governors. It occupies a Victorian house, with modern additions, set in spacious grounds in a rural location in north Herefordshire.

The school aims to give pupils 'a sense of their personal worth and the value of family and community within a stimulating and supportive environment.' The school sets out to offer a caring environment in which pupils can develop their self-confidence, respect for others and a love of learning. This is underpinned by a focus on pupils having the freedom to enjoy their childhood in an atmosphere akin to a family, based on Catholic traditions and values.

This is the school's first Ofsted inspection but it was inspected by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) on 25 to 28 February 2008. Boarding provision was last inspected on 27 February 2008.

Evaluation of the school

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1

St Richard's School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The vast majority of parents are positive about the education that their children receive. The curriculum and teaching are good in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 8. As a result, pupils make good progress. The school's provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is also good, and all safeguarding requirements are met. The school is successful in meeting its aims and meets most of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

Teaching and assessment are good. Teaching seen during this inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding, with the majority being of a good quality. All staff have high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning, concentration and application. Behaviour management is good and, as a result, pupils' behaviour in class is good and often outstanding. Lessons are conducted at a good pace. Staff use questioning strategies well. They make sure that a wide range of pupils are included and use this strategy effectively to draw in pupils who may be reluctant to answer, or who lack confidence and find understanding new learning difficult. Questions are challenging and matched well to pupils' capabilities. Good teaching results in pupils of all ages making good progress.

Pupils say they enjoy lessons and find them interesting. Older pupils like the opportunities to investigate and find things out for themselves, such as in a Year 5 information and communication technology (ICT) lesson in which they explored different ways of writing formulae into specific cells to simplify calculation. However, in some lessons, pupils are given the information and led through the process without having the chance to experience the satisfaction of having found out for themselves.

Improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has come about from the introduction of a robust appraisal process for all teachers. Monitoring and evaluating of the school's performance is good but information on different aspects of school life is not yet brought together into a single document, useful to governors and senior staff in identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Work is assessed regularly, and used well in planning lessons. Teachers have an accurate knowledge of the learning needs of pupils and match work closely to these. Lesson planning includes tasks matched well to the learning needs of the more able and talented, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for those with English as an additional language. Consequently, pupils at all levels of attainment progress well. Work is marked regularly and often in detail. Teachers make complimentary comments, but not all provide detail about what pupils need to do to move onto the next steps in their learning. Long-term progress is carefully monitored through the formal use of standardised tests, which give leadership staff and teachers a reliable picture of how well individual pupils are developing literacy

and mathematical skills and a general picture of their potential. This information is used well to set individual targets.

The school is thorough in assessing pupils' starting points from which progress can be measured. Assessment information shows that most pupils make good progress at all stages of the school. This is confirmed by the good progress that pupils make in lessons. Any one falling significantly behind their chronological age, receives additional support, either for a short period, or longer if required.

The curriculum is good. It is broad and well balanced, and promotes pupils' personal development as well as their academic performance. Out-of-school hours' activities for boarding pupils make a significant contribution to both academic and personal development. The curriculum provides experience in all National Curriculum subjects, French and Latin in the preparatory school and a recently developed programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship. Very good use is made of the extensive grounds, and pupils thoroughly enjoy exploring and working in the outdoor environment. Physical education is provided through effective use of the school's grounds, including an outdoor swimming pool, and indoor resources. Pupils enjoy a wide appropriate range of sporting activities, including riding and many opportunities to engage in competitive sport with other schools. In addition to learning ICT skills in dedicated lessons, computers are used effectively to support work in other subjects. During the inspection ICT was linked with history and literacy, and with numeracy on another occasion, to provide valuable independent learning opportunities.

The curriculum is enhanced by a range of visits and visitors to school that are linked to the pupils' work. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship is well planned and provides valuable experiences to support personal development. Curriculum provision for those pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The staff member responsible for provision has ensured that individual education plans (IEPs) for withdrawal support and for support in class are useful in informing planning to meet pupils' needs. Plans are evaluated and reviewed regularly, and parents are kept well informed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Strong relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, underpin the ethos of the school and contribute well to pupils' self confidence. This is particularly so for boarding pupils. Activities and the social interaction that comes from living alongside other pupils are effective in promoting pupils' social and moral development. Pupils behave well, and are respectful and considerate of each other. This is not only because staff expect this but also because pupils have high expectations of themselves and other pupils. They know the difference between right and wrong, and are able to moderate their own behaviour. Pupils take on different roles and responsibilities available for them, and perform them well. These include positions as house captains, Head Boy and

Girl, monitors and taking on responsibility for charity fund-raising. Pupils say they enjoy school very much: this is reflected in their commitment to doing their very best, and in their good attendance and punctuality. Pupils are keen to support their own school community and the wider community by fundraising. Pupils' understanding of British institutions, different cultures and beliefs is developed appropriately through history, geography and, in particular, personal, social and health education and citizenship. Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in education through their good academic progress and the level of independence they develop, many through boarding.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. Procedures, including those for child protection are supported by effective policies. Good levels of care ensure that pupils are able to learn and play in a secure environment. Pupils are well supervised at all times, and the staff take care to record carefully any incidents or accidents that occur. Risk assessments are carried out, but would benefit from greater detail of how they work in this school. Through the curriculum for physical education and personal, social and health education and citizenship, and through eating healthy food, pupils stay fit and healthy. All members of staff are trained in child protection and an adequate number in first aid.

The school meets all requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and has an appropriate three year plan outlining its action to improve accessibility.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school's recruitment procedures meet all regulations. The single central record shows that the necessary checks have been made on all adults to confirm their suitability.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The main house and extensions containing teaching classrooms have been improved so that they provide an effective environment for learning. The grounds in which the school is located are developed extremely well to provide for outstanding outdoor learning and recreation. Classrooms are equipped well and specialist rooms for English, French, art, science and information and communication technology provide a focused and effective learning environment. There is a school hall, a sports hall and separate dining accommodation. There are adequate washrooms but only one set of showers for girls, situated in the boarding area. Regulations include the need for there to be separate showers for day pupils and for boarders to use during the day. The school meets most requirements.

Provision of information

The school provides a comprehensive range of information, relevant to parents of both day pupils and boarders, through its school prospectus and website. Published information is clear and up-to-date. Parents are kept fully informed of school events. Parents receive reports on their children's progress each term. Parents are pleased with the amount and quality of information they receive. The school meets all requirements.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's procedures meet all the regulations and the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Teaching is good and adults promote excellent relationships. They provide interesting activities, taking place indoors and outside, for example in the Forest School, which add a great enjoyment to learning and help children learn how to stay safe. The assessment of children's work is good. It includes ongoing assessment and appropriate standardised tests. This information is used effectively to plan children's next steps in learning to ensure they make good progress across all areas of learning. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is good and prepares children well for the next stage of their education. Planning at all levels is detailed enough to ensure all areas of the curriculum are covered in sufficient depth.

The curriculum is interesting, varied and closely linked to the six areas of learning for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although there is appropriate emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy, there is very good provision made for other areas of learning, providing a good balance between learning indoors and outside.

The welfare, health and safety of the children are good. Procedures are thorough. There is sufficient staff with relevant first aid training.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The manager works well with members of the senior leadership team and manages Early Years Foundation Stage staff effectively. Robust monitoring of provision and progress help to ensure that good effectiveness is sustained.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The quality of the boarding provision is good. The key national minimum standards are met. The seven recommendations set at the school's last welfare inspection are also met.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Boarders benefit from living in a school where the boarding team are committed to providing individual care and support. Staff fully understand the need to ensure all are included in boarding activities and to challenge any form of discrimination.

The physical and emotional health needs of each boarder are proactively identified and promoted by a skilled and professional boarding team that includes a qualified nurse. Boarders have access to good quality medical treatment and first aid. The school provides them with appropriate guidance, advice and support on health and personal care issues. This is through a range of forums that include individual and group discussions with boarding staff, access to healthcare professionals and the school curriculum.

The school has a medication policy, procedure and practice guidance that specifically addresses the use of non-prescribed medication and the safe storage and administration of medication. All medical procedures have been signed by the school's doctor who works closely with the head matron. This strengthens the systems in place for staff to identify, address and monitor both the whole-school approach to health and the meeting of individual needs.

Boarders are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs by a team of experienced catering staff who are integral to the life of the school. All meals are home cooked with locally sourced ingredients. The school menu is well received by boarders and includes vegetarian options, as well as a wide range of culturally diverse meals. Mealtimes are seen as social events that support boarders to develop their social interaction skills and enable staff to monitor their well-being. The school's kitchen retains a four star rating from the environmental health authority.

Boarders' safety is effectively promoted because staff listen and take appropriate actions to ensure their welfare. They are cared for in a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere. Their privacy is respected by the boarding staff who assist them with personal care tasks in a sensitive manner. They know that bullying is not tolerated. Staff are very clear that any form of behaviour that causes distress to others, regardless of intent, is treated as a serious matter. Positive behaviour is actively rewarded and inappropriate behaviour is addressed in a very fair and measured way. Boarders are proud of the matrons' recognition of achievement and endeavour and respond well to initiatives such as dormitory competitions. Boarders show great respect and regard towards each other and this is fostered and encouraged by staff. Emphasis is placed on caring behaviour, citizenship and positive thinking and this is reflected throughout the school.

Boarders feel confident to seek help from the range of staff available to them. The school promotes a strong family atmosphere where dormitories and dining tables present mixed age ranges and ever present staff members and captains. Boarders

state that they feel encouraged and supported by both staff and peers. Although St Richard's is a Catholic school, non-Catholic children are welcomed and readily absorbed into the boarding community, adding to the spiritual life of the school. The school's chapel is used daily with children often leading the prayers. Mass is sung in the chapel on Saturday and parents and members of the local community are always welcome to attend. The boarding environment represents the international and diverse identities of pupils and this uniqueness is celebrated in a way that promotes awareness and understanding. Boarders and boarding staff ensure overseas boarders feel welcome and are supported to settle into boarding. However, the school is still developing the resources and systems to embed this process.

The boarding community fluctuates in size due to the combination of full, weekly and flexi-boarders. However, it is still small enough that the matrons spend quality time with all boarders every day. In addition, matrons meet, talk and consult with boarders, for example using food surveys and surveys on boarding. Systems for listening to and obtaining the views of dormitory captains are integrated into the running of boarding.

Boarders are proactively supported to maintain contact with their parents and families. The school demonstrates a positive attitude to boarders' families and parental contact. Staff are sensitive to the special needs of boarders who need to contact parents abroad at different times of the day.

The school provides a satisfactory standard of boarding accommodation. There is not a refurbishment and redecoration plan in place to give clear timescales or plans for improvement. However, work has been undertaken to begin to raise standards. Boarders' safety is promoted by a health and safety policy. Risk assessments are in place but do not always contain specific details to ensure that risks are identified and appropriate action can be taken to manage and reduce them. Staff are trained in health and safety matters, including first aid and fire awareness. Recommendations from the last fire inspection have been addressed and the school is now waiting for a follow-up visit.

St Richard's School has substantial strengths and is working towards a sustained record of delivering good performance and managing improvement. There is a strong commitment to the development of boarding as an integral part of the continuing provision made by the school. Boarders' health and pastoral care is being effectively promoted by a dedicated team of professional boarding staff who are continually striving to develop the boarding experience and attain good outcomes for children. However, the school's quality assurance of boarding does not refer to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools in order to identify areas of development to further enhance boarding and boarding practice and future short- and long-term objectives are not reflected in the school's strategic plan.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁴

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that there sufficient showers, other than those in the boarding provision, for girls to use during the day after physical education (paragraph 23(j))

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated regulations.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- use the monitoring and evaluation of school performance to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is at least good by eliminating satisfactory teaching
- combine the findings of all aspects of monitoring and evaluation into one document to provide a clear overview of the school's overall performance to be used by governors and senior leaders in planning development.

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- ensure that the resources and systems in place to provide support for boarders for whom English is not their first language continue to be developed (breach of national minimum standard 18.6)
- ensure that assessments of risk continue to be developed to contain details specific to the setting or activity (breach of national minimum standard 47.9)
- ensure that the standard of decoration, furnishings and facilities in the boarding accommodation continues to be developed (breach of national minimum standards 40, 42 and 44)

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

- ensure that the school's governing body has a system to monitor boarding and welfare provision in the school (breach of national minimum standard 8.2)
- ensure that the development of boarding is identified in the school's strategic plan (breach of national minimum standard 8.1).

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision		✓		
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Date school opened	1921		
Age range of pupils	3–13 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 53	Girls: 72	Total: 125
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 37	Girls: 47	Total: 84
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,115 (Prep School)	£4155 (Pre-Prep YR)	£4395 (Pre-Prep Y1) £5175 (Pre-Prep Y2)
Annual fees (boarders)	£16,500 (full)	£15,300 (weekly)	
Address of school	Bredenbury Court, Bromyard, Herefordshire HR7 4TD		
Telephone number	01885 482491		
Email address	schooloffice@st-richards.org.uk		
Headteacher	Nathan Cheesman		
Proprietor	The Board of Governors		