



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BURY CATHOLIC PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Bury Catholic Preparatory School

Full Name of School/College	<b>Bury Catholic Preparatory School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>351/6000</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>509280</b>		
Address	<b>Bury Catholic Preparatory School Arden House Manchester Road Bury Lancashire BL9 9BH</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>0161 764 2346</b>		
Fax Number	<b>0161 764 2346</b>		
Email Address	<b>acdean@burycatholicprepschool.co.uk</b>		
Headteacher	<b>Mrs Anne C Dean</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs E Jane Riley</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 11</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>138</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (77 boys; 61 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>95</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>43</b>	11-18: <b>0</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>28 Sep 2010 to 29 Sep 2010</b>		

## 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. This is the first ISI inspection of the school since its accreditation to the ISA.

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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 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. The school promotes Catholic Christian values and beliefs. It aims to offer a broad based educational experience, with emphasis on providing confidence and motivation for learning, for pupils of all denominations and faith backgrounds.
- 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. That limited company still administers the school through a Board of Directors, also referred to as the governing body. Directors, or governors, include parents of current and past pupils.
- 1.3 Currently, there are 77 boys and 61 girls on roll. Of these, 43 children (24 boys and 19 girls) are aged from three to five and in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The offer of a place in the EYFS follows an informal interview early in the spring term. Older children attend a taster day during which informal assessments take place.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the school is above average. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but the school has identified seven pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A range of ethnicities is represented but no pupil is at an early stage of speaking English. Most are from white British heritage and adhere to Catholic Christian beliefs.
- 1.5 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 From the EYFS and throughout the school, pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills are excellent. The school's aims are fully fulfilled, exemplified by pupils who are confident, articulate, and fully motivated to do well by an excellent curriculum and good teaching. They listen attentively, read with insight and write imaginatively. Pupils use their well-developed number skills confidently across a range of subjects including science and humanities, but have fewer opportunities to apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, so these are less developed. They are often successful in sports competitions against similar schools, and in speech, drama and music festivals.
- 2.2 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national norm, as national tests are not taken, but inspection judgements, including observed performance in relation to national targets, confirm that pupils attain excellent standards in relation to their ability, which is above the national average. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make exceptional progress when compared with those of similar above average ability. By the time they leave Year 6, their level of attainment is exceptional. Pupils achieve places at selective independent or maintained schools, a number with scholarships. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. Their enthusiasm is infectious, extending to all areas of the excellent curriculum and nurtured in the high quality teaching that underpins their success.
- 2.3 The curriculum offers exceptional support for pupils' learning and enjoyment. All the required subjects and experiences are supplemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment such as visits. Parents praise the provision. 'The weekly schedule is crammed with activities and there is something for every child,' was a typical comment. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very strong. Although ICT is provided it is not employed fully to support the curriculum. Pupils with additional needs receive strong support. Teaching is good and sometimes excellent, having a matching impact on learning. Most lessons are thoroughly planned with clear objectives and a sequence of activities to secure and maintain the pupils' interest well. Insufficient attention to the differing abilities within the class limited progress in some lessons for particular pupils. This was because assessment information was not used sufficiently to pitch tasks to pupils' differing abilities. All the teaching observed was supportive and encouraging, and often used praise well.

## **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.4 The school's aim to develop pupils' confidence and motivation for learning underpins their excellent personal development. Their spiritual development is exceptional. Pupils show a considered understanding of the value of their own faith and that of others. They learn to live consistently with its values of personal worth and mutual respect as an integral part of their lives, whatever their background. They are self-confident and have well-developed awareness of the aesthetic, such as music and art. Moral awareness is excellent. Pupils relate positively to each other and to adults, show a keen awareness of moral issues and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. This is seen in their co-operation and kindness to each other. They readily quote and abide by the school's code of conduct, which includes entreaties such as to 'wear a smile and be a friend'. Social development is extremely strong. Each year the pupils support a different country through the school's chosen charity, whose motto is 'children helping children'. Pupils have many opportunities to undertake responsibilities. This provides a good channel for them to participate in democratic decision making and to develop their good understanding of the way society functions, and for their views to be taken into account by the school management. A good level of cultural knowledge is evident in pupils' participation in art, music and the theatre, and in their understanding of their various cultural backgrounds. They demonstrate a natural inclusive attitude to all their companions.
- 2.5 Pastoral care is of the highest quality and is reflected in pupils' well-honed personal skills. Relationships are highly conducive to building pupils' confidence and a strong emphasis is placed on rewarding achievement, effort and contribution to the school community. As a result pupils have very positive attitudes. The school takes effective measures against bullying and pupils report no significant incidents. They are confident, should any arise, that they will be dealt with effectively. Healthy living is effectively encouraged through PSHE, science and pupils' active participation in exercise. Although the school does not provide school lunches, advice on lunch box contents is sent home to help ensure a healthy balance.
- 2.6 The pupils' welfare, health and safety are assured. Health and safety arrangements and fire precautions are applied assiduously; attendance and admissions registers are maintained efficiently and are properly backed up. Safeguarding arrangements were secure at the time of the inspection. The medical room provides suitably for pupils who are unwell and medicines are stored and administered properly, ensuring a safe and caring school environment.

## **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.7 The school benefits from excellent leadership and management supported by good quality governance. Governors bring a wide range of expertise and are fully involved in school development planning. They maintain a good general overview through close liaison with the headteacher. Links with departments are evolving. The governing body reviews the child protection policy annually and is particularly skilled in the area of ensuring that the school promotes health and safety effectively. Whilst governors are fully aware of their legal responsibilities they are not as fully conversant with how well pupils achieve in relation to national standards. This makes an impact on how well the governing body can provide challenge and support for the school.
- 2.8 Strong, efficient leadership and management have ensured that self-assessment, review, lesson observation and assessment of training needs have been effective in securing highly positive outcomes at every level. A strong sense of teamwork is evident. All required documentation is comprehensive and ready to hand, clear and well organised. Policies are effectively implemented and reflected in practice. Pupils' targets are set and measures of progress are taken to help ensure best progress. However, the system for managing this and ensuring that the information is used effectively in the classroom to provide sufficient challenge for each pupil is not yet embedded.
- 2.9 Suitable staff have been recruited and deployed, with required checks recorded efficiently on a single centralised register. Resources for learning are good and staff make the best possible use of most areas of the site, within the limitations of the buildings. For example, a narrow area outside, at the side of the school, has been developed imaginatively as a quiet and calm garden for reflection or reading. Inside, pupils have contributed to some high quality displays that enhance learning throughout the school.
- 2.10 The school works in close and effective partnership with parents. High quality information is available, and parents can express their views or learn about aspects of the work of the school. Reports are informative and constructive in tone with pupils' next learning targets identified. Parents' evenings are held at least once a year for all year groups. Parents have strong representation on the governing body. Parental concerns, usually minor and few in number, are dealt with promptly, and records show they are handled sensitively and effectively. The clear complaints policy has not been invoked. The school receives a strong response to its regular parental surveys. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents had few concerns. They were overwhelmingly supportive of the education that their children receive. Their comments indicated that pupils enjoy coming to school and love to learn.

### **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) Recommendation(s) for further improvement**

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. 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.
2. Develop the use of ICT across the whole school to support pupils' learning.
3. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, develop additional covered areas outside to enable children to learn there in all weathers.

#### **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 outstanding. Highly successful teaching and support nurture the lively independent minds, personal confidence and respect for others that are evident in the children. The staff show excellent understanding of the children's needs and promote an environment where academic progress and pastoral care are well balanced. Sharp self-evaluation and detailed planning ensure the capacity to sustain the high standards. As a result, children make excellent progress in their learning. They enjoy their time at school and participate enthusiastically in all the activities.

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

4.2 Leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. Adults have extensive knowledge and skills in promoting children's welfare and a fully inclusive ethos. They support learning, development and well-being for each individual through constant refining and evaluation of practice. All records, policies and procedures for the efficient management of the setting and safety of the children are implemented well. Risk assessments are robust. Safeguarding procedures are efficient, and all staff are suitably trained. Parents and children are encouraged to share their various cultures through a range of activities, making good use of available resources. Visitors and outings enrich children's knowledge of the local community. Staff are suitably qualified and well deployed. Links with parents are strong. They particularly value the care given to their children. Helpful links with local agencies and a high staff to pupil ratio ensure that children's needs are fully met.

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

4.3 The quality of the provision is good overall. Children learn and develop exceptionally well through stimulating play and valuable first-hand experiences although those for ICT are limited. Activities are carefully planned, based on the interests and needs of the children. An excellent balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities means that children enjoy a wide variety of experiences in both the Nursery and Reception classes. High quality pastoral care and thorough assessment identify what children can do, and the next steps they need to take to progress. Excellent resources are available inside and outside the classroom. Children have access to two outside areas, one of which has cover, but overall their activities during inclement weather are restricted. All staff guide and support children well, providing safe and clear routines for them. Children enjoy the healthy snacks they are given and the sociable nature of snack time and lunch time which enables their personal skills to develop very well.

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

- 4.4 Outcomes for the children are outstanding. They make excellent progress in their learning in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Most children make particularly rapid progress in literacy and numeracy because these are strongly promoted. Knowledge and understanding of the world are developed through first-hand experiences and children can talk about their learning activities with growing confidence and clarity of expression. They enjoy their learning both indoors and out with infectious enthusiasm. Their excellent personal, social and emotional development is clearly apparent. Behaviour is exemplary and is effectively managed through gentle reminder and the underlying rules and expectations of the setting. As a result children grow in confidence and independence. They are well prepared to move on to Year 1. They develop a good awareness of personal safety which is underpinned by rhymes and songs that make the rules of safety memorable for them.

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

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. 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 Ruth McFarlane

Miss Maureen Mullins

Mrs Linda Donowho

Reporting Inspector

Former Head, ISA school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector