

St George's School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118227
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	379571
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2012
Lead inspector	Denise Morris

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Of which, number in the sixth form	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Justine Turner
Headteacher	Sue Holman
Date of previous school inspection	July 2009
School address	Watergate Road Newport PO30 1XW
Telephone number	01983 524634
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Denise Morris

Additional Inspector

Sally Hall

Additional Inspector

Desmond Dunne

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 30 lessons, many of them jointly with senior leaders, taught by 19 different teachers over a period of 16 hours. Meetings were held with senior leaders, members of the governing body, students and teachers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and observed the school's work. They looked at students' work, school planning documents, assessment information of students' progress and attainment, and teachers' records. The inspectors scrutinised 55 parental questionnaires, and also took note of questionnaires completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average special school. There are twice as many boys as girls. The majority of students are White British. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than in most other schools. All the students have a statement of special educational needs. Their needs include complex and often profound learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, physical disabilities, behaviour difficulties and learning difficulties. A few students are looked after children. The school has achieved several awards. These include Healthy School Status, Artsmark Gold level, Silver Travel Plan and National Autistic Society accreditation 2011. The numbers of students in the school and sixth form have risen significantly since the last inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- St George's School is a good school. Since the last inspection it has consolidated its strengths and made good improvements to the curriculum and assessment systems. The sixth form is also good. The school is not outstanding because a few inconsistencies in the quality of teaching lead to a dip in progress in some lessons.
- All groups of students achieve well. They make the best progress in their personal skills, communication and reading. A high emphasis placed on these skills, supported by a wide range of high-quality resources, encourages students to make choices, respond to questions, search for information and read regularly. Students in the sixth form also achieve well.
- Teaching is mostly good, and some is outstanding. Teaching typically extends students' skills and ensures that they have equal access to an exciting range of learning opportunities. In a very few lessons, the pace of learning drops because expectations are low, not enough is planned for each individual student, and support by teaching assistants is not focused rigorously enough on encouraging students to do their very best. Assessment is used effectively to inform students and teachers how well each student achieves.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Parents, carers and students overwhelmingly say that the school is safe and secure and that behaviour is excellent. Attendance is high. Students are very well cared for.
- The headteacher, along with other leaders and the governing body, has created a welcoming ethos in which students thrive. Leadership of teaching and management of performance, including in the sixth form, are good. The extensive outdoor area contributes effectively to the good curriculum and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have successfully managed a rapid influx of higher-ability students with challenging behaviour.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching so that the pace of learning is at least good in all classes by April 2013, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers and teaching assistants convey high expectations by demanding more of what students can do
 - making sure that sufficient tasks are planned to meet the full range of abilities in each class so that each student is challenged by the work set
 - developing the roles of all teaching assistants so that they have the full range of skills to support students.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students' attainment on entry to the school is low because of the impact of their disabilities and special educational needs on their learning. Nevertheless, all groups of students, including those with autistic spectrum disorders and those with behavioural difficulties as well as those in the sixth form, achieve well during their time at the school. Students achieve particularly well in their personal skills, in communication and in early reading skills. Students acquire the skills to help them continue to make progress in these areas in the future, and parents and carers agree. When students in the sixth form leave the school to go to college, all have acquired accreditation and undertaken some vocational work, such as gardening or working in local shops or garages. Almost all students make good progress because of well-planned, often exciting, tasks. Some students make outstanding progress. This is particularly the case in art lessons, where teachers' excellent skills and support promote some exceptional artwork. In a reading session older students showed their competence in reading unknown words because of their skill in using letter sounds to help them identify the beginning of the word. They enjoyed their reading because their books were very relevant to their interests as well as their different ability levels. Students in the sixth form were observed working at a fast pace as they developed their understanding of the use of prepositions in their writing. Well-structured activities enabled the students to learn collaboratively about the use of prepositions in different contexts, ensuring success for all.

Throughout the school, highly flexible provision enables individual programmes to support students with particular needs. Those with autistic spectrum disorders, for example, have highly individualised learning programmes that fully meet their needs. The Phoenix Project, which enables students with behavioural difficulties to spend time out of class in the school gardens, helps students to learn to stay calm and use their energy to undertake physical tasks such as planting bulbs, building sculptures or sweeping paths. These activities contribute exceptionally well to students' outstanding behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very occasionally, the pace of learning dips because students are not required to do enough work in the time allowed. This was particularly evident when too much teacher talk reduced the amount of time students had to complete their tasks. In one

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lesson, for example, students wrote very little in their English lesson because of a very long introduction, leaving too little time for students' own contributions.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers have an accurate view of the good overall quality of teaching. Teachers regularly enthuse and inspire students. Questioning is a particular strength in many lessons. Teachers encourage students to develop the skills and confidence to respond vocally or through the use of pre-programmed switches. This was exemplified in the sensory class, where all students were able to take part fully in a sensory story about Europe. Students made outstanding progress because their switches had been pre-programmed and they were able to respond independently. They showed exceptional enjoyment of the music, costumes, smells and dances of different countries as they joined in with enthusiasm. Tasks to promote the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural ethos are fully planned for. These help pupils to learn about, and celebrate, different cultures. The experienced staff team works very well together. Staff have a clear focus on improving students' communication and independence, and work in close collaboration with parents and carers. Their very effective behaviour management techniques and secure knowledge of each individual students result in excellent relationships, ensuring that lessons are calm.

Very occasionally, the pace of learning slows when there is too much turn taking, too much teacher talk, or not enough tasks are prepared for each individual student's needs. For example, younger pupils were able to recognise capital letters in different words as they focused on developing their looking and listening skills, but turn taking limited the pace of their responses and some adults were not used well enough to support individual students to encourage a faster response. The effective curriculum provides good opportunities for teachers to build on prior skills, and accurate procedures for assessing students' skills clearly show their rates of progress over time. Students' work is regularly marked and updated, and this clearly illustrates their positive progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour was judged as outstanding at the last inspection and has remained so since that time. Parents and carers are highly positive about behaviour and safety. 'My child is happy, safe and wants to go to school. St George's is a happy place to be.' was a typical comment. In their questionnaires students said that behaviour is very good and during discussion with inspectors they said that they do not think there is any bullying. They feel very safe and know that adults are always there for them if they have any concerns. The strong focus on positive behaviour is reflected in the friendly and welcoming way in which staff talk to students. The good quality curriculum supports students' outstanding behaviour and safety with key emphases on how to stay safe, developing positive relationships and working well together. The school ensures systematic and consistent management of behaviour through its innovative provision for those students with behavioural difficulties, helping them to manage their behaviour very well.

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The quality of relationships is exceptionally good and this provides very positive role models for students. All of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires said that their child is safe at school. They say that there is no bullying of any kind. No evidence of any bullying, including cyber bullying or prejudice-based bullying related to disability, special educational needs, sexual orientation, race, religion or gender, was evident during the inspection or in past records. Students behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. They listen carefully, often waiting patiently while a classmate is talking. Attendance is high. Students are well prepared for their future lives.

Leadership and management

The school has made good improvements since the last inspection, particularly in the promotion of early phonics (matching letters and sounds) for younger students leading to improved reading skills across the school. Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are strongly focused on further improvement and have a clear vision for the future. They have successfully integrated the rapid increase in student numbers and are working rigorously to improve teaching and learning, providing high-quality support for new staff. Their strong capacity to improve is supported by good quality, accurate self-evaluation, which identifies clearly what has already been achieved and what still needs doing. For example, strong emphasis on improving opportunities for those with challenging behavioural difficulties has resulted in the excellent Phoenix Project, which now plays a very valuable role in improving personal development and behaviour. Additionally, leaders have recently been working closely with local schools and colleges to develop joint opportunities for staff as part of good performance management. Leaders have extended provision in the sixth form by introducing increased accreditation, helping to better prepare students for the future. The impact of professional development is evident in the high levels of skills that almost all staff exhibit and their expertise in supporting and caring for students, regardless of their need, showing a strong commitment to equal opportunities. Leaders and managers are effective in tackling discrimination.

Very good partnership work with parents, carers and external agencies promotes the well-being and achievement of students well. The broad and balanced curriculum is effective in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is evident in their positive attitudes, their collaborative working and their high attendance. Parents and carers comment favourably on the impact the school has on their children's lives. For example, 'The school continues to offer our child wonderful life opportunities'. The school's arrangements for safeguarding fully meet current statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of St George's School, Newport, PO30 1XW

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. It was lovely to meet you, and to see all the lovely things you do at school. We were particularly impressed with the way your attendance is improving. Well done for that. We really enjoyed having lunch with some of you and talking with you about your school.

The school is good. It was very clear from the answers to the questionnaires that we received from some of you, and your parents and carers, that you are happy at school and that your parents and carers are pleased with your education. There are lots of good things in your school, such as your good achievement, your positive relationships and the way you work well together. Your headteacher and the other managers are also doing a good job. They keep you very safe and secure. We thought your behaviour was outstanding. Well done!

Just occasionally, there are not enough tasks to keep you really busy and challenged in lessons. We have asked your teachers to provide more activities, so that you all have the chance to do more and do not have to wait too long for a turn. You can help with this by trying to do a bit more in each lesson. We have also asked the school leaders to check that all staff are fully involved in supporting your learning in lessons. We are sure you will want to help with this by working hard.

Thank you again for your welcome.

Yours sincerely

Denise Morris
Lead inspector

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