

St John's School

Episkopi, Cyprus, BFPO 53

Inspection dates

25–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Principal and his team provide clear direction and work relentlessly to drive improvement. They have energised staff in establishing a culture and ethos of high expectation and aspiration so that all contribute fully to realise their motto of 'learning at the heart of all we do'.
- Students develop into mature, delightful and rounded individuals, well prepared for their future lives.
- Teaching is typically good. Some teaching is highly innovative and successful but this is not widespread enough to ensure that the quality teaching is outstanding overall.
- Students achieve well while they are at St John's. They make good progress and gain GCSE and A level results that enable them to move confidently into the next phase of their lives.
- Student's behaviour is superb. They have a clear sense of aiming high as shown by a strong commitment to their learning and exemplary attitudes.
- Students really appreciate that staff understand their personal circumstances. A significant strength is the quality of school support for those who arrive with gaps in their learning and those facing difficult times in their lives.
- The School Governance Committee understands clearly the actions being taken to achieve the school's priorities. The Chair and the Principal work closely in their efforts to improve teaching and achievement further.
- The sixth form is good and improving. Students achieve well, have high expectations for the future and most progress to higher education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching for some Key Stage 4 students in English and mathematics has not been good enough. The new subject leaders have tackled this well and progress for these students is accelerating.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching to raise achievement higher and ensure that all students are able to excel and gain the highest levels.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons, all of which were joint observations with a member of the school's senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with five groups of students, the Director of Education for Service Children's Education, as well as a range of school staff including senior and middle leaders. The Chair of the School Governance Committee was interviewed by telephone.
- By the end of the inspection visit, 29 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) had been collected and analysed. The school's analysis of its own parental surveys was also taken into account.
- Inspectors analysed 34 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on students' current progress, its self-evaluation, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, and students' work.

Inspection team

Karl Sampson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Margaret Dickinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's serves two military bases situated in the Western Sovereign Base Area of Cyprus: RAF Akrotiri and Episkopi Garrison. Most students' parents are serving in the British Forces.
- The school is much smaller than most secondary schools in England.
- The school works in a soft federation with King Richard School, the other Service Children's Education secondary school on the island. The principal divides his time between the two schools. Each school has a deputy principal who is responsible for its day-to-day running. The two schools maintain separate school governance committees.
- Mobility is very high: many students transfer frequently between schools as their parents move between postings.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of school action students (those who require extra help with their learning) and those supported by school action plus is below average. Currently, there no students with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students access alternative provision at sites outside the school, but within the garrison.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the overall quality of teaching to achieve greater consistency of good or outstanding practice by:
 - ensuring that all lessons challenge all students regardless of starting point, ability or special educational need to achieve as well as they can
 - ensuring that all teachers keep a close eye on students' learning and swiftly adjust their support where learning starts to falter
 - enabling students to make the most of suggested improvements from teacher's feedback in order to produce more sophisticated written responses which show how much they have understood and help more of them to gain the highest levels.
- Improve the impact of middle leaders by:
 - ensuring that when they monitor their department's work they focus sharply on the progress made by all groups of students so that leaders have precise knowledge of what needs to happen to improve teaching to outstanding
 - sharing the outstanding teaching more widely within the school and across the federation.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- GCSE examination results are usually above those found nationally across a range of attainment indicators and in most subjects. Students are not entered for examinations early.
- An analysis of students' achievement over time shows that most groups of students make good progress despite joining the school at different times and with a range of different starting points. Students reported the individual attention they receive in class lessons goes a long way to helping them settle, when new, and to achieve well.
- In 2013 results in English, mathematics and history dropped significantly, especially for lower and some middle ability students. The recruitment of three high quality leaders, themselves strong teachers, has already begun to address this issue. As a result of better teaching and more sophisticated use of assessment information, targeted support is helping to reduce the gaps in achievement, particularly for students in Year 11.
- More-able students are sometimes not given work that stretches them enough to achieve the highest grades. However, inspectors saw the impact of the school's recent work in this area particularly where students are left in no doubt that they are expected to aim high. Where achievement for more able students was maximised, work at a B level was not accepted if the students were capable of an answer that reflects an A* or A. They were challenged to add more detail and depth to show their very best and pitch their sights high.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers. The curriculum and teaching are focused precisely on students' emerging needs and revised accordingly. Time and time again, students spoke of the benefits of having a small school where they were known as individuals and received good quality teaching and appropriate support in lessons.
- Students read well. The use of e-readers alongside the work of the library has been successful in helping younger students to develop a love of reading whilst ensuring that they are motivated to gain quickly the skills they need.
- A designated member of staff monitors the quality of alternative provision closely to ensure its effectiveness and safety for students. The few students who follow vocational courses alongside academic subjects enjoy their work. They achieve and behave well.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good and rising steadily over time. In 2013 the school achieved its best results in recent years. Over 80% of this cohort had been in the school from Key Stage 4 and nearly two thirds of students achieved A*-B grades in their final examinations. The students spoken to by inspectors, attribute their good progress to the quality of teaching and exceptional care that they receive from the moment they arrive at St John's.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Inspectors agreed with the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching. Good teaching is found across all subjects and an increasing amount is outstanding. Students and parents rightly express confidence in the quality of teaching overall.
- The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is improving strongly and securely. The new subject leaders have made an immediate and significant impact in ensuring that at least good teaching is helping Year 11 students make up the lost ground as a result of weaker teaching in 2013. School leaders recognise the need to continue the process of strengthening the quality of teaching as the next significant step on the journey to excellence.
- Good teaching engages students fully in their learning and progress. Teachers make sure that students know what they have to do and check their understanding during lessons. Where teaching assistants work best they mirror this practice so that individual students who find work difficult are supported to rectify their mistakes and keep pace with other students.
- The most effective teachers are skilled in tailoring activities that stretch and challenge all

learners, regardless of their starting point, so that their progress is consistently good or better. Several students in the sixth form and the main school spoke of reaching their end-of-year target levels, or grades, already and were pleased that these had been pitched even higher.

- Inspectors saw examples of teachers creating a lively, vibrant atmosphere for learning and transmitting an energy and passion for their subject. In a religious education lesson, students' made excellent progress as they eagerly shared their ideas and spontaneous thoughts, safe in the knowledge that they would be respected and heard.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not adjust their teaching or intervene quickly enough when students' learning begins to falter. For example, learners move on to the next activity despite not having fully understood the previous one. Consequently, gaps in knowledge and understanding remain and progress is slowed.
- Marking in most subjects is thorough and it was clear some teachers are beginning to regularly engage students in a discussion about their learning and seek a response to their comments. Where this does not occur, students find it harder to construct a sophisticated written argument that explains their ideas clearly and conveys the depth of their thinking. In some cases this prevents them from reaching the very highest levels.
- Inspectors observed outstanding assessment practice in design and technology which demonstrated excellent impact on students' learning and progress over time. All students were able to talk confidently about how regular discussion with the teacher had helped to develop their skills, extend their thinking and build their confidence in relation to the design and making of their 'block clock'. They enjoyed working together and with the teacher, and their engagement was exemplary.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. When talking to students about St John's, and what it means to them, the friendliness of everyone at the school is mentioned time and time again. This is not solely down to the staff. It is also the students' mature and responsible attitudes that make St John's such a caring community.
- Students are polite and friendly and treat others with respect. They give a warm welcome to new students so they settle in and soon make friends. Students convinced inspectors that, should anyone with a disability or learning difficulty join the school, they would not be singled out as different or teased in any way.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Bullying incidents are very rare and dealt with immediately, even if they stem from the military communities rather than the school. Students say that because the school is such a supportive community they would not hold back from approaching a member of staff if they had a concern. The school provides excellent information to make sure students know how to use the internet safely.
- The school is highly responsive to students' individual needs, especially those going through challenging times in their lives, which may overflow into their behaviour in school. Leaders and staff do everything possible to 'nip problems in the bud'. They work closely with support agencies, and parents, to help students learn successfully as soon as possible.
- Students clearly enjoy school and appreciate the opportunities that St John's offers. They show a high level of commitment to their education, and their attendance and punctuality are very good.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong leadership of the principal and his ability to 'bring out the best' in other people is a significant factor in the school's success. His vision and determination to provide a high quality education for all students are shared by the whole school community. There is a palpable sense of pride among those who work and learn here.

- The principal is well supported by a strong senior team and 'doing your best for the students' runs as a thread through their work and that of the staff. In turn, students appreciate their school, the individual care and support they receive and the lengths everyone goes to help them achieve and succeed.
- The quality of teaching and the tracking of students' progress are monitored regularly and with increasing sophistication. Both are linked closely to the challenging targets that are set for all teachers and form an important part in determining salary progression and training needs.
- Teachers are ambitious to improve. The principal invests in his teachers and leaders by setting up opportunities for them to benefit from courses and training opportunities open to teachers in England. He maintains strong links with other headteachers in England. This enables him to gain professional challenge outside that provided by Service Children's Education and to check that the school is keeping pace with what is happening in schools nationally. There is no sense of complacency when it comes to improving the school.
- Middle leaders are not yet making full use of the outstanding teaching to drive up achievement, particularly at the highest levels. Consequently, teachers are not always aware of the 'tapestry of expertise' that leads to outstanding teaching in their subject. The federation with King Richard School has opened up opportunities for sharing and developing ideas,
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. The high quality of individual pastoral care has been strengthened through clearer systems of monitoring, evaluation and accountability. Consequently, senior leaders are better placed to evaluate the quality of all aspects of the sixth form, including teaching, more rigorously.
- Leaders are constantly refining the curriculum in the main school and the small sixth form so that it provides a coherent set of academic and work-related courses for students of different aspirations and abilities. The school goes the extra mile to ensure that the choice of subjects is flexible and precisely meets the needs of each individual no matter at what point they join the school. In addition, catch-up classes after school and at weekends play an important part in maintaining the good levels of achievement and students are well prepared for the next steps of their education or employment.
- Service Children's Education staff provide specialised support where and when required. The English advisor has played a strong role in supporting the new Head of Department to improve teaching and secure teachers' judgements about students' achievement in order to eradicate previous under performance.
- Students are clear that the school is rigorous in promoting equality of opportunity. They are adamant that no form of discrimination is tolerated.
- St John's is a school where it is safe to take risks and be innovative and provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. Whether a student has an interest in the Arts or sciences, a passion for cooking or business, the desire to explore Mount Kilimanjaro, work closely with a school in Kenya or practise French in Paris, the school provides all of these opportunities and more. As a result, students' experiences are enhanced and they are keen to embrace new challenges and cultures.
- Feedback from parents and students shows the community is delighted with St John's and the education it provides.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The School Governance Committee works effectively in partnership with the principal and plays an important role in reviewing the school's development plan. The Chair has a clear understanding of how well students achieve and the quality of the school's leadership.
 - The committee provide an appropriate level of challenge and support. For example, in ensuring that the dip in English and mathematics results in 2013 is being tackled swiftly and successfully.
 - Effective arrangements are in place to ensure students' safety and the committee promotes strong links with the welfare organisations in the Episkopi Garrison and nearby RAF Akrotiri base.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	132416
Local authority	Service Children's Education
Inspection number	407042

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	24
Appropriate authority	Service Children's Education
Chair	Lt-Col Stephen Burton
Principal	Martin Ainsworth
Date of previous school inspection	26-27 January 2010
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