

St George's Preparatory School and Little Dragons Preschool

126 London Road, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 7HB

Inspection dates

19–21 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders have created a nurturing, positive and challenging ethos that encourages all pupils to find and develop their talents and aptitudes. As a result, pupils reach high standards in many subjects, including music and sport.
- From their average or slightly above average starting points, pupils make accelerated progress in mathematics, reading and writing and reach standards above and well above those of their chronological age when they leave.
- Teachers plan bespoke learning journeys for their pupils. They assess the progress of each pupil very carefully and ensure that the work planned for them precisely meets their needs. As a result, all pupils make rapid progress and achieve very well.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well. Teachers quickly identify their particular needs and well-planned interventions ensure that they make progress that is equal to their peers.
- Pupils are extremely keen to take part in all the school has to offer. They speak eloquently about their learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance rates are very high.
- Leaders carefully monitor the work of the school. They are effective in acting quickly to address any deficiencies and, as a result, a process of continual improvement ensues.
- The headteacher has a strong vision for excellence. Her forward-thinking and determined leadership drives the vision for continuous improvement. Her staff gladly take up the challenge to enable every pupil to reach their full potential.
- Children in the early years achieve very well across all seven areas of learning. Children learn by investigation and exploration. Their enthusiasms and interests are encouraged and developed. As a result, they make excellent progress and are well prepared for school.
- Pupils have a strong sense of self-worth and are proud of their school. The school instils in them a real awareness of their responsibility towards each other and the wider community. Values such as tolerance and respect are clearly embedded in the way pupils act and speak.
- Pupils are exceptionally polite and well-mannered. Even the youngest children demonstrate an awareness of the needs of others and seek to help them. This is due to the strong sense of 'family' created by school leaders.
- Parents unanimously agree that their children achieve very well at this school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the early years outside area further so that it fully reflects the opportunities that children have to learn and progress indoors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Her vision to ensure that all pupils achieve success is written into every aspect of the school's life. The strong ethos of meeting the needs of the 'whole child' underpins the actions taken to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils receive a well-rounded education and success is measured not only in academic achievement but in social success and success in the arts and sport as well. Consequently, the curriculum provided at St George's reflects this broad and balanced approach. Imaginative and creative solutions to learning are adopted, for instance in the adoption of the Forest School curriculum. Threaded throughout are the values of fairness, tolerance and respect for others. Leaders measure success and progress in a variety of ways so that pupils' self-esteem is nurtured. As a result, pupils excel in many areas and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher is well supported by other leaders in school. The deputy headteacher works very effectively alongside the headteacher to create a culture of excellence and high expectations that enables pupils to shine. For example, leaders actively seek out pupils' talents and aptitudes. They provide them with opportunities to develop and nurture their talents. Pupils contribute to county teams for sport and play musical instruments in orchestras within the county. Other pupils are encouraged to develop their linguistic aptitudes through learning languages such as Mandarin. The ethos of the school means that every pupil, regardless of their needs or abilities, develops a range of skills much broader than the core subjects of English and mathematics.
- Relationships within the school are strong. Leaders regularly challenge and inspire staff to reach higher. This is a growing school, and the headteacher is effective in identifying the next steps for the developing leadership team. Newly appointed middle leaders support the headteacher to monitor the progress of pupils in English and mathematics. Robust and careful checking of pupils' progress through thorough analysis of pupils' work is regularly undertaken. This means that leaders know exactly what needs to be done to support pupils who are off track to meet their learning goals. As a result, leaders immediately intervene and provide further help to ensure that pupils are swiftly back on track.
- School leaders ensure that teaching is highly effective through a detailed analysis of each teacher's performance. Performance management targets are focused on improving outcomes for all pupils and ensuring that teachers uphold the ethos of the school, and that they model the high expectations of behaviour and manners expected of the pupils. Teachers receive appropriate feedback, challenge, and training to ensure that they reach their targets. This results in high standards and the rapid and sustained progress that pupils make, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual, and cultural development are well nurtured. The many visits to places of interest, visitors to the school, outdoor learning and cultural activities enhance pupils' awareness of the wider aspects of life. Pupils know about different faith communities within Britain. Leaders take the prevention of extremism and radicalisation very seriously. They work with a number of outside agencies to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the duty to prevent any extremist views pervading the curriculum. Leaders understand how important it is to ensure that pupils receive a balanced view of the world and provide regular opportunities to discuss and explore current world affairs. As a result, pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of fairness and democracy in their dealings with each other, around school, and in lessons.
- Leaders provide appropriate support to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Focused interventions mean they are able to take full part in every aspect of school life and make similar progress to their peers.
- Parents are unanimous in their support of the school. One parent said, 'I am pleased my daughter can get dirty at this school' in reference to outdoor learning curriculum. Many parents spoke very positively about the rounded education their children receive and the accelerated progress they make in learning.
- The school business manager is meticulous in ensuring a system of regular and careful checks on the safety of the premises and on the maintenance of equipment and resources to a high standard. Detailed risk assessments and records of checks for all aspects of school life demonstrate how vigilant staff are in ensuring the safety of pupils. The business manager also makes a valuable and broader contribution to school life in leading the Forest School aspect of the school curriculum. The school provides support to other providers such as Bishop Grossteste University in this respect.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safety of pupils is paramount and is embedded into the life of the school. Leaders carry out all necessary checks in recruiting staff. Arrangements for ensuring

that all staff know what to do if pupils raise areas of concern are clear and documented. Regular weekly training for staff ensures that leaders keep the safety of pupils at the forefront of adults' minds. Leaders train pupils well to assess risk at an age-appropriate level through the broad demands of the curriculum and in particular through Forest School. Pupils undertake work to make them aware of the risks of modern life. For example, pupils know and understand the risks posed by the internet and what to do should they be concerned.

- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met for leadership and management of the school's work, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers know their pupils extremely well. They plan effectively so that pupils of different abilities and aptitudes have learning that is bespoke to their needs. Tasks challenge and engage all pupils whether they are the most able or those with special educational needs. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. There is a real sense of corporate responsibility for teaching all pupils. Teachers regularly challenge and support one another in subject areas where they have less expertise. As a result, teaching across the range of subjects is consistent. This results in continuity of provision and progression throughout the school.
- Teachers offer pupils many opportunities to practise the skills that they develop in reading, writing, and mathematics in other subjects such as science, history and geography. One pupil said, 'we learn, even when we don't know we're learning', in reference to learning about the nets of solid shapes in Forest School. As a result, pupils gain the necessary practice in these skills to prepare them well for the next stage in their learning journey.
- Teachers assess individual pupils very carefully and identify their learning needs well. Their feedback takes different forms depending on the needs of the pupils. In line with the school's assessment/marketing policy, teachers provide detailed written feedback which pupils respond to. In addition, through focused one-to-one meetings and opportunities to check each other's work, pupils were fulsome in their appreciation of the feedback they receive. They said that the feedback their teachers give enables them to close gaps in their learning quickly.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable and focused support to pupils. As a result of clear communication with teachers, they know exactly what their pupils needs to make progress. Carefully planned interventions, particularly for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, ensure that they make accelerated progress in learning.
- Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to 'think for themselves', take risks and learn by mistakes. Emphasis is given to developing self-esteem and confidence so that pupils know what they think and how to express their views to others. Learning outside, developing team work and responsibility are core elements of teachers' planning. As a result, many pupils spoke powerfully about learning and in particular about their excitement at going to learn about science at Boston Grammar School and playing their instruments at a concert outside school.
- Teachers provide parents with timely and pertinent information about their children's progress. As a result, parents spoken with during the inspection talked about the reading, writing and mathematics skills that their children were developing in relation to their chronological age. The homework provided also supports the school's approach to learning through problem-solving tasks and through opportunities to extend pupils' thinking skills.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards for teaching and assessment are met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are confident and self-assured learners. From the youngest pupils to the oldest, pupils know that they are valued and known as individuals. They take their responsibilities for managing themselves very seriously. As a result, in lessons and around school pupils manage themselves, use self-control and show an awareness of the needs of others.

- Leaders have successfully created a 'family' atmosphere. As a result, older pupils take their responsibilities to care for younger pupils very seriously. The welfare of pupils is a key priority and pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, how to manage different risks and what to do should they feel afraid or threatened. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that the adults will support and look after them. This is clear in the way that pupils arrive at school, running ahead of their parents and quickly taking off their coats ready to start a new day!
- It is clear that pupils know and understand about the impact of bullying. In discussions, pupils say that there is no bullying of any kind. The oldest pupils were able to talk about sensitive aspects of bullying like homophobia, gender confusion and different lifestyles in a mature and thoughtful way. This is a testimony to the thoughtful approach the school takes to pupils' welfare.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of 'stranger danger' and internet safety. The school's social, moral, spiritual, and cultural aspects of learning prepare them well to be thoughtful, active citizens through charity work, and in their input into the wider community through their art and sports programme.
- All the independent standards are met for pupils' personal development and welfare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' conduct is impeccable and reflects the very effective and well thought out behaviour management system. Pupils value highly the 'golden leaves' and 'smart points' that they receive for hard work and social excellence.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning that serve them well and make a tangible difference to their progress. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and each other. Pupils understand that people hold different points of view and they respect this. Pupils, particularly the oldest ones, understand that good manners and respect for others are key attributes in creating harmony and success in later life. As a result, pupils are unfailingly polite, respectful of others' learning and willing to 'go the extra mile' to help someone. Even the youngest pupils held open doors for others to go through and never failed to say 'thank you' to each other and to the adults present.
- Pupils are very keen to come to school. They value their education and rarely miss school. Attendance rates are very high and the school keeps detailed records of any absences should they occur. One parent shared that, while on holiday, a child from the preschool asked if he could go to school. The parent said it was because his child enjoyed school so much.
- Leaders have ensured that a full range of policies and procedures are in place, so that the independent school standards for this aspect of the school's work are met.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- From their starting points in early years, pupils make substantial and sustained progress across all subjects. As a result, pupils gain excellent knowledge, understanding and skills across a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, reading, and writing.
- Pupils are very articulate and describe how they learn, how they are supported to learn and what difference this makes to their outcomes. The proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is very high.
- The most-able pupils and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well planned for. As a result of the very clear curriculum framework, challenge for the most-able pupils is built into their learning journeys. The understanding and skills of the most-able pupils are broadened and deepened through the depth and breadth of the curriculum. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers through the well-planned intervention programme at the school.
- Work in pupils' books and precise school assessments demonstrate that most pupils attain standards in mathematics, reading and writing well above their chronological age across the school. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and work is planned that consistently meets their learning needs. The school assessment system clearly highlights where aspects of pupils' development are not as good as others. For example, spelling in Key Stage 2 was identified as not meeting the high standards expected. School leaders have responded quickly to ensure that pupils gain the necessary spelling skills to raise their attainment in this aspect of their learning.

- Pupils in Key Stage 1 have a very well developed understanding of phonics. They have made excellent progress from early years and every pupil has a reading age well above their chronological age.
- Pupils across all key stages are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders have ensured that all the independent school requirements related to pupils' outcomes are met.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Children in the early years mostly come into preschool with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age across the seven learning areas. They are physically able and sociable, aware of books, understand stories and have a sound understanding of early number. Leaders capitalise on these positive starting points and plan a challenging curriculum that ensures that all children make accelerated progress. As a result, the majority of children achieve well above the good level of development expected for their age.
- Children's welfare and safety in the early years receive the same meticulous attention as the rest of the school. Risk assessments are carried out each day to ensure that the learning environment is safe and secure. The early years leader and teachers make sure that they receive feedback from parents about their children so that children's learning is seamless between home and school. The headteacher ensures that any wider concerns are shared with outside agencies, such as educational psychologists, as the need arises.
- The early years leader ensures that there is a stimulating, accessible and secure learning environment that young children can access to develop their interests and fascinations. All adults in the early years have high expectations of children's development and learning. Adults know the children very well. They understand the small steps that children need to make to maximise learning, and plan precisely to meet their needs. Each child is unique and has a bespoke plan for learning. As a result, current assessments in the Reception class show the majority of children working very securely within the 40–60 month band of development, and a number of children exceeding this across all seven areas of learning. As a result, they are very well prepared for the expectations when they move into Year 1.
- Planning closely reflects the characteristics of effective early years teaching. Adults are committed to ensuring that children gain the necessary skills for school. For example, in Reception some children were learning how to use phonics blends in their writing. The teacher had provided everything they needed to write independently. The children very confidently used the resources to write their own sentence. One child could be heard saying 'I can do this' as he wrote his words, and he was successful! There was a palpable sense of achievement in the room as a result.
- Teachers question children well. They ensure that children have to think carefully about their learning. During the inspection, dinosaurs fascinated children in Reception. At the end of the morning, children had placed small groups of dinosaurs around the room, 'feeding', 'hiding', and 'playing'. The world they had created was capitalised on by their teacher to develop speaking and listening skills, mathematical skills, and their creative imaginations. As a result, children made good progress in learning.
- Relationships in the early years are very positive. Young children run enthusiastically into school every morning because they trust the adults who care for them. They are excited about their day. Children in preschool spoke confidently with the inspector about their learning. The expectations for their behaviour and social development closely match those of the rest of the school. Children sit beautifully and listen carefully because teachers plan to support their physical and social development appropriately. Inspectors saw the same well-mannered and polite children seen elsewhere because the ethos of excellence begins in the early years and continues throughout the school.
- The learning environment supports the high-quality teaching. The school building is a Grade 2 listed building and this presents some challenges to the early years leader and the headteacher. The preschool class and the Reception class do not share a learning space. Leaders have overcome this by creatively using resources to support learning in both classrooms. All children have the opportunity to go to Forest School and this supports their social and physical development outside. However, school leaders are aware that some of the outdoor space for learning is, at present, underdeveloped. Although all aspects of the early years curriculum are taught in this space, not all the resources are of the highest quality and they are in need of refurbishment.
- Leaders have ensured that all the requirements for the early years provision are met.

School details

Unique reference number	137327
Inspection number	10006080
DfE registration number	925/6000

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Non-selective day school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Number of part-time pupils	22
Proprietor	Sarah Whelan and Mark Whelan
Headteacher	Sarah Whelan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,240–£6,912
Telephone number	01295 317600
Website	www.saintgeorgesprep.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@saintgeorgesprep.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 September 2012

Information about this school

- St George's Preparatory School, incorporating Little Dragons Preschool, is an independent and non-selective co-educational day school for boys and girls, on the outskirts of the market town of Boston, Lincolnshire.
- The school is located in a large three-storey Victorian Grade 2 listed building, which previously housed the local authority and other businesses.
- The extensive grounds incorporate a large hard play area, garden, car park and a large wooded area.
- The preparatory school opened in September 2011, taking pupils seeking continuity for their education from the Little Dragons Preschool and for others seeking the school's approach to learning outside through its Forest School curriculum.
- It is owned and managed by a husband and wife team who are the registered proprietors.
- One of the proprietors is also the headteacher, who teaches French throughout the school. The other proprietor is the school business manager who also teaches Forest School activities and provides training to other providers, including Bishop Grossteste University.
- The school aims to provide a place where children can enjoy their childhood, to encourage each individual and to achieve the very highest standards of work within a supportive, yet challenging environment. The school also aims to provide children with a strong foundation of experiences, knowledge and values, develop children to become physically strong, emotionally resilient, independent, adaptable, charming, well-mannered and considerate.
- The school also seeks to identify children's special talents, thus ensuring that an individual develops self-worth and confidence along with a 'can do' attitude. The school aims to promote children's achievements not only in academic excellence but also excellence in the arts and in sport.
- The school motto is 'Believe, achieve, succeed'.

- Since its opening, the school has grown at a steady rate and now has classes across the early years, and Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils are mainly of White British origin.
- Twenty-two children attend part-time in the preschool.
- The percentage of pupils with special needs is broadly average.
- The deputy headteacher teacher was absent during the inspection through illness.
- The school does not make use of any training away from the school.

Information about this inspection

- This is the school's second inspection since it opened in 2011.
- The inspector observed seven lessons, five jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector met with members of the school's leadership team, including the headteacher, the early years leader, subject leaders and the school's business manager.
- The inspector scrutinised school documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness, the school development plan and evidence of the school's own monitoring of its work.
- The inspector looked at a range of information, including school policies and procedures relating to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, as well as many other aspects of the school's work. The school's single central record of recruitment checks was scrutinised.
- The inspector examined pupils' books from across the school and looked at the school's planned curriculum and schemes of work. The inspector also looked at how the school assessed the progress of pupils and measured their attainment. The school has deferred from taking part in early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 national tests.
- The inspector conducted an extensive tour of the school's site.
- The inspector spoke with a group of Key Stage 2 pupils formally, and with many other pupils informally around school, in class, and at play- and lunchtimes.
- The inspector took into account the 21 replies to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The inspector also took into account the views of 14 parents spoken with at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspector spoke with staff during the inspection and took into account their views in 14 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jan Connor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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