

St Andrew's School

Aylmerton Hall, Holt Road, Aylmerton, Cromer, Norfolk NR11 8QA

Inspection dates

25–27 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Trustees have ensured that the good quality of education found at the previous inspection remains. Leaders and trustees have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- There have been significant changes to the leadership structure. The leadership team has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement and has the capacity to continue school improvement.
- Pupils learn in a calm and orderly environment. They have access to extensive outdoor space that is well resourced.
- Teachers meet the individual needs of pupils well. Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge. They plan learning that ensures that pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils make good personal and academic progress. Many leave with sufficient entry-level qualifications or GCSEs to continue to further education.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. Leaders ensure that pupils' welfare is given the highest priority. Most parents and carers are highly positive about the work of the school.
- Pupils receive suitable career information and development. However, leaders' rigorous organisation and implementation of consistently good-quality work placements are new. The impact of this work is yet to be seen.
- The effectiveness of support staff varies too much. Some teaching assistants do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can independently achieve.
- A few pupils are persistently absent.
- In the past, some pupils have had transition plans to start school on a full-time basis that have been too long.
- Leaders are starting to ensure that pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subject areas. However, it is too early to judge the impact on pupils' progress over time.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.
- The school is likely to continue to meet the independent school standards following the request to the Department for Education to increase pupil numbers.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that pupils have relevant opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills across all subjects
 - providing a clear and progressive approach to career development
 - ensuring that work placements are highly effective in supporting pupils' decisions about employment.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by providing teaching assistants with the skills required for them to contribute fully to the academic progress that pupils make.
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and trustees have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They have created a warm, safe and welcoming place in which pupils can learn well.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes, and the school has been through a period of turbulence in its leadership. Last academic year, trustees effectively restructured the leadership team and distributed roles between four senior leaders, with one of them having overall responsibility as headteacher. As a result, the trustees have restored the good quality of management and education at St Andrew's School.
- Senior leaders have clear roles and responsibilities. They have an accurate view of what the school does well and what still needs to improve. Over a short amount of time, leaders have ensured that weaknesses highlighted in local authority audits have been rigorously dealt with. Leaders have identified appropriate and relevant school improvement priorities and have plans in place to continue to develop the school further.
- Staff morale is high. This is reflected in the positive responses to the staff questionnaire, collected over the inspection. Teachers receive appropriate training that helps them build their knowledge and practice of adapting what they teach to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- The school is a happy place in which to learn. Pupils and adults have positive relationships. A typical view of pupils is that, 'Teachers have an understanding of autism and are adaptable to us.'
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is provided for well. Each day, pupils start their learning with personal reflection and positive thoughts. Pupils respond maturely and well to the adults' systematic and calm approach. As explained by the school council, pupils appreciate the summer fair and other activities such as horse-riding. Pupils receive social and life skills lessons regularly so that they develop crucial skills. Older pupils demonstrate the impact of these lessons with their politeness, friendly approach and clear understanding of social norms.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment more regularly than previously. They provide staff with a greater range of professional development, so that adults continue to develop their understanding of teaching pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. However, the effectiveness of teaching assistants varies. At times, some do not ensure that pupils increase their independence or make the best progress that they can.
- Parents are very positive about the work of the school. All respondents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that behaviour is good, and their children are well cared for and safe. Many parents echoed one sentiment expressed: 'The support we as a family receive from school, and the care my son receives at school, make us feel valued, appreciated and cared for.'

- The curriculum is increasingly well organised and implemented. Leaders ensure that teachers adapt learning to meet the needs of individual pupils, particularly in science, mathematics, art and computing.
- Leaders' work to check pupils' application of reading, writing and numerical knowledge and skills in subjects other than English and mathematics is new. Consequently, it is too soon to see the impact of this work on the pupils' outcomes.
- Equally, in areas such as career development, leaders' organisation and planning of how pupils learn about potential careers are more recent. Currently, this aspect of the school's work is not as systematic and as effective it could be.

Governance

- The work of the trustees remains strong.
- Trustees are committed and dedicated to improving the education of pupils and of maintaining the ethos of the school.
- Trustees offer good support and challenge to school leaders and ensure that the independent school standards are met. They have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses.
- The chair and vice-chair of trustees have the relevant expertise to hold the headteacher and other leaders to account. They visit the school regularly to check the information that they have from school leaders, including whether the independent school standards are met consistently.
- Trustees focus on pupils' achievement and welfare and hold school leaders to account for the education provided. At their meetings, trustees consider how funds are used and ensure that there is value for money.
- Under the careful leadership of the chair of trustees, the trustees have changed the leadership structure of the school. They have ensured that these alterations have increased leaders' capacity and the pace of school improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders and trustees have ensured that the school is a safe place for pupils and staff.
- Suitable safeguarding arrangements are in place. Staff are appropriately trained, in line with current national expectations. Records are well kept, and staff are knowledgeable about raising concerns they may have about the welfare of a child. In the staff questionnaire, all staff stated that pupils are well cared for and safe. Parents and pupils agreed.
- Leaders responsible for safeguarding ensure that they work effectively with other agencies when required. Concerns are dealt with promptly and with the best interests of the pupils in mind.
- Pupils learn about keeping safe when using online technology in lessons, such as those in life skills and computing. They can explain how they keep safe when using computers in school. Pupils follow the school's policy on the safe use of mobile phones willingly.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

- Trustees have applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to increase pupil numbers from 40 to 45. The intention is that the additional pupils will join the school in January 2019. Trustees do not intend to increase pupil numbers beyond 45.
- The size and quality of the accommodation and outside space are suitable for the proposed increase in numbers. The trustees have a clear and suitable plan for the reorganisation of the accommodation to extend the teaching areas.
- Arrangements for monitoring and improving the health, safety and well-being of pupils are well established.
- Expertise, qualifications and experience within the current staff team are suitable and sufficient.
- The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide an individualised approach to learning that considers pupils' personal educational plans and targets. Teachers are skilled at adapting their teaching style, so that pupils learn well and are successful.
- Relationships are positive between pupils and adults. As one pupil explained, 'The teachers are kind and caring.' There is a high level of supervision in lessons. Pupils often receive one-to-one attention and receive precise, clear, verbal feedback so they know how to improve their work.
- In subjects such as science, pupils often check their own success and appreciate where they are allowed to work independently. Pupils are often appropriately challenged to achieve greater things. One pupil stated, and others agreed, that in science especially, 'activities are made understandable'.
- Teachers use questioning skills effectively to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, in mathematics, pupils are provided with a range of activities so they can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Through careful questioning, adults support pupils to persevere and complete their work. The most able pupils relish the challenges they receive.
- Teaching assistants are committed to supporting the personal development of pupils with whom they work on an individual basis. During the inspection, several teaching assistants were observed using questions effectively to help individuals explain their understanding and helping pupils develop their social skills. However, in a number of lessons, teaching assistants were too often not used effectively enough to help more pupils to make better academic progress.
- Leaders' expectation that teachers include reading, writing and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics is developing, but is not well established. Currently, school assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils who have made good or better progress in reading and writing is smaller than that for mathematics and science.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Adults provide a very nurturing and safe environment where pupils are well cared for and their individual needs are met. Pupils openly speak about how well and sensitively staff deal with 'moments' or issues of personal anger or frustration. They speak highly of the knowledge adults have of autistic spectrum disorder and how adaptable and understanding adults are.
- Pupils want to learn and achieve well. Pupils spoken with talked about wanting to achieve as well as they can. Many enjoy feeling challenged in their work and are proud of their academic success. Several parents commented that since starting at St Andrew's School, 'we have our child back'.
- Routines are very well established and followed. Pupils appreciate the way leaders organise the daily timetable and how well adults explain and prepare them for any changes to the school day. Pupils are provided with their own spaces or 'booths' in classes. They decorate and keep these personal spaces orderly and well.
- Pupils are provided with additional roles and responsibilities through the school council and 'pupil voice', where they can contribute ideas to improve the school. They have been especially pleased that leaders have responded swiftly to their request for longer food technology lessons, and these are now in place. School council representatives are also proud of participating in recent events, such as the summer fair.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- St Andrew's School provides a calm environment in which to learn. Pupils, once settled, are provided with effective strategies to manage their own behaviour and develop personally and socially. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils stated that behaviour over time 'is about 90 per cent good' and that adults are good at dealing with situations. They confirmed that the quiet room is available when they want to go in there and that they are happy to use it if they want.
- Pupils' personal achievements are acknowledged with, for example, a 'Golden gotcha' or a 'Diamond' in key stage 2. Pupils see these as worthy rewards.
- When an incident occurs, adults deal with it swiftly, so that situations do not escalate further. Records of behaviour incidents are well kept, with clear records of the action taken by adults and the resolution.
- There have been no exclusions for almost one year.
- In the past, pupils' transition plans have gone on for too long without sufficient review. Leaders have changed their approach to settling pupils into school since the spring term 2018. New pupils now have transition plans that are regularly reviewed, which results in a shorter period of transition.
- Most pupils attend well, including those who have been school refusers in the past.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- When pupils enter St Andrew's School, they often begin with significantly lower starting points than their national peers. Many have become disaffected with school or have had large gaps in their formal education. School information, supported by pupils' work seen over the course of the inspection, confirms that most pupils make good progress.
- The progress that pupils make over time is very evident in subjects such as science, art, design and technology, and computing. This is because their needs are precisely met and teachers are highly skilled in presenting information in the best way to help pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder to learn effectively.
- Primary-aged pupils make good progress in reading and respond well to the opportunities to develop their literacy skills throughout the school day. Pupils' phonic skills are applied well to aid their spelling.
- Pupils' education, health and care plans and targets are well considered. Once pupils are settled, they generally move through their individual targets quickly. Pupils are aware of their targets and take responsibility for checking when they meet them.
- The school uses well-established schemes of work to help pupils gain independent life skills. For example, pupils build their experience and skills, from identifying aspects of the school premises, to visiting Cromer and the shops. Eventually, they are able to plan a journey into Norwich, using public transport independently.
- Secondary-aged pupils make good and often accelerated progress. They work diligently towards examination courses and, where possible, to GCSE examinations. In 2018, all pupils achieved entry level 3 in mathematics and science.
- The school is registered to educate students up to the age of 19. However, nearly all pupils leave the school at the end of Year 11 to take up places in local colleges or in other work-based training, such as in mechanics.
- Over the past three years, too few students have remained at the school to provide a separate judgement on the quality of the sixth form. Individuals stay on at the school to complete their GCSEs where appropriate. The school provides suitable teaching accommodation for older students to excel personally and academically.
- There is a clear and useful assessment system in place. Leaders gather and analyse the progress that pupils make in reading, writing, mathematics, science and communication. Adults' effective use of the information gathered is still in its infancy. This is especially the case for how effectively adults increase pupils' progress in reading and writing skills across all curriculum subjects.
- Careers advice and guidance are improving, but are not as progressive and intentional as they could be. Pupils receive careers information through their spiritual, moral, social and cultural lessons. A few pupils participate in well-chosen and interesting work placements which they enjoy, such as in site maintenance. However, the work placement options are limited, and are under current review to improve their usefulness for all pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	121252
DfE registration number	926/6145
Inspection number	10054008

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.

The inspection of the school provision in relation to the material change that the school has applied to make was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Proprietor	The St Andrew's School Trust
Chair of Trustees	John Garner
Headteacher	Carol Keable
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,000
Telephone number	01263 837927
Website	www.standrewsschool.org.uk
Email address	office@standrewsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–12 November 2015

Information about this school

- St Andrew's School is a small independent special school with a Quaker ethos. It runs under the proprietorship of The St Andrew's School Trust, a registered charity with a board of trustees.
- The school caters for up to 40 pupils. Trustees have applied for a material change to

increase the number admitted to 45. The DfE asked Ofsted to consider the school's application to increase pupil numbers as part of this standard inspection.

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan for autistic spectrum disorder and other social or communication difficulties.
- Typically, pupils have missed significant periods of schooling prior to admission and transitions are planned over extended periods of time.
- Each pupil is funded by their local authority, mainly Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. A few pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- The school uses Century Training Academy as an alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching for all year groups across a wide range of subjects. Observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher to determine the quality of teaching over time. The inspector heard pupils reading aloud in class.
- The inspector held a meeting with the school council and informally discussed pupils' learning and work with them in class.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation, which included: information about pupils' attendance and registration; pupils' achievement information; records of behaviour incidents; school self-evaluation; school improvement action plans; safeguarding and safer recruitment records and practices; the curriculum; and the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Meetings were held with a range of leaders, including the headteacher and other senior leaders, trustees and subject leaders. A telephone call was held with the chair and deputy chair of trustees and also with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector considered trustees' application for a material change to increase pupil numbers, reviewing the space and quality of teaching over time.
- The views of 13 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, together with their comments on the free-text service, were considered. The inspector also took account of the views of 30 staff who responded to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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