

Inspection of St Wilfrid's School

25-29 St David's Hill, Exeter, Devon EX4 4DA

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 October 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

St Wilfrid's School is a vibrant place for pupils to learn. They receive a good education. Pupils live up to the school's motto of 'a small school with a big personality'. They have very positive attitudes. Pupils are proud of their school. They say it is friendly and welcoming. Older pupils help the younger pupils to feel safe and secure. A typical view of parents is that 'this is a caring school where children thrive'. This is true.

When pupils join the school, they learn quickly of leaders' high expectations. Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. The calm atmosphere in lessons helps pupils to concentrate and do their best. Staff say that behaviour is not a problem at St Wilfrid's. This view is also supported by parents and pupils.

Pupils feel safe. Leaders make sure that pupils feel they can speak out should they have a concern or worry. Pupils are adamant that bullying does not happen.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is well led. Leaders provide a good quality of education. They have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Leaders, including the proprietor, have ensured that the independent school standards are met in full. This includes Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum and how it meets pupils' needs. Many pupils join the school at different times and often from different cultures. Teachers use their strong knowledge to help all pupils learn well. They explain key knowledge to pupils clearly and check regularly that pupils understand. This leads to pupils knowing and remembering more. For example, in modern foreign languages, leaders have prioritised important content such as grammar and pronunciation. This helps pupils develop their knowledge of spoken and written language. Teachers have effective systems in place to ensure that any pupil who falls behind can catch up quickly.

Leaders make sure that pupils' personal development is central to their work. There is an impressive range of opportunities to support pupils in their personal development. Through the well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, pupils gain a strong knowledge of relationship education. They learn about leading a healthy lifestyle and what makes a good citizen. In addition, pupils have opportunities to learn about different religious beliefs and cultures. They visit different places of worship to support their knowledge. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Leaders encourage pupils to have their own opinions and debate different viewpoints. For example, older pupils maturely discuss issues such as sexual harassment and prejudice.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders provided pupils with a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and interests to pursue. Leaders have plans in place to

reintroduce these experiences as soon as possible. These include visiting foreign countries.

Leaders ensure that effective careers provision is in place. Pupils have access to impartial careers advice. Leaders work closely with families to build on pupils' talents and interests. Pupils receive specific guidance that they can use to make informed choices.

When learning to read, younger pupils get off to a flying start. A small proportion of pupils join the school with English as an additional language. Some of these pupils initially struggle to read and understand English. Notably, early identification of pupils' needs, and high-quality support, ensures that these pupils catch up quickly. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on pupils' understanding of vocabulary. Leaders have put in place an expectation that pupils will learn and understand the meaning of words that they are not familiar with. This is having a positive impact on pupils' comprehension. Pupils are positive about reading. They understand that reading is the gateway to the curriculum. However, the reading curriculum for older pupils in the lower school does not always enable pupils to develop their knowledge and skills well enough. This leads to some pupils not being as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they could be. In the upper school, the reading curriculum is better organised.

The curriculum for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not precise enough. Leaders and teachers take pupils' needs into account. However, at times, the curriculum is not as well organised as it could be for some of these pupils. This leads to some pupils' personal targets not being fully met. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not always achieve their full potential.

Staff feel very well supported by senior leaders and the proprietor. They feel valued and listened to. Staff say that leaders are mindful of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture. All staff are vigilant to the risks to pupils. Leaders work closely with external agencies, ensuring that families and pupils get the support they need. The necessary checks to ensure that staff can work with pupils are carried out. Once recruited, staff are well trained to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

The PSHE education curriculum is particularly effective in teaching pupils about the risks they may face. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe.

An up-to-date safeguarding policy is on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Despite leaders' ambitious intentions, the curriculum does not support some pupils with SEND as well as it could. As a result, some of these pupils do not reach their full potential. Leaders must ensure that teachers plan a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils.
- While the reading curriculum for most pupils is effective, for older pupils in the lower school, leaders do not consider well enough what they want pupils to know by the end of each year. Consequently, some of these pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that the content of the reading curriculum is coherent and well sequenced so that these pupils achieve consistently well in reading.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	113567
DfE registration number	878/6004
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10201939
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Proprietor	St Wilfrid's School (Exeter) Ltd
Chair	Alexandra Macdonald-Dent
Headteacher	Ross Bovingdon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,506 to £12,909
Telephone number	01392 276171
Website	www.stwilfrids.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stwilfrids.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 to 19 October 2017

Information about this school

- The headteacher started in September 2017.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders, curriculum leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and teaching staff.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, PSHE education and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans and documentation relating to attendance.
- Inspectors toured the site with leaders to evaluate the suitability of the premises and the arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, tested staff's safeguarding knowledge and spoke with pupils. The lead inspector also met with the designated safeguarding leader.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stewart Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector

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