

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Anthony's School

Woodlands Lane, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 5PA

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel valued and safe at this happy school. They say that staff really care about them. At the beginning of each day, pupils enjoy greeting staff and Bella the therapy dog, who come out to meet them. Parents speak highly of the care and support provided by the school. Many said how their child has thrived since starting St Anthony's.

Staff have high expectations for every pupil. Children settle quickly when they join in early years. As they progress through the school, pupils rapidly gain the confidence and self-belief to try the various opportunities that are provided. Many go on to further education, with an impressive range of useful qualifications.

Pupils develop a deep appreciation of the natural world. In the school's large grounds, they enjoy working in the vegetable garden and visiting the sensory garden. Some pupils help out at a local farm. Pupils say how much they enjoy school trips to the local countryside and seaside.

Staff ensure that situations that could cause unwanted behaviours are quickly identified. Because of this, there is a calm and orderly atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils know that if bullying does occasionally happen, it is never tolerated.

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

The school provides an ambitious and well-designed curriculum. There are an impressive range of subjects available for pupils to study. Those in key stage 4 can follow different pathways. These enable pupils to develop their own skills and interests further. For example, pupils who like outdoors activities can follow the pathway that consists of forest school, land-based studies and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Assessment is well used to ensure that staff identify any gaps in pupils' learning.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of what the school does. One parent expressed their views, 'Since attending St. Anthony's, we have seen huge progress in our child's social and emotional development. It has been life-changing for both them and us.' From the moment they start school, children in early years are skilfully supported and reassured by staff. Children with autism spectrum disorder quickly learn the school's routines. As they progress through the school, pupils gain the confidence to try new activities. Staff successfully develop pupils' independence through a range of enrichment activities. For example, pupils learn the fundamentals of cooking and the right foods to eat to stay healthy. There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. These enable pupils to explore different options. For example, there are many different sports on offer.

Therapy is interwoven throughout the school day. A wide range of therapy options, such as dance movement psychotherapy, are available to meet pupils' needs. Therapy provides pupils with effective opportunities to support their personal and academic development.

Communication is prioritised in the school. Through the coordinated work of teachers and speech therapy, pupils develop effective communication strategies and often develop strong verbal skills. When ready, many pupils start on their journey of learning to read. However, they do not always quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to become confident, fluent readers. This is due to a lack of staff training and the school not following a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics.

Many pupils leave school with a range of useful qualifications from level 1 to GCSE. They usually go on to local colleges for further education and training. Leaders have started to implement a more detailed careers programme for pupils. Some aspects, such as work experience programmes, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders recognise the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about work options and the skills that are valued in the workplace.

Leaders ensure that staff feel valued and supported. Staff say that their well-being is carefully considered by leaders. They appreciate the coffee truck that comes to the school each week with real ground coffee. Staff consider that the workload they have is fair and manageable. Governors work closely with leaders. They know the school's future priorities and ensure that statutory responsibilities are met.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that training staff and developing a well-sequenced phonics programme, and further developing aspects of careers provision may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff fully understand the safeguarding policies of the school. There are effective systems in place to monitor and support the needs of all pupils. All staff have completed a rigorous programme of safeguarding training. They have a detailed understanding of the ways in which pupils are vulnerable.

Staff ensure pupils are aware of potential online threats, such as online grooming. Pupils have great confidence that staff will always help them if something goes wrong. All staff and governors understand and carry out their safeguarding responsibilities well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Currently, the school does not follow a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. Additionally, many staff have not had recent training. This means that pupils do not always develop their reading knowledge and skills well enough. Leaders need to ensure that staff are well trained to deliver a structured programme to teach pupils to read.
- Leaders need to continue the work they have already started in providing more timely work experience and opportunities for pupils to learn from employers about work and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This is so that pupils have a greater awareness of all the options that are available to them.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 2012.

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

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	126155
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10200424
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John O' Brennan
Headteacher	Helen Ball
Website	www.st-ants.org
Date of previous inspection	30 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Anthony's caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have speech, language and communication needs. Many have additional special educational needs and/or disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder.
- The school uses two alternative providers. These are Chichester College and Angling for Education.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, history and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with staff, pupils, parents and carers.
- There were meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. A meeting was held with the school's careers adviser to discuss provision for careers education, advice and guidance. There was a meeting with some members of the school's therapeutic team. An inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Governors' minutes were reviewed.
- The inspection team took account of the views of 55 members of staff who responded to the Ofsted survey. Inspectors also took into account 18 responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as 13 parents' free-text comments.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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