

Inspection of a good school: St George's School

Watergate Rd, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1XW

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 September 2022

Outcome

St George's School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St George's is a vibrant, happy and inviting school which caters for pupils with a wide range of complex needs. Pupils have extremely positive relationships with staff. This is because staff know pupils very well. This is aided by the positive relationships staff have with families. Pupils are supported extremely well. As a result, they feel safe, secure, well looked after and prepared for the future.

Every moment of every day is structured so that pupils know what they are doing and when. Highly consistent routines help pupils move around the school calmly. Fudge and Poppy, the school's resident cat and dog, have a calming effect on pupils.

Pupils like attending St George's. They make friends and play nicely at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Some pupils are non-verbal, but this does not stop them from communicating their wishes and desires or from interacting with their friends.

Every now and then, pupils might say or do something unkind. However, these instances are usually misunderstandings that are a result of the social and communication needs pupils have. Importantly, staff, along with peer mentors, are always on hand to help resolve any issues.

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

Leaders and staff are highly ambitious for the pupils of St George's. The curriculum has been developed over several years, but leaders are always making refinements to ensure that it successfully meets pupils' wide-ranging needs. Leaders have created four pathways which pupils follow.

The curriculum for older pupils and sixth-form students provides a range of academic and vocational subjects that lead to accreditation. These pupils benefit from work experience and opportunities to engage with local providers. This helps to broaden their horizons. The excellent careers programme prepares them very well for the future.

When pupils first join the school, staff take a careful, thoughtful approach to decide which of the four pathways pupils should follow. They check what pupils already know and can do. This helps them to make sure that the pathway is right. Crucially, staff build a very clear picture of what each pupil needs, and this means that they can design learning that is highly personalised and engages pupils extremely well.

The school's assessment system helps leaders and teachers check for understanding and make changes to what pupils learn. However, leaders know that this system needs to be much simpler and more consistent in all areas of the curriculum.

Pupils love books, and they are encouraged to read. Books in the library and classrooms mean that there are plenty of opportunities for them to read. Many pupils enjoy being read to by an adult. Running through the curriculum is an emphasis on communication. Many pupils have difficulties communicating. However, pupils use a range of communication systems that support their development very effectively. For example, some use Makaton, picture exchange communication systems and eye-gaze technology.

A culture of high expectations is promoted by staff. The headteacher and her senior team set the tone, and staff work together well to ensure that pupils' behaviour and attitudes are positive. Tellingly, pupils themselves encourage others to behave positively and follow the school rules. Many are good role models. Sometimes pupils will get angry and frustrated and behave inappropriately. Staff are extremely skilled in knowing how to manage these situations with success.

Support for pupils' personal development is strong. Staff teach pupils about different religions and relationships and sex education and health education. The school's 'person of the week' has a focus on people who have overcome barriers in their lives and helps to inspire pupils. Pupils learn how to take care of themselves and do everyday tasks that prepare them for adulthood. Staff have a relentless focus on ensuring pupils do things for themselves because they know how important this will be for them later in life. For example, trips to the local supermarket and the opportunity to ask for and pay for items are an important part of the curriculum.

Governors know the school well. The work they do is strategic, but, importantly, they visit the school and talk to leaders, staff and pupils. This helps them to check the work of leaders and hold them to account. While they do this, governors accept that they need to provide more challenge to leaders. In addition, a sharper focus on actions set at governor meetings would further help the school. Some policies were out of date at the time of the inspection. Leaders and governors know that they need to resolve this issue swiftly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is at the heart of what leaders and staff do here. Staff are very aware of the vulnerabilities of pupils and their families. They know what will keep pupils safe. Regular training means that the school community knows what to do if they have

concerns. Leaders work well with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the help they need. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum. For example, for some younger pupils, this will include teaching them to recognise important social sight signs in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's assessment system is not as refined and consistent as leaders would like. This means that the information it provides for leaders and staff is not used as effectively as it could be and creates some unnecessary workload. Leaders need to ensure that the assessment system is simpler and more consistent across the school.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account rigorously enough. The questions they ask do not challenge leaders enough and the actions they set at governor meetings are not clear enough. This has meant that some of the school's policies have not been reviewed when they should have been. Leaders and governors need to ensure that governance is more robust and that policies are reviewed when they should be.

Background

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

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 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.

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	118227
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	10203113
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dave Piggott
Headteacher	Steff Gleeson
Website	www.stgeorges-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 January 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a community special school for pupils that have a diverse range of complex needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The provision for students in the sixth form, known as The View, is located in a separate building on the school site.
- The headteacher took up her post at the start of this academic year but was previously deputy headteacher of the school for a number of years.
- The deputy headteacher post is currently interim.
- The chair of governors took up his post in October 2021.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision. This is a registered charity.

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 of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, key stage leaders and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector held a discussion with a representative of the local authority and met with the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and reading, physical education, relationships and sex education and vocational learning. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff and pupils throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. The lead inspector met with individual pupils and a small group of pupils. For a very small number of discussions with pupils, staff were present due to pupils' communication needs.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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