

Inspection of St Anne's College Grammar School

293 Clifton Drive South, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire FY8 1HN

Inspection dates:

3 to 5 October and 5 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

St Anne's College Grammar School is a welcoming, caring and supportive place where pupils enjoy their learning. The school has created a nurturing environment where people's differences are celebrated. Pupils said that they feel happy and safe at this school.

From early years through to the sixth form, the school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Children in early years learn well. However, across key stages 1 to 5, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because of weaknesses in how well the curriculum is designed and delivered in some subjects.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive high levels of pastoral support from staff. They enjoy warm relationships with staff. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Furthermore, pupils have a strong voice in this school. They told inspectors that they appreciate how staff consider their views carefully.

The school offers an engaging choice of extra-curricular activities and wider enrichment experiences. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the trips that the school provides to enhance their learning for example to historical sites, wildlife centres and the Lake District. Children in early years enjoy and benefit from visits such as to the nearby park, the beach and local farms.

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

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the leadership of the school. New leaders have ensured that pupils receive a broad and balanced range of subjects, suited to their needs and interests. However, while the curriculum in early years is generally well considered, this is not replicated across the rest of the school. Across a number of subjects and key stages, the school has not considered the knowledge that it wants pupils to learn in enough detail. In addition, in some subjects, the order in which pupils will learn this knowledge is not clear. Therefore, staff are sometimes unsure about what knowledge and vocabulary they should teach. This prevents some pupils from learning as well as they should.

Teachers typically have secure subject knowledge. However, they have not had sufficient training to deliver the curriculum consistently well. This is because, until recently, the school has not provided staff with sufficient support and training. While most pupils achieve well in some key stage 4 external examinations, the curriculum does not enable pupils to develop a deep and rich body of knowledge in a range of subjects.

The school has not ensured that assessment systems are fit for purpose. This means that, in some subjects, teachers are not clear about the gaps that pupils have in their learning. Additionally, some staff do not identify pupils' misconceptions and misunderstandings effectively. This limits staff's ability to support these pupils well.

The school has made reading a high priority. Pupils of all ages talked enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. Across all key stages, pupils appreciate the school's reading rewards and bookworm badges. These rewards encourage pupils to develop a love of reading.

Children in Nursery Year benefit from listening to songs, rhymes and stories. In Reception Year, children learn phonics from the very start. The books that the youngest pupils read are well matched to the sounds that they know. Staff quickly identify those younger pupils who need extra help to keep up with the school's phonics programme. The school ensures that these pupils get the timely support that they need to catch up quickly. However, the school has only recently established a systematic approach to identifying older pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. This means that these pupils do not receive the support that they require to catch up quickly with their peers.

Pupils with SEND are identified and assessed promptly. Teachers receive up-to-date information on the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Typically, these pupils receive care, guidance and support that are well matched to their needs. Staff carefully consider the needs of pupils, including those who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school monitors closely pupils' progress towards their EHC plan targets. Pupils with SEND are fully involved in all aspects of school life. However, pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should because of the weaknesses in the design and delivery of the curriculum.

Pupils display positive attitudes towards learning. They manage their own behaviour well. In early years, children are happy and motivated to learn. Across the school, classrooms are typically calm and harmonious. Older pupils are appropriate role models for younger pupils in the school.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Children in early years learn how to share and take turns. These children learn to recognise and value healthy foods. Staff cultivate other pupils' learning through the appropriately designed personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils learn about important topics, such as healthy relationships, different faiths, religions, and equality and diversity. Additionally, the school's relationships and sex education programme prepares pupils well for growing up in modern Britain. Pupils in the secondary phase receive appropriate careers information, advice and guidance. They are well prepared to make choices about their next steps in education, training and employment.

The school engages well with parents and carers and the wider community. The school provides parents with up-to-date information on important issues, such as the potential risks of online gaming and social media use. This helps the school and parents to work together to keep pupils safe when they are online.

Staff feel valued and enjoy working at the school. They appreciate the steps that the school takes to prioritise their well-being and workload. The school has a clear understanding of the priorities for school improvement.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders and the proprietor body ensure that the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage are met. The proprietor body has ensured that the safeguarding policy meets the latest statutory guidance. The policy is available on the school's website.

In October 2023, inspectors identified that several of the independent school standards (the standards) were unmet. The school rectified some of these unmet standards before the end of the inspection. For example, the website was updated to provide the contact details for the proprietor body, and the correct signage was displayed to indicate that hot water may pose a scalding risk to users. However, some standards remained unmet. This included the school's admissions and attendance records not meeting statutory requirements. Furthermore, the proprietor body had not reviewed the medical fitness of all staff employed at the school.

Following the October inspection, the school acted swiftly to rectify the unmet standards. For example, improved systems to oversee the quality of pupil attendance records have been introduced, and the academic performance of pupils in the preceding school year is now available on the school's website. The school has now checked the medical fitness of all staff employed at the school. The school has improved its procedures so that staff's medical fitness is routinely checked as part of the recruitment process.

While the school has taken prompt action to address the unmet standards identified in October 2023, some standards were not consistently met. Some improvements to the school's systems are very new. It is too soon to judge whether these improvements will impact positively so that all the standards are consistently met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In key stages 1 to 5, the school has not given sufficient thought to the subject knowledge and vocabulary that it wants pupils to learn, and by when. Consequently, pupils, including those with SEND, do not always encounter learning in a logical way that helps them to build the depth of knowledge and understanding that they should. The school should ensure that there is clarity around the knowledge and vocabulary that it wants pupils to learn, and by when. It should do this across all subjects, from Year 1 through to Year 13.
- The school has not ensured that its systems to assess pupils' learning are consistent and coherent across all subjects. This means that, for some subjects, teachers are not clear about gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that it develops a coherent approach to assessment across all subjects. This is so that teachers identify and address any misconceptions or gaps in pupils' learning.

- The school's processes to identify deficits in older pupils' reading knowledge are new and have not been used systematically. This means that some pupils do not receive the timely support that they need to develop their accuracy in reading. The school should ensure that teachers are fully equipped to identify and support those older pupils who are behind with their reading. This is so that these pupils learn to read with fluency and confidence.
- The school has not ensured that staff are sufficiently well trained to deliver the curriculum consistently well. As a result, in some subjects, pupils do not develop their subject knowledge in sufficient depth. Leaders should ensure that staff receive appropriate training to deliver the curriculum consistently well.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that all the standards are consistently met. As a result, there were several weaknesses identified, such as how effectively leaders carry out checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils, and in the school's arrangements to maintain admissions and attendance registers. The proprietor body should ensure that it strengthens its understanding of the standards and develops improved oversight of the school's work so that the standards are met consistently.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	119819
DfE registration number	888/6001
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10267608
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	St Anne's College Ltd
Chair	Stephen Welsby
Principal	Abigail Welsby
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,580 to £8,268
Telephone number	01253 725815
Website	www.sacgs.co.uk
Email address	office@sacgs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 to 22 November 2018

Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection took place from 20 to 22 November 2018. The school received two additional progress monitoring inspections in June 2019 and January 2020.
- The current principal was appointed in February 2023.
- The proprietor is St Anne's College Ltd, although this is not currently listed on the 'Get Information about Schools' (GIAS) website. There are three directors, including the principal. The chair of the proprietor body is Stephen Welsby.
- The school is located at 293 Clifton Drive South, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire FY8 1HN.
- The school does not use any 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Two of His Majesty's Inspectors made an additional visit to the school on 5 December 2023 to gather additional evidence.
- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the chair of the proprietor body and the principal. They also spoke with other senior leaders, subject leaders and a representative of a local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, geography and English. They talked to leaders and staff about the curriculums in these subjects. They also talked to pupils about their learning. They reviewed pupils' work and visited lessons. The lead inspector also evaluated the curriculums, visited lessons and considered pupils' work in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors reviewed the school’s policies and documentation relating to pupils’ welfare and to their education. They talked with staff and pupils about pupils’ personal development and pupils’ behaviour and attitudes. They observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors checked the school’s compliance with the standards. As part of these checks, an inspector toured the school’s premises, accompanied by a school leader.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, as well as Ofsted’s online surveys for pupils and for staff.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Jackie Stillings	His Majesty’s Inspector
Pippa Jackson-Maitland	His Majesty’s Inspector
Emma Gregory	His Majesty’s Inspector
Rebecca Sharples	His Majesty’s Inspector
Adam Sproston, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Steve Shaw	His Majesty’s Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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