

# St George's Preparatory School & Little Dragons Preschool

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

St George's Preparatory School, incorporating Little Dragons Preschool, is an independent and non-selective co-educational day school on the outskirts of the market town of Boston. The building is a large three storey Victorian Grade 2 listed building which previously housed local authority and other business offices. The extensive grounds incorporate a large hard play area, garden, car park and a large wooded area. The preparatory school opened in September 2011, taking pupils seeking continuity for their education from Little Dragons Preschool, housed in the same building, and for others seeking its unique Forest School approach. The school is open to all. It is owned and managed by the proprietors of the preschool who are a husband and wife team. One of the proprietors is the headteacher and also the class teacher of the school. The school's aim is to make St George's Preparatory School a special place for children to enjoy their childhood, to encourage each individual to achieve the very highest standards of work within a supportive, yet challenging environment, provide children with a strong foundation of experiences, knowledge and values, develop children to become physically strong, emotionally resilient, independent, adaptable, charming, well-mannered and considerate and to prepare them well to take their place in tomorrow's world. Also the school aims to seek out and develop to the full each child's special talents, thus ensuring an individual develops self-worth and confidence, along with a 'can do' attitude and to nurture each child as an individual, whilst maintaining high levels of expectation in all areas such as academic, the arts, sporting and behavioural. The school motto is 'Believe, achieve, succeed'.

The school is registered to provide education for up to 120 pupils aged 3 to 11 years. It provides a curriculum broadly based on the Early Years Foundation Stage and The National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2. It is underpinned by The Forest School and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs approaches. There are currently 10 pupils on roll in the one preparatory school class aged from four to seven years. The reception age children registered in this class spend some of their time in the Little Dragons pre-school along with the 17 currently registered three and recently turned four year olds. Children attending the school reside within the town and outlying villages and represent the diverse population of the area. The school plans to continue to phase in pupils in Years 3 to 6 in following years. There are no pupils currently with a

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

statement of special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language. This is the school's first inspection since registration.

## **Evaluation of the school**

St George's Preparatory School and Little Dragons Preschool provides an outstanding education for its pupils and meets its aims exceptionally well. It meets all of the regulations for independent schools. The extremely well planned curriculum precisely matches the interests, needs and abilities of each individual pupil. Pupils clearly take delight in every moment at school and make excellent progress because of the outstanding teaching and through assessment. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is behaviour. Pupils become confident, articulate, well-rounded young people while they are at the school. There are robust arrangements for safeguarding pupils and provision for their welfare, health and safety is outstanding; parents and carers value highly the care provided and the attention given to promoting pupils' well-being and enjoyment of the school.

## **Quality of education**

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and secures the interest and enjoyment of pupils extremely well. Meticulous planning is supported by reference to the requirements of the National Curriculum and to the new framework requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Uniqueness is brought to the curriculum through the importance given to the Forest School approach and regard given to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. As a consequence, pupils conduct much of their education out of doors. Emphasis is given to exploring basic physiological needs for shelter, water and food for example, along with safety, love and belonging. Self-esteem, confidence and respect are central as is self-actualization, including creativity, problem solving and morality. All of these aspects are carefully woven through topic themes which are relevant to pupils' lives and include lots of first hand experiences such as visits out and visitors to school. For example, at the time of the inspection pupils were studying the topic 'Emergency 999'. Visiting police officers set up a crime scene in the classroom and the pupils were busy taking and dusting for fingerprints whilst exploring the idea of concentric circles as also found in the natural world along with their ability to reproduce them on the computer. The language promoted was rich and sophisticated and pupils talked confidently about what they were doing, why it was important whilst asking carefully thought out questions to satisfy their curiosity and further improve their understanding. Curriculum planning clearly identifies what pupils are to learn to ensure the progression of knowledge and skills. Pupils are clear about the success criteria for each lesson and they have targets to help them focus on what they need to do to improve. They receive on-going feedback on their work. There is a strong focus on the key skills of literacy and numeracy and an excellent focus on developing pupils' language and communication skills. The understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) is systematically taught. Children and pupils routinely receive the same high quality experiences throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, both indoors and outdoors. Pupils' enjoyment is

in no doubt. They say they particularly enjoy Forest Schools because they are outdoors, exploring and making things and climbing trees. They are encouraged to push boundaries and challenge themselves but always within safely established boundaries and following rules of which the pupils are very well aware. During the inspection, pupils built homes for a story character in the woods using natural and found objects. The discussion which followed in the classroom, well supported by photographs of their work, involved them maturely justifying their choices to the rest of the group and their peers devising and asking them challenging questions in return. They were enjoying themselves so much that they didn't realise the excellent progress they were making in their understanding of living things, materials and physical processes, or how well their vocabulary was being extended and their communication skills and confidence improved.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Because the class teacher and other adults know the pupils exceptionally well, and the class size is very small, there is a high degree of individualisation, with tasks that are closely matched to the abilities of pupils in all cases. Teaching allows pupils to make good and mostly outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 as evidenced in most lessons, pupils' work and in discussions with the pupils themselves. Parents report that they are extremely pleased with how quickly their children progress and report changes in them at home, for example, in the way they asks sophisticated and challenging questions and insist on things being done 'properly'. Teacher and adults in both phases are particularly skilled at encouraging tenacity, independence and excellent learning behaviour. They know just how long to talk when introducing activities to children and pupils, and then give them lots of opportunities to practice what they have learned or to use their knowledge to find out and solve problems for themselves. Yet they are always on hand, alert for the need to swiftly put right any misconceptions or to increase the challenge so that pupils can reach the highest expectations of which they are capable. Children and pupils have regular hands on and practical opportunities. Learning is usually active with teachers modelling concepts in lively and understandable ways. For example, pupils developed a strong understanding of the number concepts studied when they turned the assembly hall into a street with sequentially numbered houses where they had to help the police who were on a police investigation. They expertly carried out calculations to get the police from one house to another using addition, subtraction and inverse operations. They were then prepared expertly for recording these number operations without realising they had been doing challenging mathematics. Assessment is outstanding. Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage a Learning Journey is completed which is of the highest quality, giving detailed information about the progress made and informing planning for the next steps. Similarly, in Key Stage 1, the class teacher collects a wealth of accurate information about how well individual pupils are doing which informs the individual plans for pupils' next steps of learning. The school does not yet systematically track the progress of all its pupils. However, the class teacher has begun to devise a system for tracking the older pupils' progress as numbers grow and pupils move on through the school so that she can keep a close eye on the effectiveness of the school's work.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Providing the highest quality personal, social and health education is central to the school's ethos and highly valued by parents and carers. Children and pupils quickly learn respect and how to get on well together. There are daily opportunities for pupils to reflect and discuss a range of issues from the need to look after the environment to the importance of positive relationships and good behaviour. They show their pride in demonstrating their beliefs through taking such responsibilities as being light switch monitors or mentoring younger children on the playground. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of the institutions and services of the United Kingdom through classroom discussion, assembly themes and regular visits for example from the police and fire service or to local health providers and the lifeboat station. Independence is promoted exceptionally well throughout. It is the norm for children and pupils to direct their own learning and for adults to follow their lead in deciding when and how to develop lessons and plan for next steps. Pupils take responsibility for their decisions and understand that there are consequences to their actions. They are well motivated by rewards and understand sanctions are needed in order to promote best behaviour. They are adamant that there is no bullying because everyone gets on so well together. School logs and records confirm this. Consequently their behaviour and manners are outstanding. This is very evident at lunch times which are a civilised and calm time with pupils demonstrating their social competence as they converse about their day whilst tucking into tasty and well prepared meals. Parents volunteered to inspectors that table manners at home have improved. Pupils advocate healthy eating and one told the inspector over lunch that it was important to drink lots of water because 'it keeps you hydrated'. Pupils demonstrate their absolute enjoyment of school through their high levels of attendance. They learn about the cultures and faiths of others and show empathy. The strength of the academic and personal skills promoted means pupils are very well prepared for the future.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are very well supervised in school, out in the woodland and on trips out. There are no incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment reported by pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils, including staff training and risk assessment, meet requirements and their implementation is highly rigorous and effective. The school has the required policies and practices that minimize risks to pupils' health and safety. Staff have the required training and attend to first aid and medical needs conscientiously and promptly. Practices in relation to fire safety and checking the safety of the premises are robust. Arrangements to promote exemplary behaviour are extremely effective and result in a supremely calm environment for learning. Pupils are encouraged extremely well to develop healthy lifestyles and to keep safe. They talk with secure knowledge and confidence about how to achieve this. This is particularly evident in Forest School activities, where for example pupils consistently know to only walk in a clockwise direction around the fire pit and they use tools such as a hand drill correctly and safely. They regularly are heard to

rehearse the need to be alert for 'hazards' and how these can be tackled safely. There is a comprehensive policy for child protection, which is implemented very well.

The excellent emphasis placed on developing pupils' emotional health results in pupils saying that they are confident that they can talk to adults about any concerns. Strong and open relationships enable adults to pick up quickly when pupils are facing challenges and put the appropriate support in place.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All adults have been subject to the necessary checks to confirm their suitability to work with children. These are recorded in a single central register as required.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises have been transformed to provide an effective, safe and stimulating environment for learning. Swift action was taken to address issues in order to meet the requirements stipulated at the time of the registration visit. There are now ample washrooms for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage which are of good quality. Classrooms are clean and tidy and flooring has been replaced and is in excellent condition. The hard surface area to the rear of the school provides a safe environment for pupils to play and exercise outdoors. The refurbished hall provides ample space for assemblies, lunchtimes and physical education. Staff do all they can to ensure the woodland and garden area provides a safe environment for pupils to explore and pursue their Forest School and other play activities. All areas are maintained to high standards of maintenance and decoration.

### **Provision of information**

The extensive range of information provided to parents and carers by the helpful school website, parents' handbook, regular correspondence and detailed termly reports is clear, accurate and up to date. The school operates an open door policy and there are at least three formal opportunities each year for parents and carers to consult with the teacher. Parents and carers report an exceptionally high degree of satisfaction with the school's work.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The procedures for handling complaints meet all regulations.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made).

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that there is a rigorous system for recording and tracking the progress that pupils make as they move through the school.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Non-selective day school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	7 September 2011		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 5	Girls: 5	Total: 10
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 5	Girls: 5	Total: 10
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£5,250 Reception £5,877 Year 1 and 2.		
<b>Address of school</b>	126 London Road, Boston, PE21 7HB		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01205 317600		
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@saintgeorgesprep.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sarah Whelan		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs Sarah Whelan and Mr Mark Whelan		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



21 September 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St George's Preparatory School & Little Dragons Preschool,  
Boston, PE21 7HB**

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school last week. We enjoyed speaking to you about all the things which you said you like about your school and your views are really important to us.

We found that your school is outstanding. We can see why you all enjoy coming to school so much. This is clear from the very positive attitude you have to your work and your exemplary behaviour. All the adults at school take excellent care to make sure you are very well nurtured and safe. As a result you grow in confidence and become extremely well-rounded, independent young people. Because of the very high quality individual support you each receive and the outstanding teaching, and the very exciting things you are given the opportunity to do you make excellent progress in your work.

We would like your school to continue to improve, so we have asked them to make sure there is a system in place to record and track the progress that you make as you move through all the year groups in the school.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey  
Her Majesty's Inspector