

The St Anne's College Grammar School

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

Inspection dates

4–6 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school's website does not provide all the required information.
- While senior leaders are very effective in many respects, the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement are overgenerous.
- The opportunities for teachers to develop their own skills further are limited.
- The systems for judging pupils' academic progress do not provide as much useful information as possible.
- Some policies and other documents are out of date.

The school has the following strengths

- The principals are highly committed to the pupils in the school. They work closely with other members of staff to make sure that the school is happy, friendly and nurturing.
- Pupils learn well. Some make very rapid gains, in comparison to those in their previous schools, as a result of growth in their confidence.
- Behaviour in the school is good. Pupils know about the school's high expectations and generally meet these very well. Pupils get on well together and they say there is no bullying.
- Staff know pupils as individuals. This allows the school to meet pupils' needs very well. It underpins the highly effective care they receive.
- Special educational needs provision is effective. Leaders work closely with partners outside the school when this is needed to support pupils.
- Teachers know their subjects well. They plan lessons which are tailored to each pupil in their classes. Pupils experience a variety of different learning activities which maintain their interest. Pupils and staff work hard.
- The provision for the youngest children in the early years and the oldest students in the sixth form is effective. Pupils of all ages enjoy school and are helped to succeed.
- Parents are positive about the work of the school. They have confidence in the principals and other staff.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of leadership by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders use detailed evidence about the school’s performance as the basis of their evaluation of its effectiveness, so that planned actions to develop the school are linked to the most important improvement priorities
 - policies and other documents are fully up to date, accurately reflect the current work of the school and, where relevant, current national guidance
 - leaders make better use of subject-based assessment and target setting to give a more complete picture of pupils’ overall academic progress, which can then be used to plan for the fastest possible learning and evaluate how effective the school is in providing for this
 - the arrangements to provide a new school website are completed as soon as possible, so that all necessary information is available for parents and others, and the requirements are met.
- Ensure that teachers can renew and refresh their skills by being provided with more opportunities for continuing training, so that they can maintain their effectiveness, stay up to date and, in so doing, further help pupils to do as well as possible.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that following an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act, a copy of the report of the inspection (if it has been sent to the proprietor) is published and maintained on the school’s internet website, and provided to the parents of each registered pupil, by any date specified by the body who conducted the inspection (paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, so that the independent school standards are met consistently and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The principals work effectively to ensure that the school provides a happy and wholesome environment for pupils. They demonstrate a clear commitment to each pupil and know and understand the needs of pupils, including those who may have experienced difficulties and disruption to their education in other settings. Leaders and other staff have clear principles about valuing each pupil and their success. Pupils, parents and staff are very positive about the school and morale is high.
- While leaders have evaluated the work of the school, their summary of this evaluation uses a document which refers to a previous version of the independent school standards. This means that some important aspects receive insufficient focus. This then limits the usefulness of the evaluation in identifying key improvement points and leads to its conclusions being overgenerous. The school development plan is restricted because it almost exclusively considers improvement to the school's buildings and resources rather than ways to develop further the effective work already done with pupils.
- The subjects and learning activities offered to pupils throughout the school provide them with broad opportunities to learn and develop. There is sufficient emphasis on learning to read and write and understand simple mathematical ideas for the youngest pupils. These skills are built on as pupils get older, eventually to develop the more detailed understanding needed for GCSE and A-level study. While the options available are somewhat limited by the small size of the school, leaders ensure that older pupils still have some choice over the subjects they study. The school places considerable and successful emphasis on providing pupils with wider confidence and skills. Secondary-aged pupils receive supportive careers education which prepares them for the different options available as they go through the school and then, when they reach 16, for next steps which meet their needs.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well thought out and contributes to the wider care of pupils and their developing confidence. Pupils are helped to understand fundamental British values, such as respect and tolerance, as underpinning principles of the school through planned activities in lessons and elsewhere. The school council is active and its older members are involved in local democratic activities with pupils from other local secondary schools. The systems to ensure that pupils know about this work help all to understand about living in and contributing to a community.
- Senior leaders are supported by a small group of middle leaders. They and other teachers understand what is expected of them and, in return, are trusted by the principals to take an independent professional approach to their teaching responsibilities. The provision for special educational needs and its leadership are strengths of the school.
- While the staff team from the whole school meets regularly and discusses important aspects of the school's work, the opportunities for more formal training for teachers are fewer than in many schools. Some staff identified on their inspection questionnaire responses that they would like to receive more training so that they can continue to be as effective as possible.

- The illegal attack on the school's computer system has caused considerable disruption since the end of the summer term. Leaders and other staff have invested considerable time in resolving the problems it caused. This has put additional pressure on leaders but they have ensured that there has been minimal impact on pupils.

Governance

- While the school's proprietor is a limited company, the directors are the two principals who also own the school. This gives them a very detailed knowledge of all aspects of the school's work. However, they have limited access to advice, information and scrutiny from outside the school. This makes it harder for the school to remain fully up to date. For example, the principals were not aware of new versions of some guidance documents from the Department for Education, and some policy documents seen during the inspection did not fully reflect the school's current practice.
- Work was undertaken by the principals during the inspection to ensure that almost all the independent school standards were met. The principals made the necessary arrangements and financial commitment for a new school website to be provided some time before the inspection. However, this has not yet been completed. The existing website contains limited information and does not include all the required details.
- The principals do not use a formal performance management system for staff. However, the school's small size means that leaders have much contact with staff and understand how effective they are. Teachers are observed working with their classes and the results their pupils achieve are scrutinised. When required, the principals are willing to take difficult decisions to ensure that the work of staff is as good as is needed to benefit pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders recently renewed the school's safeguarding policy. This is made available to staff who have also received a copy of the appropriate section of the latest statutory guidance. A copy of the safeguarding policy is published on the school's website so that parents and others can refer to it. However, safeguarding in the school does not rely on documents alone. The small size of the school means that pupils are known very well as individuals. This means that any particular matters which may affect them can be acted on in a personal way, if necessary, in partnership with professionals from outside the school. In addition, staff receive appropriate training, for example on how to protect pupils from the risk of experiencing extreme views or radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching enables pupils to learn well, particularly in the development of their wider skills and attributes. The small classes allow teachers to work very closely with individual pupils.
- Staff use a wide variety of different approaches in their teaching. When these take into account teachers' close knowledge of pupils and how they learn, as is frequently the case, they are highly effective. For example, a Year 9 English lesson seen by an inspector linked work studied in personal, social and health education to the book the pupils were studying. The teacher organised the learning so that pupils were involved and guided pupils' thinking through questioning closely targeted to each pupil. This kind of practical

approach to learning is common across the school. For example, play in the early years is structured so that children learn well and Year 11 pupils and sixth formers regularly undertake science experiments.

- Teachers are not afraid to address sensitive issues as they help pupils learn. An inspector saw particularly effective learning in personal, social and health education for Year 10 where, as part of a series of lessons, pupils are fully involved in giving and responding to interesting presentations about potentially difficult topics. In the sample seen, the lesson content was brought to life through pupils' own experience and treated with great respect and maturity by the whole class.
- Teachers also demonstrate their skills in their approach to teaching the mixed-age classes in the junior school. Their effective planning helps pupils of different ages and starting points to make good progress.
- While reading is encouraged across the school, some aspects of writing are less consistently addressed. Sometimes teachers accept written work which is not as tidy as possible. Although teachers have strong subject knowledge and know their pupils well, they do not provide work that is sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able.
- All pupils are assessed on arrival in the school. Teachers and subject leaders, when these are in place for a particular subject in the senior school, then take responsibility for the assessment of pupils. Teachers check on how well pupils are doing in their own classes. Leaders gather and review the overall outcomes from assessment as part of the reporting system for parents. The school tests its pupils every year. However, the types of tests used are not best suited to showing how well the pupils are developing. More could be done to ensure that the overall picture of each pupil's academic achievement is as robust and well considered as possible, so that any pupil at risk of falling behind can be identified as early as possible. Without this, leaders cannot be sure that the school is doing as good a job as possible in supporting pupils' academic learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils know what is expected of them. The positive attitudes and aspirations which pupils are helped to develop are demonstrated by the pride which pupils of all ages have in the school. This is seen, for example, in the way they wear their school uniform. They are neat and tidy. They are friendly to visitors and very polite.
- The welfare of pupils is fundamental to the work of leaders and other staff. The good relationships in the school mean that pupils are confident to discuss any matters of concern with the adults who work with them. The small size of the school allows the principals to have direct input if any concerns about pupils' welfare arise.
- The parents, pupils and staff, whose views inspectors heard, said that the school is safe. Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe, for example when using smartphones or other communication devices. As part of the resolution of the school's recent computer problems, a more secure computer system has been installed. This includes a system to check that pupils cannot access unsuitable websites.
- A very small number of maintenance issues, required for the school to meet the independent school standards, were addressed during the inspection. This further

ensured the safety of pupils.

- The pupils who spoke to inspectors said that there is very little, if any, bullying in the school. They were fully confident that staff would deal with any issues which may arise between pupils from time to time.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Inspectors saw very little evidence of anything other than good conduct from pupils in lessons and their social times. However, some pupils said that others occasionally behave less well. If there are any instances of poor behaviour in lessons, there is a well-understood system of warnings followed by sanctions. This gives pupils the chance to improve their behaviour and, if they do not, other pupils' learning is disturbed as little as possible. The special educational needs coordinator keeps detailed records of any significant incidents of poor behaviour, so that any needs these indicate can be followed up and pupils helped to be better behaved in the future.
- Pupils' good behaviour helps everyone to learn well. It also demonstrates pupils' respect for each other.
- Few pupils are absent except for good medical reasons. Leaders ensure that attendance records are carefully kept and monitored. If pupils are unexpectedly away from school, parents are telephoned on the same day to find out why. Overall attendance broadly matches the national average. While it is still early in this school year, the records indicate that attendance has improved slightly compared with the start of the previous school year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school with starting points which vary considerably and are sometimes reduced by their previous experience in other schools. This can be particularly significant for those who start in the senior school. This, together with the typically small number of pupils in each school year, makes it very hard to draw comparisons about outcomes with those achieved by pupils in other schools.
- Pupils in Year 11 take GCSE examinations. The overall results have varied in recent years but have reflected the school's expectations, based on staff knowledge of pupils' starting points and progress. The school has chosen for pupils in Year 6 not to complete national curriculum assessments. However, test papers from previous years are used with pupils as part of the school's system for checking on individual pupils' progress.
- Leaders' and teachers' detailed knowledge of pupils' potential from their work with them in class and the testing undertaken allows the school to enter a small number of the most able pupils for early entry to GCSE examinations across a range of subjects. Such pupils' GCSE success then encourages them to continue their rapid progress by working on A-level courses. The most able sixth form students gain high standards in their A levels. However, it is not clear from the school's data on outcomes that all other pupils make the fastest possible academic progress.
- A very significant aspect of the school's work is the way it helps pupils achieve in less easily measured aspects, such as their confidence, ability to work with others and how they develop a positive character. For some pupils, success in aspects like these is necessary to allow academic achievement to follow. Parents who provided inspectors with

their views were very complimentary about this feature of the school. For example, they recognised how their children's emotional needs are met, allowing them to be happy and to develop good manners.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for in the school. They make similar progress to their peers and often considerably more than in their previous schools because their needs are better known and addressed. Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers to ensure that such pupils learn well.
- Pupils are helped to take appropriate next steps at the end of Year 11. These include further study in the school or in other schools or colleges, depending on individual pupils' needs and aspirations.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is organised as part of the junior school. A middle leader works closely with the relevant principal to ensure that the provision is effective. Recently, all early years staff have been working on, and have almost completed, a full audit of the provision against demanding standards set out by the local authority. This has allowed staff to identify and improve any weaker aspects. In addition, it is allowing leaders to put in place a system for setting ambitious targets and monitoring the continuing quality of the provision.
- Safeguarding arrangements for children in the early years are secure. Children's safety is strengthened by the training staff receive, such as in paediatric first aid. Children are taught about how to be safe through, for example, using 'circle time' activities where children talk and listen to each other.
- Reading is taught systematically using phonics. This enables young children to become confident readers. Parents are actively encouraged to become involved in the education of their child, including in practising reading.
- As in other areas of the school, the small number of children in the early years makes it hard to be precise about overall patterns in children's progress. However, the evidence available indicates that children make typical progress from their starting points. As a result, most children achieve a good level of development and are ready to move into Year 1 at the appropriate time.
- As part of their learning, children develop important skills for the future. These include sharing, cooperating and making friends. They behave well.
- The independent school standards as they relate to the early years are met.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The sixth form is organised as part of the senior school and does not have separate leadership arrangements. The school's size means that this does not disadvantage sixth form students.
- Students in the sixth form continue to make progress and learn well. However, the very small numbers involved mean that it is not possible to draw general conclusions from data about pupils' achievement in the past. The most able students are helped to apply to university and achieve the high A-level grades they need to take up their places. Other

students are given the encouragement and support they need to take up apprenticeships and other opportunities when they leave the sixth form. These sometimes follow the successful use of links with organisations and employers outside the school.

- Teaching is highly responsive to students' needs, with teachers challenging and encouraging students in equal measure. The strong support for pupils seen in other parts of the school continues for the older students. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of students to tailor the content of lessons to individuals. In samples of lessons seen by an inspector, pupils enjoyed their learning and cooperated well with each other and their teachers.
- Sixth form students are just as polite, friendly and well behaved as other pupils. They form a coherent group and relate well together. They use their common room sensibly.
- Sixth formers choose from a small number of A-level subjects. Those offered normally include the sciences and mathematics. Other subjects are provided when there is sufficient interest. This ensures that the needs and aspirations of sixth form students are met.

School details

Unique reference number	119819
DfE registration number	888/6001
Inspection number	10012962

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	St Anne's College Ltd
Principal	Mr S R Welsby and Mrs S M Welsby
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,250–£7,140
Telephone number	01253 725815
Website	www.sacgs.co.uk
Email address	principal@sacgs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 October 2012

Information about this school

- The St Anne's College Grammar School is registered as an independent day and boarding school which provides full-time education for up to 151 girls and boys aged from two to 19.
- No pupils have been boarders for a number of years and the boarding provision was not inspected.
- There are 16 pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- Seven children are eligible for funding under the government's Nursery scheme.
- The school was originally established in 1886 and moved to its current premises in 1902. It is situated in a large purpose-built house surrounded by play areas for pupils. The school also makes use of the gardens of two adjacent houses. These houses formerly provided boarding accommodation.
- The school is divided into a junior school and a senior school. Currently, the junior school is organised into a Nursery, a combined Reception and Year 1 class, and classes for pupils in Years 2 and 3 and in Years 4 to 6. The senior school comprises separately taught Year 7 to Year 11 groups. Additionally, there is a small sixth form.
- There are separate principals for the junior and senior schools. This husband and wife team are also the directors of the company which is the school's proprietor.
- The school aims include 'to provide a stimulating and happy environment where children will want to learn,' and 'to identify individual talent in whatever direction it lies and to nurture its full development.'
- The school suffered from an illegal attack on its computer system shortly before the summer holiday. It was in the final stages of recovering from this at the time of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- An inspector toured the school site accompanied by the principals.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. An inspector visited a morning form group session and also observed a meeting of the school council. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct in lessons, during movement between lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principals, the special educational needs coordinator and groups of teachers, including middle leaders, and other members of staff. They met formally with groups of pupils from the junior and senior schools and spoke to others during lessons and at other times during the school day. An inspector spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority's special educational needs service.
- Inspectors examined pupils' books during lessons and in a scrutiny of samples of written work across a range of pupils and subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed documents to confirm compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence. These documents included school policies, safeguarding information, the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness and development planning, minutes of staff meetings, and the attendance and admissions registers. Inspectors examined the school's website.
- Inspectors considered 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including eight additional written comments to the survey questions. An inspector met with a parent to discuss their views of the school. They considered 15 responses from members of staff to a questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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