

St George's School

28 Priory Road, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 4HR

Inspection dates

3–5 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Pupils take great pride in their work.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Consequently, pupils make good progress in their learning.
- Children in the Reception class settle quickly and learn well. The environment is safe and the provision is well managed.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils and children make the most of the many experiences available to them.
- Staff know their pupils' personal and emotional needs very well. They use this knowledge effectively to develop pupils' confidence.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They move on successfully to schools of their choice.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils are very effective. Staff implement the school's policies well to ensure pupils' safety at all times.
- The proprietor and senior leaders ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. The school is a kind and tolerant community. Pupils learn to care for each other from a very young age.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have the knowledge and capacity to address aspects that need improvement to make the school even better.
- The current practice to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning is not effective enough.
- Information about the potential of the most able pupils is not used well to accelerate their learning and progress.
- Communication with families requires some consolidation, especially to eradicate lateness and improve attendance.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - using a wide range of evidence to monitor the quality of teaching
 - evaluating accurately the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and achievement
 - using the evaluation of teaching to identify and meet staff's training needs.
- Make better use of performance information to identify the most able pupils quickly and accelerate their learning and progress in all classes and subjects.
- Improve communication with families, including through a more informative website, to:
 - keep them informed of the school's work
 - eradicate lateness and improve attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor and leaders ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards. With the support of staff, they communicate their vision clearly. They are successful in ensuring that pupils enjoy school and thrive in their personal development and learning.
- The new headteacher leads by example. She is an excellent practitioner who is quickly establishing a culture of collaboration and success for the future growth of the school. All members of staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire for this inspection are extremely positive about the leadership of the school. They love working at St George's.
- Almost all the parents who met the inspector or who sent written comments liked the way the school is run. They praised the staff for their commitment and for the family feel of the school. This inspection confirms that relationships between staff and pupils are very good.
- The teacher in charge of the nursery has recently taken up the overview of the Reception Year. The new leadership of the provision for early years is developing well. Teachers work well together to ensure that the children learn well in a safe environment.
- The curriculum supports the aims of the school very well. The focus on developing pupils' creativity, confidence and independence is a success. Topics and subjects are well planned, with detailed schemes of work for all areas of learning. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular opportunities.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils experience a rich breadth of learning experiences in and out of school. The specific curriculum activities to develop pupils' speaking skills are highly effective. The presentations that children and pupils made at the harvest festival in Priory Church were of an exemplary standard.
- The school strongly promotes the fundamental British values of democracy and the rule of law, with a specific emphasis on tolerance and respect for different faiths and beliefs. As a result, pupils understand what equality of opportunity and respect for diversity mean. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning about the variety of religions in their local community. They were able to explain how their charity work, including their visits to meet elderly people, was essential to becoming good citizens.
- The deputy headteacher leads the development of assessment conscientiously. He has set clear and realistic timescales for staff to submit their performance information on pupils' progress. These arrangements help staff to understand whether pupils are learning well in literacy and numeracy. More work is required to develop assessment across all subjects.
- The curriculum is adapted carefully to meet the needs of pupils who require additional help. The leader in charge of this provision ensures that parents are kept aware of the specific strategies that help their children make good progress.
- The curriculum is evaluated frequently to ensure that it matches the school's aims and the school's commitment to raise aspiration and provide equality of opportunity for all pupils. For example, leaders have developed a policy for the most able pupils called the 'high

potential learner policy'. Although staff have had some training, the strategy is not applied consistently well across all subjects of the curriculum.

- Senior leaders have, in the past, kept oversight of the quality of teaching and learning. All teachers participate in the review of the school's strengths and areas for development. This practice has led to some reflection on the strategies required to maintain good teaching and learning. The new headteacher is keen to rekindle monitoring procedures to raise academic standards further. Currently, the range of evidence used to monitor the quality of teaching is too narrow. The evaluation of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and achievement is insufficient. Findings from monitoring and evaluation are not used well enough to plan staff's training.
- The school's website meets basic requirements but it is not used well to share information with families. Some information that would be useful, such as information about the early years provision, details about the curriculum and changes to staffing, is lacking. There is scope to develop the website so that it becomes a more effective communication tool.

Governance

- The proprietor takes responsibility for the governance of the school. She is frequently on-site to support the new headteacher.
- Staff work closely together to evaluate the school's work. However, leaders are very keen to set up a body of people, such as a governing body, to acquire a more objective understanding of the school's provision and outcomes.
- The proprietor and the headteacher check pupils' progress and consider pupils' needs. Together they ensure that the school continuously addresses any changes to the independent school standards. They oversee effective arrangements for the recruitment of staff.
- The policies and procedures are kept up to date, although, in a few documents, leaders acknowledge that staff names need to be updated following the appointment of the new headteacher.
- The proprietor ensures that safeguarding requirements are met, including the regular training of staff.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils state that they feel safe in school and they are confident that the staff would support them appropriately with any concerns they may have.
- The school publishes its policy for safeguarding on the school's website.
- Senior leaders give a high priority to ensuring that arrangements for safeguarding and pupils' welfare are kept under continuous review. The policy and associated procedures have regard to the latest statutory guidance and staff are trained frequently to recognise different forms of abuse and to implement the latest guidance effectively.
- The headteacher, who is the designated safeguarding lead, and class teachers have

daily contact with parents or family members. This enables the immediate exchange of information related to individual pupils. Pupils' needs, including their medical needs, are very well known and understood by staff.

- The headteacher ensures that the school maintains appropriate contact with external agencies. Local authority teams and specific organisations are available to support the staff and provide advice about any safeguarding concerns. The headteacher is aware of the specific risks that might exist in the local community.
- The school implements effective procedures for the safe recruitment of staff, the assessment of risk and the safety of the premises. The school's oversight of all aspects of safety, including for outdoor visits, is effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are highly committed and are good role models for pupils. Staff are very open to new ideas and are willing to review the quality of their teaching and the accuracy of their assessment. The effective teaching in the Reception class has enabled children to settle quickly in their new school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach all aspects of the curriculum with confidence. Pupils benefit from the expert input of specialist staff, such as in dance, French and music.
- Teaching in English and mathematics is good. Pupils progress well from their starting points. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils who have additional needs. Staff are aware of their specific targets and parents are kept well informed of their progress.
- Teachers organise their classrooms carefully so that resources support pupils well in their learning. Teachers use practical equipment and images to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, in literacy, pupils were provided with a meaningful picture and text about the First World War so that they could describe what the emotions of soldiers might have been at that time. Classrooms are packed with examples of words that pupils can use to strengthen the quality of their writing. Others have number lines and counting squares available so that pupils can get quick reminders of things they have learned in numeracy.
- Teachers use probing questions to check pupils' understanding. They spot misconceptions quickly and provide clear explanations to ensure that work is accurate, for example in mathematics, where some pupils used protractors incorrectly. In a science lesson, the teacher was quick to explain the requirement of a fair investigation when pupils were not measuring the size of their feet accurately.
- Phonics is taught from the early years onwards. The youngest children become quickly proficient in applying their knowledge to read and write unfamiliar words. The time allocated to the teaching of phonics is sufficient and activities during the day support this important area of work.
- The positive relationships between adults and pupils mean that pupils are confident and say that they are willing to 'have a go'. The outdoor learning environment is used well in the Reception class to make learning relevant and exciting.
- Pupils who met the inspector said that they want to do their homework because it helps

them make progress, especially in reading and research. Pupils take reading books home regularly and parents are encouraged to hear their children read to develop their children's love of reading. Older pupils said that they found their research in history interesting and that they learn 'not to just copy from the internet'.

- Teachers understand and apply the school's marking and assessment procedures. However, staff do not use assessment information well enough to plan learning activities that accelerate the progress of the most able pupils. Teachers' expectations of what these pupils can achieve are too low, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils said, and the inspector agrees, that, in some subjects, the most able pupils do the same work as others in the class and that it is, at times, too easy for them.
- Teachers regularly discuss with leaders the progress that individual pupils are making in English and mathematics. This process helps staff to identify pupils who are falling behind. However, it does not identify clearly enough the pupils who could make accelerated progress across all subjects. The headteacher is seeking to establish links with other schools to check that teachers' judgements about pupils' progress are accurate and to ensure that more pupils reach the highest standards.
- Parents praised the staff for the way they manage behaviour in class. During this inspection, staff were observed sensitively redirecting the rare moments of off-task behaviour so that learning could proceed without interruption. Parents receive regular information about their children's progress through the daily contact with families, frequent parents' meetings and the comprehensive mid-year and end-of-year reports.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- When asked which words they would use to describe their school, pupils said 'amazing teachers', 'caring', 'welcoming', 'help me learn stuff' and 'cool school trips'. Pupils like their school.
- Many pupils said that the school was a happy place and teachers always sorted problems out. The findings of this inspection support these positive comments. Pupils respond well in class and are proud of their work. Pupils try their best and persevere.
- Pupils are happy because they feel safe and are well cared for. They said that staff are always willing to help them if they are worried about something. Pupils understand how to stay safe, including when using social media and the internet.
- The personal, social, health and economic education programme helps pupils understand issues such as how to maintain positive relationships and respect the views of others. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's aims and the fundamental British values. The oldest pupils like to volunteer for jobs and help younger children. Members of the school council, in particular, enjoy carrying out their responsibilities.
- Displays around the school and work in books show pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example when they learn about different faiths and take part in high-profile events with other schools. The participation of the school in the

Bedfordshire festival of music, speech and drama and other important celebrations makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development.

- Pupils are very active. Many love physical education, dance and sports. Some pupils were able to explain the impact of dance on their health and general well-being. Pupils were observed to be very active over the lunch break and doing very well in their physical education.
- Pupils' personal development is not yet outstanding because pupils are not often curious about their learning and rarely ask questions to further their understanding. In addition, some pupils lack confidence and rely heavily on the support of additional adults, despite their above-average ability. These pupils are not self-assured learners.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils listen attentively to adults and to each other. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Behaviour in lessons is very good.
- Children have only spent about three weeks in the Reception class. They already know and follow the school's routines. They respond well to instructions. Older pupils were observed behaving very safely on the school's playground and around the school. When walking to the church for the harvest festival, older pupils were each responsible for holding the hand of younger ones and behaviour was exemplary.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying. They said that they have no hesitation in telling an adult if they need help. No parents raised issues about behaviour and records show that incidents are extremely rare.
- Pupils want to attend school. However, in some classes, attendance is below average. Many parents have families abroad and extended holidays are affecting rates of attendance. A few parents are not dropping their children on time at the beginning of the school day and this affects their punctuality. The school and families must continue their efforts to reduce absence and improve punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The number of pupils in each class is too low to make reliable comparisons with national results. There are no pupils who are disadvantaged or in receipt of funding for additional needs.
- Pupils enter Year 1 with well-developed social skills. They are ready to learn and their stage of development is at least typical of pupils of their age. Pupils make good progress in their personal development and their learning.
- Pupils' progress in reading, writing, listening and numeracy is good. Progress in speaking is outstanding. This is because teachers develop this skill very well and pupils have many opportunities to speak in public and to express their own views. Overall, they develop their knowledge, skills and understanding at least as well as pupils nationally.
- In the Year 5 and 6 class, pupils demonstrate maturity in literacy and numeracy. They are able to develop reasoned arguments to support their ideas. They enjoy reading and do so

fluently and with the right intonation, often above the standards expected for their age. Across the school, most pupils demonstrate an increasing ability to solve problems, conduct fair scientific investigations and organise their own ideas in a coherent way.

- The most able pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Across all subjects of the curriculum, they underachieve when activities do not match their good prior knowledge or when lesson time is not planned well to deepen their learning.
- Staff provide well-targeted support to the few pupils who experience some difficulties in their learning. They make good progress from their starting points. Pupils are successful and usually gain places at the secondary schools of their choice.
- Pupils' good progress is evident across a number of subjects in addition to English and mathematics, including art and design, history, physical education, French and science. Pupils make very good progress in the creative areas of learning.
- Work to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils is not always sufficiently ambitious or systematically planned across all subjects of the curriculum. Considering the well-developed skills of pupils on entry to the school and their good attitudes to learning, the proportion making better-than-average progress is not high enough.

Early years provision

Good

- Parents are pleased with the provision in the Reception class. They are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning. The learning records and work kept electronically are shared with families, who are well informed about their children's development.
- Children are well prepared for Year 1 in all aspects of their development. Their personal and social development is good. They learn to listen and speak with confidence. They are well prepared to apply their skills in writing and use of number.
- Children have a lot of fun in the early years. The learning environment is exciting. The school's well-maintained and safe grounds enable children to explore and develop their understanding of the world around them.
- Some children join Reception from the school's own nursery and almost all have had prior pre-school learning experiences in early years settings. Children's stage of development is usually typical for children of that age, although the current cohort includes a number of children who are very articulate and confident. Children learn well and make good progress from their varied starting points. By the end of the Reception Year, almost all attain a good level of development.
- A new coordinator took responsibility for the leadership of the early years at the beginning of this academic year. With the support of the proprietor, she ensures that all the independent school standards are met in relation to the early years provision. Effective planning shows that work complies with the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- The leader works well with the Reception class teacher and her leadership is quickly becoming effective. Staff are determined to do their best for children and parents. They ensure that children are kept safe and well cared for. Safeguarding children is given a high priority.

- Children behave well. They quickly learn about the school's routines. They share toys and play together sensibly. They learn to respect older pupils. Their participation in the many whole-school outings and events teaches them how to behave in large groups. This was exemplified very well when children learned how to cope with losing in physical education. Their work and attitudes to learning during the dance workshop were excellent, not least due to the outstanding guidance of their older classmates.
- Teaching is good. Staff engage children in conversation to develop their speaking and listening skills. Children who lack confidence in speaking benefit from precise questioning and modelling that adults provide through their interaction with them. The Reception class is well resourced but space is tight. The room requires some reorganisation to make children's learning even better.
- Staff give opportunities for children to read, write and use numbers, but higher expectations and more direction are necessary to accelerate the progress of the most able children. Assessment is not used well enough to identify most-able children quickly and match learning to their needs.
- The new leader and the proprietor prepared a list of things to improve. The timescales for implementation and systems to monitor the impact on progress and outcomes for children are not clearly identified. The website is not used well enough to inform parents and prospective parents about the work of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	109723
DfE registration number	823/6007
Inspection number	10026060

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	Primary
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mrs Patricia Plater
Headteacher	Mrs Ellie Graham
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,119
Telephone number	01582 661 471
Website	www.stgeorgesdunstable.co.uk
Email address	info@stgeorgesdunstable.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2011

Information about this school

- St George's is a non-selective, co-educational school for pupils aged four to 11. There are currently 35 pupils on roll.
- The school is situated in Dunstable, Bedfordshire.
- The school provides full-time education, and before-school and after-school care.
- This is a small family-run school. The school does not have a governing body.
- There are four classes: one for Reception, one for Years 1 and 2, one for Years 3 and 4 and one for Years 5 and 6.

- The headteacher took up her appointment on 1 September 2017.
- Very few pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school aims to:
 - foster a love of learning and aspiration to succeed in both academic and creative subjects
 - build confidence and develop individual talent
 - build cooperative, open working relationships with families.
- Children aged three to four years, together with the under-threes, are registered in the Little Steps Nursery, which is part of the school and on the same site. The nursery and registered childcare were inspected in June 2016 and judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classes. She scrutinised examples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects, including English and mathematics. She attended the school's harvest festival at the local church and a whole-school dance lesson.
- The inspector held discussions with the proprietor, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the early years coordinator and the coordinator for special educational needs. She also considered responses submitted by 12 members of staff to an inspection questionnaire.
- The inspector talked with a number of parents at the parents' evening and at the beginning of the school day. She took account of four responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. The school's own survey of parents' views was also considered.
- The inspector held a meeting with members of the school council. She met many pupils informally and listened to some of them read.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards and with the requirements of the early years foundation stage.

Inspection team

Marianick Ellender-Gelé, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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