

The St Anne's College Grammar School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	888/6001
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URN for social care	SCO42801
Inspection number	333363
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI
Social care inspector	Michael McCleave

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005). The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

This was a light touch educational inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

St Anne's College Grammar School is a long-established school located in Lytham St Anne's. The school has occupied its present site since 1902. The current proprietors took over the school in 1987. The school's philosophy is that 'learning should be first and foremost an enjoyable experience' and the school sets out to provide a 'friendly, welcoming environment'. The overall aim of the college as stated in its prospectus is: 'to use the teaching skills of the staff to obtain the highest levels of motivation in each of the pupils in the hope that it will remain with them for the rest of their lives.'

The school comprises a kindergarten, an infant and junior school and a senior school. There are two headteachers, one for the junior and one for the senior school. There are 85 pupils on roll, including five boarders. Twelve pupils are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Reception-aged children are taught alongside the Year 1 pupils. There are five students in the sixth form.

There are fewer pupils than at the time of the previous inspection. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and who are foreign nationals are greater. Nine pupils have a statement of special educational needs, related to their learning or emotional difficulties. Twelve pupils do not have English as their first language.

The junior and senior departments of the school occupy different floors of a large, detached building. The kindergarten, school hall and gymnasium and the boarding house are in adjacent buildings. There is a playground for older pupils and a designated outdoor area and garden area for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

An affiliated English tutorial language centre occupies a room in the school. This is separately registered. The pupils on roll there attend lessons at St Anne's.

Evaluation of the school

The St Anne's College Grammar School provides good quality education. The school meets all but one of the education regulations. Pupils are well cared for. Small classes and good teaching ensure that they make good progress. The curriculum is satisfactory: the school stresses the acquisition of basic skills and pupils reach above average standards by the time that they leave. It is indeed a small, friendly school. The provision for the Early Years Foundation stage is good. The quality of boarding is good. The school meets all but one of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory and it meets all the regulations. The school emphasises the development of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics from the outset. The curriculum in both junior and senior schools is very closely based on the national curriculum, with appropriate coverage of science, information and communication technology (ICT), humanities subjects including religious education, creative subjects such as art and music, sport and physical education. French is taught from the junior school upwards. The curriculum is delivered through published materials related to the national curriculum, together with supplementary worksheets and lesson plans prepared by the teachers. Visits out of school to places of cultural, scientific or historical interest add breadth to the curriculum.

In the senior school the curriculum focuses on preparation for GCSE examinations at the end of form Upper 5 (Year 11). Pupils typically enter between five and ten GCSEs and there is a satisfactory range of subjects to choose from. Pupils achieve well in public examinations. This emphasis on academic subjects fosters good development of pupils' economic well-being. However, there are very limited opportunities for vocational or work-related learning: a recently established link with a local college provides an appropriate vocational course for one pupil, running alongside the subjects in school. Good numbers of pupils follow examination courses in ICT.

In the sixth form a limited range of AS and A-level subjects is offered, tailored to students' needs. Typically these include mathematics and a science subject, such as biology.

For students whose first language is not English there is an additional programme of English available organised through the language school. These lessons take place in St Anne's school buildings. This supports the students well in helping them to develop their skills in English and so be able to succeed in their chosen examination subjects.

Students who have special educational needs follow the same curriculum as their peers, but with supplementary help organised by the school's special needs coordinator. This reflects the pupils' written statements of provision that specify what must be arranged to meet their needs. Teaching assistants help these pupils in

lessons on a one-to-one basis and the coordinator provides a planned programme of supplementary lessons by withdrawing individual pupils from a class, on a regular basis to target their particular needs. Further specialist support is provided through the local authority's inclusion service, if required. The curriculum for statemented pupils supports the pupils well, enabling them to make good and sometimes outstanding progress.

Physical education is taught in the school hall. As there are no other facilities for sport at the school; pupils are taken weekly to local sport centres for a range of sports, including hockey, basketball, football, swimming and for older pupils, fitness and dance. A few parents commented in their questionnaires that the range of extra-curricular activities offered at the school was restricted and pupils commented that transport time eats into the time available for sport. Inspectors judge that the provision for sport is satisfactory and contributes to keeping pupils healthy.

There is a programme for personal, social and health education taught mainly through a weekly tutorial period, supplemented by occasional talks from visitors such as health professionals or the police. This programme is satisfactory overall and contributes to preparing pupils for adult life. It is more comprehensive and better planned in the junior school than in the senior school. Pupils in the senior school say that there is insufficient information provided to meet their changing needs as teenagers and too few opportunities for meaningful discussion of issues, such as relationships or about the dangers of substance abuse, smoking and alcohol.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge and skills are good. Small classes ensure that individual attention can be given to pupils. This helps pupils' academic progress, but at times pupils are over-dependent on their teachers. This restricts the rate at which they develop independent learning skills.

Pupils make good progress. They reach above average standards by the time they leave school at the end of Year 11, or at the end of the sixth form. Some pupils achieve standards that are well above average. Pupils make particularly good progress in the basic skills of English and mathematics, reflecting the emphasis placed on these in the curriculum.

The progress made by individual pupils in lessons varies because there is an increasingly wide range of abilities and pupil needs in the school, but it is never less than satisfactory. Where lessons are exciting and really interest the pupils, their progress is good. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons that are fun or where there are opportunities for active learning. In a good AS-level biology lesson observed, for example, pupils were fascinated by the practical experiments and were being encouraged to think for themselves how effectively the plants might be adapting to their environment. Some individual pupils make outstanding progress academically and socially.

The progress of foreign national students is also good, though it is sometimes constrained by their ability to express themselves in English. However, the school and teachers address this well by providing specific instruction in English and through skilful questioning.

The quality of teaching, though good overall, is inconsistent. A minority of lessons lack pace or are rather dull. For example, where pupils copy charts or information unnecessarily from the board when this could have been prepared ahead or materials better differentiated to meet a child's particular needs.

The responses to parental questionnaires show that parents are satisfied that their children are making good progress at the school. Parents praise the difference the school has made to their children's happiness and well-being.

Resources are adequate. However, the ICT room is cramped for some classes and there is no internet access except in the library. This restricts senior pupils' independent learning in school. The teacher compensates well for this by encouraging pupils to follow up work at home. Boarding pupils have appropriate access to the internet in the boarding house.

Assessment is satisfactory. Parents receive regular, informative reports on pupils' progress. Teachers' marking is effective, often with helpful comments on how pupils might improve their work. As classes are small teachers know their pupils well and generally plan lessons that meet their needs. However, the school's current systems do not easily show how an individual pupil is making progress over time in a particular skill or subject. The school has recently introduced a more effective tracking system to monitor pupils' progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with strengths in their moral and social development. However, inspectors do not agree with the school's assessment that this is outstanding overall. The school does not meet one of the regulations: it does not assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions.

Pupils who transfer from other schools are helped to settle in and to be able achieve well. This includes pupils who have specific educational needs, or emotional problems related to being at school. Inspectors agree with the local authority and parents that these pupils develop confidence and self-esteem particularly well.

Pupils say that they like being in a small school because of the quiet atmosphere and the help that teachers can give them. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are good. This encourages pupils to learn. Pupils enjoy school and their behaviour is good. The school stresses courtesy and good manners. The headteachers set the tone, providing good direction in moral education through assemblies, reinforced by the example staff set to pupils. Pupils get involved in activities related to their local community, or for charity fundraising.

Provision for spiritual education is satisfactory. Assemblies are Christian in character, with some references to other cultures and religions at times of important religious festivals. However, pupils in the senior school do not learn enough about other faiths and in discussion display little awareness of other cultures. The school is missing opportunities to draw on the diversity of its pupils in order to heighten all pupils' awareness of different cultures and religions.

The school council has been recently reinstated. This is welcomed by pupils as a means to allow them to make a more positive contribution in the future to school life and as a channel for their views.

Being a small school, although pupils' social development is good, the full development of their wider social skills is restricted. There are few opportunities to meet or work with pupils from other schools, in competitive sport or other links, or through any work-related learning, for example to help to develop team-working skills.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Parents' questionnaires show that they are very satisfied with the care that their children receive. The staff care well for the pupils, who are known and valued as individuals. Relationships are good and so children quickly settle into school routines. Appropriate records and checks are in place to help safeguard pupils' welfare, including those required for the recruitment of staff. Pupils are appropriately supervised. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school and that they like being in a small, friendly school. The provision for keeping pupils healthy is satisfactory.

The school complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is good overall.

Children's attainment on entry is variable. Some children are high-attaining whilst others have limited language and communication skills. Achievement is good. Children make good progress, as shown by their reading scores, writing samples and numeracy work. Children's key skills in these areas have improved significantly since the start of the academic year. By the time that children enter Year 1 they are working securely at the level expected for their age. Some are beyond or well beyond this level.

The school has very good partnerships with parents. A rigorous system has been introduced recently to track children's progress across different areas of learning. It is too soon for this to demonstrate impact on children's achievement and standards.

There is good provision to help children learn and develop, with strong emphasis on developing basic communication, language and numeracy skills. Music, role-play and developing children's awareness of the wider world are equally important.

Children learn in a safe setting, with appropriately trained staff who meet current safeguarding requirements. Staff have good knowledge about assessment, safeguarding and outdoor learning. The school has rightly identified the need to develop further the garden and outdoor area into an attractive and stimulating addition to the learning environment. A good start has been made: children are beginning to grow plants and vegetables, but the full potential for developing cross-curricular skills has yet to be developed.

There is a good balance in lessons between teacher-led learning activities and children choosing for themselves. Tasks in lessons are generally well matched to individual abilities although at times do not challenge the higher-attaining children sufficiently. Staffing levels are generous and so children benefit from much individual attention. However, they sometimes lack independence when working, relying too heavily on the staff. The school has identified this as an area for development. Occasionally teaching assistants are not used to best effect.

The promotion of children's welfare is good. Children have very good awareness of what constitutes a good diet and the importance of keeping fit and healthy. They have a good sense of personal safety and look out for one another in a mature and caring way. Personal development and behaviour are good. They are keen, enthusiastic learners who concentrate well and readily share equipment and resources. They are confident in making their own choices.

Leadership and management are good. The staff are well trained and form a cohesive team with accurate insight into what is needed to further improve the provision. The headteacher of the junior school oversees the Early Years Foundation Stage but systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision are too informal.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The quality of boarding at St Anne's School is good and the school meets all but one of the National Minimum Standards.

The boarders, the majority of whom are from abroad, are happy living in the boarding accommodation and are very well supported by staff who work in the boarding house. The small size of the boarding population enables the staff to provide individual support and for group living to be a positive experience. This fosters boarders' respect for one another. Bullying is not an issue. Relationships between the boarders and the house staff are very good. Warm mutual respect is evident. The boarders are cared for in a safe, friendly and comfortable environment. Staff clearly take their responsibilities seriously and ensure that boarders' welfare is safeguarded.

Boarders' health and well-being needs are fully met. Procedures for the management of any medication are sound, and appropriate records are maintained. Boarding staff are trained in first aid and food hygiene. The meals prepared in the boarding house are nutritionally balanced, and the three-week cycle of menus offers the boarders a choice of food including a vegetarian option at every meal time.

There is a sound understanding of safeguarding, and boarding staff are aware of the process to follow in reporting any allegations or suspicions of abuse. The school has a designated person who is responsible for coordinating any child protection concerns, and information from the Local Safeguarding Children Board is available for staff to consult. The designated person has completed the NSPCC trainers' course and is responsible for ensuring that all staff are trained in child protection awareness.

A number of boarders spend out of term time with a guardian in the local area, arranged by their parents. The guardian also provides accommodation for many of the day students at the school. The school currently takes no responsibility for monitoring the well-being of these students. There is no record of a local authority contact for the monitoring of this lodging arrangement under private fostering regulations. Steps are being initiated by the school to formalise monitoring of lodging accommodation to ensure that the welfare of the children is safeguarded.

The boarders enjoy a variety of activities organised with the house parent and headteacher. Trips out to places of interest are provided to enhance the boarders' understanding and appreciation of the local countryside and English traditions. These activities also support their personal development and help to increase their confidence. Shopping trips to city centres are very popular. In summer numerous outdoor activities are organised. Boarders are encouraged to express their views about boarding life, and regular house meetings afford them the opportunity to share their opinions and ideas with the headteacher and house parent. This works well and boarders genuinely feel that they are listened to and take an active part in influencing change. There are numerous opportunities for informal sharing of information with the house staff during non-teaching time.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a strong commitment towards ensuring these are promoted within the boarding house. All the children are encouraged to show respect for each other. Cultural differences are celebrated, especially so in the boarding house, where the children are from a diverse range of backgrounds. Meals prepared for the boarders often reflect their cultural heritage and they appreciate and enjoy this. For example, during particular celebratory events, such as Chinese New Year, the house parent will prepare a special Chinese meal for all the boarders. The school provides extra tuition for those boarders who experience difficulty with English. This not only helps to improve their language skills, but importantly it boosts their confidence.

Contact with families is encouraged since the majority of boarders are from abroad. Modern technology ensures that cost-effective methods such as e-mail and video-type conferencing are popular means of maintaining contact. A payphone is available for boarders' use.

The quality of boarding accommodation is good. It meets National Minimum Standards and there are appropriate security measures in place. Bedrooms afford a certain level of privacy. Each bedroom is suitably furnished with a desk and chair to enable boarders to study. Showering and toilet facilities are located close to bedrooms and these are maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

There is a suitable health and safety policy in place, and risk assessments covering the numerous activities that take place. These have been appropriately reviewed. Checks are carried out to ensure that the fire safety alarms and equipment are in working order. Students confirm that they have been involved in fire evacuations and are familiar with the process to follow.

The management arrangements in the boarding house are appropriate to ensure the safety of the boarders. There is always a back-up member of boarding staff on call if another adult is required at the boarding house. Boarders confirm that they feel safe and well cared for, and do not report any concerns about their care.

There is limited ongoing training for staff in boarding practice. This has been recognised by the school and is currently being reviewed by the head teacher with a view to introducing a more formal training structure.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- ensure that it assists pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions(standard 2(e))

In order to meet the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools the school must:

- ensure that opportunities are provided for ongoing training in boarding practice for staff with responsibility for boarding. (NMS 34.7)

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Develop an efficient system for recording pupils' progress that can show more easily the progress individual pupils make in skills over time.
- Review the personal, social and health education programme to ensure that this fully meets pupils' needs, particularly in the senior school.
- Implement the plans to further improve and use the outdoor accommodation as a valuable and stimulating learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		√		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		√		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		√		
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		√		
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		√		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		√		

The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		√		
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School details

Name of school	The St Anne's College Grammar School		
DCSF number	888/6001		
Unique reference number	119819		
Type of school	Primary and secondary boarding		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1886		
Age range of pupils	3-18		
Gender of pupils	MI		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 45	Girls: 36	Total: 81
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Number of boarders	Boys: 3	Girls: 2	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 7	Girls: 2	Total: 9
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£17, 000		
Address of school	293 Clifton Drive South Lytham St Anne's Lancashire FY8 1HN		
Telephone number	01253725815		
Fax number	01253782250		
Email address	principal@collgram.u-net.com		
Headteacher	Mr S R Welsby and Mrs S M Welsby		
Proprietor	St Anne's College Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI		
Dates of inspection	10–11 March 2009		