

Inspection of a good school: St Catherine's School and College

Grove Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1TT

Inspection dates:

30 January to 1 February 2024

Outcome

St Catherine's School and College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being a part of this caring school community. They feel safe and secure here, knowing that they are supported by their teachers and other school staff. As well as a broad academic curriculum, pupils benefit from a focus on wider goals such as communication skills and preparation for adult life. They are well prepared to take their next steps by the time they leave the school.

The wide range of pupils' talents is reflected in the extra-curricular offer at the school. Activities such as sports, choir, forest school and swimming are used as opportunities to further develop pupils' social, communication and motor skills. Students in the sixth form particularly benefit from opportunities to do similar activities in the wider community, for example using local gym facilities.

Parents and carers are incredibly positive about the school. Many of the pupils who attend here do so following challenging experiences in mainstream settings. In responding to Ofsted's survey, many parents told us about the transformational impact this school has had on their children. One parent wrote: 'Without exception, the staff are dedicated, committed and devoted to doing all they can for each child in their care. They are experienced, capable, knowledgeable and patient.'

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

Pupils flourish at this school due to the strong emphasis on developing their communication skills and the way that they interact with others. Staff at the school are ambitious for each pupil, refusing to place barriers on what they can achieve. The school's curriculum progresses coherently as pupils move from the school's primary phase, right through to the sixth form. This progression is adapted so that it takes place at the right pace for each pupil. From typically low starting points, pupils go on to achieve an impressive range of academic qualifications.

Teachers and therapeutic staff work together seamlessly to develop a precise understanding of each child and their needs. This includes the use of a wide range of assessments as well as effective use of the information in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. The school's curriculum and assessment systems have been carefully considered to celebrate each step forward that pupils make and identify any significant barriers. This approach is particularly well developed in relation to pupils' speech and communication, where the school excels.

Over the past year, the school has developed a new approach to phonics. The way this is delivered is very effective, enabling pupils to become increasingly confident readers. Teachers have been trained to deliver this curriculum consistently well. Where pupils need additional support with reading, this is identified quickly and these pupils benefit from a range of targeted and effective interventions, including some led by the school's speech and language therapy team. Following the success of this work, the school is in the process of developing its approach to teaching writing. While there is some strong work in this area, there is not yet a coherent and consistently effective approach used across all classes and subject areas. Sometimes the activities chosen by teachers do not prepare pupils as well as they could to develop more extended written outcomes.

The behaviour of pupils at the school is exemplary. The school is proactive in recognising 'behaviours for character', for example rewarding pupils who show kindness, respect and teamwork. Pupils are highly motivated by the system of collecting positive behaviour points and enjoy the sense of competition that this brings about. Pupils' attitudes to school and their learning are impressive. They attend school regularly and arrive promptly.

Pupils' wider development is prioritised at this school and is an area of considerable strength. The school has thought in extensive detail about what it wants pupils to know, for example to support their moral and cultural development. They have broken this knowledge down precisely, taking into account the special educational needs and/or disabilities of their pupils. The impact of this work is evident in the way pupils interact with each other and school staff.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned and delivered careers programme which runs throughout the school. This includes visits from employers and opportunities to participate in meaningful work experience activities.

Staff are consistently positive about their experience of working at the school. They know that leaders listen to their views and consider their well-being when implementing new policies. This includes governors, who regularly gather feedback about this and other aspects of the school. There is a strong sense of community among the staff team built on the shared purpose of helping each child to fulfil their potential.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approach to developing written outcomes is not consistently effective across all subjects. Sometimes the activities chosen by teachers do not prepare pupils as well as they could to develop more extended written outcomes. The school should implement the plans to introduce a more coherent strategy for the teaching of writing across the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	118226
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	10296249
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Graham Pengelly
Principal	Sarah Thompson
Website	www.stcatherines.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Catherine’s School and College is a non-maintained school specialising in supporting pupils with speech, language and communication needs. Most pupils also have additional needs, including autism. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is based on two sites. The main site is located at Grove Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1TT. The second site for pupils in the sixth form is located at Boniface Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1PN.
- The school is operated by St Catherine’s charity. There is a board of charity trustees who also form the school’s governing body.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school includes residential provision, which is currently used by 19 pupils.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with a range of senior staff, including the school's principal and vice-principal. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication, mathematics and personal development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the residential provision.
- The inspectors only inspected the education provision at this school.

Inspection team

Chris Ellison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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