

St George's School A Church of England Business & Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133638
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	360551
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Shirley Gornall HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	980
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Wren
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Warner
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons taught by 38 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents including planning, assessment records, monitoring reports and the school's self-evaluation. They analysed 386 questionnaires received from parents and carers, 80 from staff and 151 from students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which students of all abilities make progress, particularly in mathematics.
- The impact of the school's business and enterprise specialist status on the students' experiences and outcomes.
- The impact of the school's new leadership structure on raising students' attainment.

Information about the school

St George's Church of England Business and Enterprise College is an average sized and steadily growing voluntary aided secondary school, situated in the south of Blackpool. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The school was first designated as a specialist Business and Enterprise College in 2007 and was redesignated in 2010. It received the Warwick University Excellence in Enterprise award in 2009 and has gained the Healthy Schools standard.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St George's Church of England Business College is a good and improving school. Under the strong and principled leadership of the headteacher, provision and outcomes have improved since the previous inspection. Students enjoy all that the school has to offer and their achievement is good. Attainment has been low but there has been a strong trajectory of improvement so that it is now close to the national average. There is still some variability in standards of attainment in different subjects. Students make very good progress in English. Progress in mathematics has been weaker but has now accelerated as a result of determined action to improve engagement, teaching and learning. The school's Christian ethos underpins its work as an inclusive, harmonious community where all students are treated as unique individuals. Students' behaviour is outstanding, characterised by caring compassionate attitudes and a strong sense of pride in the school. Students feel extremely safe and speak highly of the efforts made by staff to ensure their well-being. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average. The school's specialism in business and enterprise makes a powerful contribution to students' experiences and outcomes. They develop entrepreneurial skills in a rich variety of contexts including events that have earned them regional recognition. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is good overall, with some that is satisfactory and a small proportion that is outstanding. Relationships between staff and students are excellent and teachers' assessment of their work is generally very accurate. On some occasions, however, the degree of challenge provided in lessons is insufficient to promote high-level achievement. A good curriculum has been developed, with an increased range of courses available at Key Stage 4 to meet individual needs. Take-up for modern foreign languages is low, however. Outstanding care, guidance and support, including that provided through partnership with a wide variety of agencies, contribute greatly to students' happiness, security and self-esteem and their good progress.

The headteacher and senior leadership team provide intelligent and determined leadership, articulating a vision which staff and students recognise and subscribe to. In partnership with the strong and supportive governing body, leaders at all levels ensure a climate in which students' self-esteem provides a strong foundation for achievement. They have a clear understanding of the school's performance and have taken measured and effective actions to reduce underachievement in significant areas and develop consistency of practice. However, there is still variability in achievement between some subjects. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, contributed to by leaders, teachers, support staff, students, parents and the local authority. The school has a clear track record of improvement since its previous inspection. Its success in tackling previous

underachievement, combined with its streamlined and intelligent management systems, mean that it has good capacity to sustain further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching improves still further so that a higher percentage is good and outstanding by:
 - encouraging creativity in lesson design
 - ensuring that expectations made of students are appropriately high and lessons are sufficiently challenging
 - ensuring that there are opportunities across the curriculum for students to extend their writing skills
 - using information and communication technology (ICT) more interactively in lessons to stimulate students' thinking and develop their ICT skills across the curriculum.
- Raise attainment by:
 - researching, developing and sharing good practice, particularly in the few subjects where standards are lower than the national average
 - increasing the proportion of students who achieve good qualifications in modern foreign languages.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enjoy what the school has to offer and achieve well from starting points which have been generally below average but are rising. Attainment was particularly low in 2008 but has risen strongly since then. In 2010, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE qualifications at A * to C grades including English and mathematics was much closer to the national average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE qualifications at A * G grades is consistently higher than that found nationally and testifies to the school's inclusive ethos. Students' attainment is high in business studies, health and social care and English literature. Attainment in a minority of subjects is below the national average. Very few students study a modern foreign language at Key Stage 4 and attainment in this area is depressed.

School data and lesson observations confirm that students make good progress, especially in English, where rates of progress consistently and significantly exceed those found nationally. Progress in mathematics has been weaker but has now accelerated as a result of determined action to improve engagement, teaching and learning. The proportion of students meeting ambitious targets in mathematics has increased as a result of a number of well-considered measures. Students report that their enjoyment and understanding of mathematics has been enhanced by a broadening of teaching styles and the provision of a more interesting curriculum and targeted work. The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

that of their peers due to high-quality support which is carefully matched to their needs. Students behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the site. They are courteous, polite and helpful, arriving punctually to lessons and demonstrating high levels of concentration. When working in groups, they give feedback on each other's performance in a sensitive and constructive way. Students report unanimously that incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying are extremely rare and are dealt with immediately and effectively. They feel extremely safe in the school and take responsibility for their own and each other's well-being, including playing their part in ensuring that their environment is spotlessly clean and tidy.

During their time at St George's, students develop attitudes and skills that equip them well for the world of work. Their attendance is above the national average and very few students are persistently absent. Many students develop entrepreneurial skills directly as a result of the school's specialist status, including taking responsibility for the design and organisation of a recent 'prom fayre' at a local hotel. Teams from the school regularly achieve success in regional enterprise events. Crucially, they also have a well developed moral sense and appreciate the principles of fair trade; the Watershed café, which has been developed by students, donates a substantial proportion of its profits to an international water charity. Students take on a variety of roles within their community, including as mentors, team leaders and representatives on the school council, sports council and spiritual council. Decisions they take influence the development of school policy, for example, in the provision of a pasta bar to encourage healthy eating. Students have developed good skills with regard to personal organisation. In general, their numeracy skills are not as well developed as their skills in speaking and reading. Extended writing skills are under-developed for some students.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection due to a continual focus on developing and sharing good practice within and beyond school. Professional development seminars led by staff and regular high-quality, in-house publications of case studies have broadened the repertoire of teaching styles. The majority of teaching is now securing good progress and learning, and some is outstanding. The best lessons are characterised by lively, engaging, creative teaching which challenges students to 'push themselves' to achieve high standards. In a highly effective English lesson, the teacher's enthusiastic insistence that students 'search your minds for exactly the right adjective' yielded high-quality discussion and the confidence to develop their own writing. In history, students responded particularly well when required to formulate and answer high-level open questions regarding the bombing of Hiroshima. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, the teacher's infectious passion for his subject was transferred to students and they made excellent progress in understanding unit conversions. Students who were challenged to 'make rainbows' in science made excellent progress by applying their skills in a genuine scientific inquiry. In satisfactory lessons, students behave very well and show high levels of concentration but they are not always appropriately challenged to think for themselves or produce extended written responses. There were few opportunities in the lessons observed by inspectors for students to make interactive use of ICT to develop or express their ideas.

Most students know their targets and have a good understanding of their next steps towards achieving them. Teachers' marking is good, including a balance of praise and advice on improvement. Students are increasingly able to make accurate assessments of their own work and that of their peers. In the majority of lessons, teachers meet the varying needs of students effectively, but on a few occasions they do not ensure that students have a clear grasp of a particular concept before moving on. There are also a few instances of learning not moving on at a rapid enough pace because activities are too slow and repetitive. The curriculum is broad, balanced and generally meets the needs of the students. Some personalised pathways have been developed at Key Stage 4 enabling students to gain vocational qualifications, in subjects such as aeronautical engineering, through collaborative arrangements with local colleges and other providers. Opportunities for students to develop spiritually, socially and morally are integral to the school's curriculum. Students enjoy working cooperatively and collaboratively in various subjects. Reading skills are well supported, including through the provision of catch-up programmes for students at risk of underachieving. The development of extended

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writing across the curriculum is less well developed. The proportion of students studying a modern foreign language at Key Stage 4 is very small and is restricted to French. Students agree that the quality of care, guidance and support they receive is a major strength of the school, commenting in discussion that it is, 'better than excellent.' They are very appreciative of the outstanding support they receive at transition points from primary school and leading to college entry or the world of work. Students who are potentially vulnerable are exceptionally well supported and nurtured so that they can enjoy all aspects of school life. A wide range of opportunities are provided to foster self-esteem and interventions are considered sensitively, balancing each student's learning and social needs. The school's partnerships with external agencies enables students to access a range of services to help them make choices with regard to their own health, lifestyles and futures.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong, principled leadership. She is highly respected by the staff, students, parents and carers. One parent commented, 'The headteacher is amazing. She really believes in our children and works tirelessly for them.' The headteacher is fully supported by a skilled and experienced senior leadership team. Several new departmental leaders have been appointed and have benefited from well-considered induction and coaching programmes. The reconfiguration of roles and responsibilities during the last two years has had a direct impact on students' achievements because it has enabled much closer monitoring of performance and swifter intervention and support. School leaders have a firm focus on raising achievement and have developed very clear and consistently implemented systems, including demonstrating quality and ensuring accountability. There is still variability in the quality of teaching and students' achievements across subjects; this is being tackled by the school's leaders.

Governors provide effective support and ensure that strategic decisions are properly considered. The Chair of the Governing Body is integral to the school's spiritual life and has a major role in maintaining strong relationships with the local community. Equality of opportunity is ensured, for example, through the school's curriculum policies and through interventions that support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities in accessing all that is provided by school. Although girls tend to perform

rather better than boys, there are no significant differences in the achievement of other groups. Students are adamant that discrimination of any form is not tolerated. Safeguarding procedures are robust and related policies are kept under close review. Highly-effective partnerships have been developed with a wide variety of agencies to ensure that students' individual needs are met. For example, excellent co-ordinated support provided to students in Key Stage 4 ensures that their transition to the next stage in education, employment or training is very successful.

The school is fully aware of its own context and contributes well to community cohesion. It is harmonious, inclusive and increasingly outward looking. Strong links have been developed with the immediate community, for example, through the establishment of a garden shared with local residents to grow fruit and vegetables. Relationships have been forged further afield through visits to different places of worship and through the school's impressive international charitable work. The school is well placed to build on its recent strong improvement and make further gains. One teacher spoke of the school's, 'real transformation due to hard work, dedication and teamwork'. High morale and increasing ambition are palpable throughout the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The percentage of parents and carers who completed questionnaires was much higher than average. The vast majority of those who responded say that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. They are pleased with the quality of teaching and care their children receive and feel that the school is well led. One commented,

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'The school has a great ethos and my child is extremely happy. Staff at St George's genuinely care.' This view was echoed by many other parents and carers. A very small minority feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors took particular note of this view in observing behaviour in lessons and around the school building and in the school's records. They found behaviour to be outstanding and its management to be sensitive and effective.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St George's School A Church of England Business & Enterprise College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 386 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 980 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	25	250	65	26	7	8	2
The school keeps my child safe	142	37	226	59	8	2	3	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	139	36	201	52	33	9	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	117	30	218	56	27	7	6	2
The teaching is good at this school	120	31	233	60	18	5	5	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	102	26	230	60	33	9	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	70	18	250	65	44	11	3	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	109	28	221	57	18	5	6	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	96	25	247	64	23	6	7	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	135	35	187	48	34	9	8	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	76	20	229	59	37	10	5	1
The school is led and managed effectively	146	38	211	55	10	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	144	37	196	51	22	6	9	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St George's School, A Church of England Business & Enterprise College,
Blackpool, FY4 4PH

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We were extremely impressed by your caring and sensible behaviour and the great pride you rightly take in your school. Thank you to those of you who gave up time to speak to us and those who completed the questionnaire. We agree with you that your leaders and teachers provide you with an exceptionally high standard of care and support, keep you safe and prepare you well for life beyond school. Many of you willingly take on responsibilities, such as being members of the school's range of councils, and you make a major contribution to the very positive way in which the school is regarded by your local community.

The inspection team consider St George's Church of England Business and Enterprise College to be a good school. It provides you with a good standard of education and most of you make good progress. Aspects of the school's work are outstanding and there have been many major improvements over the last few years. The way in which the school's business and enterprise specialism has been developed is very impressive. The Watershed café is an excellent example of how you behave as ethical entrepreneurs, making a difference to your school community while supporting international aid.

We have identified some points for improvement. First, we have asked the school to increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching. You can help with this by letting your teachers know the sorts of activity that really help you to think and learn best. Second, we have asked the school to consider how results can be improved further in some subjects and how modern foreign languages can be developed so that more of you leave school with good qualifications in this area.

Please continue to support your school as strongly as you do. On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector

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