

Inspection of St Anthony's School

Woodlands Lane, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 5PA

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this highly ambitious school. They happily attend school regularly and feel safe because they know that adults here will do what is best for them. Pupils receive expert and bespoke support. This includes high-quality therapy and skilled communication support. It is because of this that pupils here achieve exceptionally well as independent and enthusiastic learners and move on to ambitious next steps.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent in all areas of the school. They develop a strong sense of why it is important to behave well. The school's well-planned approach to support behaviour really helps them with this. Sometimes, pupils do find it hard to regulate their emotions. This happens rarely, but when it does, staff are sensitive and skilful in the support they provide. Pupils are aware of and appreciate the high expectations that staff have for them here. They work very hard to meet these both in and outside of the classroom.

Pupils' personal development is at the core of everything that happens at the school. Through the precisely planned community trips and their personal and social development lessons, pupils learn the skills they need to make a positive contribution to society.

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

The school has put in place an innovative curriculum that is extremely well matched to the needs of the pupils. It is well sequenced and extremely ambitious. The specific knowledge and experiences that each pupil needs to be ready for the next stage in their learning are carefully mapped out. This careful planning starts in the early years, where adapted activities spark children's curiosity and interest. It is in this phase that they learn how to interact and communicate through well-executed sensory activities. From this, the foundations for future learning are established and they are ready to succeed in Year 1.

Reading is an integral part of the school's curriculum. All staff are trained to be expert teachers of phonics. Phonics teaching is ambitious and highly personalised to each individual pupil. Staff accurately check pupils' phonics knowledge and gather information from these assessments. From this, they proficiently map out not just what each pupil will learn, but the way in which they should learn it, based on their needs. Along with regular story and reading time, these approaches mean that pupils develop their confidence and love of stories.

The school has a well-considered training package for staff. Staff have strong knowledge of special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as of their subjects. They are highly adept at making the most effective changes to lesson activities so that these are specifically matched to each pupil. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well through the entire curriculum.

Staff are determined that pupils will be ready for the next stages in their lives. As pupils move into the secondary phase, they receive a highly individualised and high-quality careers programme. As part of this, the school provides visits for pupils to places of work in their community early on in key stage 3. These vital encounters give pupils the skills and confidence they need to take part in appropriately matched work experience placements. In turn, these help to make pupils confident and prepared for their next steps.

Pupils' personal development is further enhanced through the school's strong therapeutic provision. Expert professionals are highly effective at knowing pupils' needs and matching specific support to help them. This begins in the early years with the very well implemented 'little group' sensory activities. It is here where pupils start to develop a sense of self awareness and awareness of others around them. This extensive work to develop pupils' ability to be part of a group builds through the school. It is from this starting point that pupils learn to understand and respect that people are different. In addition, they celebrate various cultural and religious festivals in school and are proudly inclusive.

The school has the highest expectations for how pupils will behave. Staff carefully provide the optimum environment to help pupils to self-regulate and be calm and focused. Pupils here are excited to learn. They have been expertly taught the rules and routines of the school and they actively encourage each other to behave well.

Staff are very motivated and proud to work at this school. They feel valued by leaders and know that their well-being is a high priority. Those that lead the school are extremely knowledgeable and experienced. They do not sit still in their work to constantly improve the provision, so it is the very best it can be for the pupils who come here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	126155
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10268082
Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Styles
Headteacher	Helen Ball
Website	www.st-ants.org
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 May 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Anthony's School provides specialist support for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and additional learning barriers, such as autism spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health and speech, language and communication needs. All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. They also met with the chair and one other member of the governing body.

- The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, music, physical education, and personal and social development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils in lessons and during play and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan and minutes from governors' meetings.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and carers and considered their responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also took account of a telephone call and an email.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Nina Marabese, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mark Bagust	Ofsted Inspector
Felix Rayner	Ofsted Inspector

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