

St. Bees School

Wood Lane, St. Bees, Cumbria CA27 0DS

Inspection dates

16–18 October 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- In the short time the school has been open, leaders, managers and staff have created a welcoming environment that is conducive to learning.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. Pupils feel safe and they are looked after well.
- Pupils thrive. They are enthusiastic and motivated in their learning. They are sociable, friendly and inclusive towards each other.
- Leaders provide a curriculum which gives pupils a range of interesting experiences. It supports the development of knowledge and skills that enable pupils to succeed in English and international examinations.
- Physical and outdoor education is a particular strength. The extensive grounds support a range of activities, including orienteering, swimming, golf, tennis, Eton Fives and cricket.
- Pupils' opportunities to develop their skills in art and music are not as extensive as opportunities in other subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social skills are promoted well. Pupils are respectful of different faiths and cultures but have limited understanding of them.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain and exemplify new learning skilfully. Pupils make good progress as a result.
- The most able pupils make consistently good or better progress. The progress of pupils who need a little more help is more sporadic. Sometimes they struggle to complete work.
- Leaders and staff promote pupils' physical and emotional well-being effectively. Pupils know they can go to staff with concerns. However, there are currently no established systems to check on and support pupils' specific personal development needs.
- Pupils' literacy, mathematical and computing skills are developed effectively. However, pupils' technological skills are developed less well across the curriculum.
- Leaders' systems for self-evaluation, school improvement planning and the management of teacher's performance are at an early stage of development.
- All the independent school standards are met. Leaders have the knowledge and skills to continue to improve the school. All leaders and staff are highly committed and enthusiastic for the school's future.

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?

- Develop leadership by:
 - honing the approach to school self-evaluation, development planning, the management of teachers' performance and planning for their professional development
 - improving systems to monitor and evaluate pupils' academic progress over time
 - further improving procedures to support pupils' individual personal development needs.
- Further develop the curriculum by:
 - extending pupils' opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in art and music
 - providing pupils with a greater range of opportunities to develop their technological skills in a range of subjects
 - improving pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures.
- Enhance teaching by making sure that any pupils who struggle to keep up in class are supported so that they make good progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- In the short time the school has been open, leaders, managers and staff have created a welcoming environment which enables pupils to thrive. Managers are planning the expansion of the school carefully. Leaders ensure that current pupils benefit from good teaching and an interesting curriculum. Leaders and managers have made sure that all the independent school standards are met, and they have the knowledge and skills to continue to improve the school.
- Staff are highly committed and enthusiastic about the venture. For example, they say that 'the opening of the school is an amazing opportunity for pupils and staff' and that 'everybody shares the same goal, which is to help pupils succeed happily'. Pupils are motivated to learn and are looked after well. Everyone involved is extremely proud of their school.
- Managers have ensured that the parts of the school building currently being used are refurbished to a high standard and are fit for purpose. The classrooms are inviting and conducive to learning. The school is being refurbished appropriately to accommodate an increasing number of pupils in the future.
- Managers have recruited staff carefully. They have successfully recruited an experienced and effective headteacher. Teaching staff have good levels of subject expertise and effective teaching skills. Support staff bring a range of skills and support the day-to-day operation of the school effectively.
- At this early stage in the school's operation, the systems for self-evaluation and school improvement planning are underdeveloped. Systems to check teaching and plan for staff training are informal and there are no written records. Consequently, teachers are not sure of the plans for their professional development. Teachers say that they find useful the verbal advice from the headteacher following drop-ins to lessons. They are keen to develop their skills.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills are assessed on entry to the school. Teachers use this information effectively, to plan teaching that builds on pupils' prior learning in each subject. However, there is not currently a school system to keep track of pupils' progress in all subjects. Furthermore, leaders do not have a clear understanding of pupils' personal development. This means that teachers and leaders do not have a holistic view of how well each pupil is managing and progressing across the whole curriculum.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a range of experiences that enthuse and motivate them. The school's 'fusion' curriculum is described as providing 'a global perspective that borrows the best from east and west'. It supports learning across a wide range of subjects, including those in the English and International Baccalaureates. Curriculum plans for international GCSEs (IGCSEs) are in place. These plans focus on developing knowledge and skills that will enable pupils to succeed in the United Kingdom and in an international context.
- The current Year 7 pupils are particularly enthusiastic about their outdoor education, Mandarin studies and performing arts. Music and art experiences are provided through themed days each term and in after-school clubs. However, pupils' knowledge and skills

in art and music are not developed as effectively as they are in other subjects.

- Physical and outdoor education is a particular strength in the school. The extensive grounds and facilities support a range of activities, including orienteering, swimming, golf, tennis, Eton Fives, cricket, football and rugby.
- Extra-curricular activities have a good impact on pupils' development. For example, activities such as Chinese arts and crafts, engineering, chess, guitar, sports and fitness training enrich pupils' learning and health.
- The school's values reflect British values. Democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, respect and tolerance are fundamental to the running of the school. Pupils learn about British society and public institutions in history and personal development lessons. Their learning is enhanced through trips and visits, such as to local courts.
- Links with St Bees Priory and frequent opportunities to connect with the diverse natural environment around the school, enrich pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are aware of moral issues and discuss them maturely. They develop effective social skills and are confident to give their views in a range of contexts.
- Pupils' cultural development is not promoted as strongly as their spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils are respectful of different faiths and cultures but have limited understanding of them. They know about and show respect for people with protected characteristics, as identified in the Equalities Act.
- Leaders and managers are outward looking. The headteacher has made contact with secondary headteachers in West Cumbria in order to share effective practice. Members of the local community are welcomed to use the school's facilities, and community links are developed through the parish council. The international dimension of the school is being developed through global links.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. For example, they say that: 'The staff are very committed to making the school and children thrive. The head is very approachable and has a realistic and balanced approach.' and 'My child goes into school beaming with pride and comes out with the same look... and that is priceless.' The inspection corroborates parents' positive views.

Governance

- Strategic leadership arrangements are clear. Strategic oversight and funding are provided through a partnership arrangement between St Bees School (a UK charitable trust) and Full Circle (a Chinese educational partner). The St Bees School Management Company Limited is made up of representatives from each group, directors of which manage and operate the school.
- Strategic leaders and managers have a clear vision to develop the school with international dimensions. They have invested in the school's infrastructure and refurbishment, and have planned carefully for its gradual expansion. They are ensuring that the school grows from a basis of good provision, with skilled staff in place.
- Directors have the knowledge and skills to challenge and support school leaders to keep improving the school. They are committed to attending training and developing links with other providers in order to develop their skills further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have created an encouraging and nurturing environment. Pupils are closely supervised and staff are vigilant in ensuring their safety and well-being in school. Pupils say they feel safe and are well looked after.
- Staff and trustees have completed training commensurate with their roles and responsibilities. All staff and trustees have completed safeguarding training and 'Prevent' duty training. The designated safeguarding leads have completed further training. Several staff are trained in fire safety and first aid.
- Safeguarding and related policies are published on the school's website. They are detailed and take full account of the latest government guidance.
- The school's premises are safe and secure. Leaders have taken appropriate measures to ensure that areas that are not yet refurbished are off-limits to pupils.
- Leaders engage effectively with parents to make sure that pupils are supported and safe. Pupils' attendance is tracked carefully and any absence is followed up promptly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and effective teaching skills. They explain and exemplify new learning skilfully. They use questioning successfully to probe and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Teachers use assessment effectively to plan teaching that builds on pupils' prior learning. They assess pupils' learning well during teaching. In mathematics, for example, pupils' misunderstandings relating to algebraic equations were promptly identified and addressed.
- Pupils' subject-specific vocabulary and conceptual understanding are developed well in all subjects. In history, for example, pupils gain a good understanding of historical concepts, such as chronology, bias, evidence, fact, and opinion.
- Pupils say that they enjoy the variety of activities and subjects that they experience across the school day. They enjoy and have made strong progress in Mandarin as a result of expert teaching. Teachers make the most of links between subjects, for example by teaching map skills in geography and then applying the skills in outdoor orienteering.
- Teachers set challenging work and have high expectations. Pupils who grasp new learning and finish their work quickly are provided with appropriate activities to deepen their learning. There are times, however, when pupils who need more support to build on their learning are not helped as effectively as they could be, and so they fall behind in their work.
- Pupils' literacy and mathematical skills are developed well in English and mathematics lessons, and across the curriculum. Pupils' computing skills are developed well in lessons in the computer suite. However, pupils are not supported well to develop their technological skills across the curriculum.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Constructive relationships between teachers and pupils support learning effectively. Pupils contribute confidently to discussion and have good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being are promoted well in subjects across the curriculum. In outdoor and sports education, for example, pupils learn resilience and perseverance as well as keeping fit. In personal development lessons, pupils learn about Aristotle's ideas on 'how to live a good life'.
- Pupils know they can go to staff for help and support with their learning or with any concerns. However, there are currently no established systems to check on and support individual pupils' specific personal development needs.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that staff make sure they are safe in school. Pupils know about different types of bullying, such as that based on prejudice. They are sure that there have been no incidents of bullying since the school opened.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe outside of school. They have been taught in depth about how to stay safe online and when using social media. They also know how to keep safe on roads and near railways.
- Careers education is planned in detail. The Year 7 pupils currently in school learn about different careers from visitors to the school. They are taught work-related skills in personal development lessons. Leaders are building connections with universities, industry and business to support work experience and work-related learning in the future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are motivated and cooperative in lessons. They adapt their behaviour appropriately to the tasks they are given. For example, they contribute confidently and competently in discussions. They concentrate on their work quietly when working independently.
- Occasionally, pupils' enthusiasm to put their views across means they do not listen to each other as well as they could. However, this does not disrupt learning.
- Pupils are sociable and friendly towards each other. They enjoy playing together at breaktimes and make sure that everyone feels included. Their behaviour around school is consistently good.
- Pupils' attendance is high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils have made good progress since the start of the school year. Teachers have used the baseline assessments effectively to build on pupils' prior learning.
- Pupils make good progress with their literacy and mathematical skills. They read widely to support their learning and for pleasure. Pupils' writing is fluent, well presented, and adapted appropriately for a range of different purposes and audiences. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and skills competently to reasoning and problem-solving tasks.
- Pupils' computing skills are developed effectively in computing lessons. However, their technology skills are not developed as effectively as their literacy and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils' progress is good in all the subjects they are taught regularly. Their progress is not as strong in art and music as these subjects are not covered in depth.
- The most able pupils are challenged appropriately. They make consistently good and sometimes better progress. The progress of pupils who need a little more help is more sporadic. Sometimes they struggle to complete work and so fall behind the rest of the class.
- The varied and motivating curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	145292
DfE registration number	909/6004
Inspection number	10053745

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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	St Bees School Management Company Ltd
Chair	Mark George
Headteacher	Gareth Seddon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,975
Telephone number	01946 828 000
Website	www.stbeesschool.co.uk
Email address	welcome@stbeesschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered in March 2018. It opened in September 2018 on the site of a previously long-established school of the same name.
- The school is registered for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. There are currently 10 pupils in Year 7. There are plans to increase the number of pupils on roll over the next few years. Admission is based on an entrance test and interview.
- There are no pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school is situated on a large site of 150 acres. It has its own golf course, swimming pool, tennis courts, gymnasium and extensive games pitches. These facilities are open for

use by the public at certain times.

- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector examined the premises and observed the school's work.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in most subjects and scrutinised pupils' written work in all subjects.
- She spoke with all pupils during lessons, at breaktimes and in two meetings to gain their views on the work of the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including school policies, safeguarding procedures, health and safety checks and risk assessments. There were no written records of self-assessment, improvement planning or checks on teaching.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, a representative of the proprietorial body, all teachers, the office manager and an independent consultant.
- She took account of seven responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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