

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf (Boston Spa)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108120
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	377702
Inspection dates	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Hilary Ward

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Rigby
Headteacher	Ann Bradbury
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2009
School address	Church Street Boston Spa Wetherby LS23 6DF
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Boarding provision	St John's Catholic School for the Deaf
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC001535
Social care inspector	Ms Helen Walker

Age group	3–19
Inspection date(s)	29 February 2012–1 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Hilary Ward
Pauline Hilling-Smith

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 17 teachers in 18 lessons, three of which were shared observations with the headteacher or assistant headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and school staff. The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, pupils' progress data, safeguarding and curriculum documents, newsletters and pupils' files. Three of the lesson observations looked at reading activities. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but the inspectors analysed the written questionnaire responses submitted by 23 parents and carers, staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf is a day and residential, non-maintained special school. It provides for pupils who are deaf. An increasing number of pupils have a range of additional, often complex, disabilities and learning difficulties. About two-thirds of the pupils are weekly boarders and a third is in the sixth form. Sixth form students access courses at local colleges with support from school staff. Pupils come from many different local authorities across the country. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Many pupils join the school at the beginning of their secondary career but admissions can be at any age and at any time in the school year. All have a statement of special educational needs. The school has specialist status for physical and sensory impairment and is part of a collaborative partnership with schools in Leeds.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
 Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- St John's is a good school. Pupils make good and often accelerated progress in their academic and personal achievement from entry because of the good specialised teaching and the outstanding levels of care and support. The school is not outstanding overall because assessment, marking and opportunities for pupils to work independently are not yet fully developed. However, the sixth form provision is outstanding.
- In the excellent sixth form students are able to achieve a very wide range of external awards through the outstanding curriculum opportunities provided in partnership with local colleges.
- Behaviour throughout the school is outstanding and priority is given to ensuring pupils' safety. The boarding provision is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and pupils develop a strong moral code.
- Good teaching is based on a good understanding of the learning needs of pupils but sometimes lesson planning takes insufficient account of pupils' prior learning to move each individual on quickly enough. Marking does not always indicate to pupils how they can improve their work.
- Senior staff and the governing body provide good leadership and management. They know their school well and effectively identify areas for improvement. Teaching is well led and performance effectively managed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further by more consistently:
 - using the assessment of prior learning to define specific learning outcomes for individual pupils in lessons
 - providing opportunities for more independent exploration in all subjects
 - using marking to inform and involve pupils in what they need to do to improve their work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry to the school is often low as a result of pupils' disabilities and learning difficulties and sometimes due to previous learning experiences. The number of pupils who have complex needs is increasing. Inspection findings agree with the parent and carer view that pupils achieve well during their time in the school. Most make better than expected progress due to the specialised teaching they receive in small groups or, sometimes, through individual programmes.

Pupils make good progress in lessons. They make very good progress in their oral communication skills. Speech and language therapists make a significant contribution to pupils' language development through collaborative work with the teachers and with staff in residence. The only child in the Early Years Foundation Stage attends part-time on a personalised programme and was seen to be making effective early steps in interaction with adults through a well-structured programme. In a lesson in the primary department, pupils were learning about verb tenses and were able to use them accurately in their speech. Pupils also make particularly good progress in their reading and writing skills which are given a high priority in the curriculum.

The school has adopted a helpful shape-coding system to improve pupils' understanding of the grammatical structure of sentences. Two more able Key Stage 2 pupils were seen to work together productively to interview staff and write an article about bug hotels. By the end of Key Stage 4, the vast majority of pupils are achieving Entry Level certificates and other nationally recognised qualifications while some gain GCSE passes, particularly in practical subjects. Pupils are especially successful in obtaining qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT) but sometimes have more difficulty with subjects requiring the use of technical language, such as science. Pupils with complex needs make progress, in relation to their circumstances, in line with other pupils.

Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Almost a third of students achieve sufficient points for university entrance and others gain accreditation in a huge range of awards related to their choice of employment, such as catering, construction, first aid and sport. This is achieved with the support of the excellent partnerships the school has developed with local colleges as well as by the thorough preparation for work undertaken in the school.

Staff have high expectations for pupils. The progress individuals make against their half-yearly targets is carefully tracked by senior staff, although the setting and monitoring of longer-term targets for ends of key stages is still at an early stage. The excellent care, guidance and support pupils receive in the school and in the residence contribute strongly to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to their extremely successful transitions to continuing education, or the workplace, when they leave.

Quality of teaching

All the parents and carers returning questionnaires feel their children are taught well and this is a view endorsed by the inspectors. Pupils enjoy very good relationships with teaching, support and care staff. As a result, they develop increasing levels of confidence, resilience and independence. This encourages them to try new things in the rich and varied curriculum, which is often personalised to match individual needs and interests.

Teachers assess pupils' progress bi-annually and set personal, linguistic and academic targets. While pupils always know their personal targets, they are not always as clear about their academic targets. Assessment is thorough but is not consistently supported by marking which enables pupils to understand how they can improve their work.

Expectations are generally high but assessment of prior learning is not always used sufficiently to define specific learning outcomes for individual pupils in lessons. Occasionally teaching dominates the lesson so that there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to explore and investigate for themselves. Pupils were seen to make the best progress where they were able to work independently or collaboratively with a partner and complete extended pieces of work.

Teachers are highly skilled in their work with deaf pupils and go to great lengths to acquire skills to meet the additional complex needs of many of the pupils. They use their subject knowledge well to plan effectively and set challenging tasks, such as in a science lesson where pupils were experimenting with substances to find out if they were acid or alkali. Teachers and pupils use ICT very well in all lessons. Pupils are encouraged to produce newsletters, make graphs and devise presentations, for example, on their experience of deafness, which they present to other schools. Close liaison with residential houses ensures that all pupils are able to extend their learning through homework.

The constantly improving curriculum has a positive impact on the outstanding development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, Year 11 pupils visited a young offenders' institute, as a result of which they created a drama production on crime and punishment which won a national award for an outstanding community project.

Teaching in the sixth form is exceptionally well planned around student's individual interests and aspirations. Students are supported by school staff into a broad range of academic and vocational college courses. Students receive additional support for basic skills, study and work skills, personal social and health education and

independence and life skills, both in school and the boarding provision. This prepares them highly effectively for the next stage in their lives. As a result of the outstanding provision for the sixth form and the carefully planned transitions, all students leaving the school in recent years have progressed to continuing education or the workplace.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are very enthusiastic learners and thoroughly enjoy their time at St Johns. As a result of this, they are extremely positive about their school experience and strive to behave well in lessons, around school and in the community. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed a concern about behaviour but the large majority feel that the school's strategies are effective. Some pupils have additional learning difficulties and disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorders, which mean they sometimes find it difficult to behave well at all times and in all situations. However, the consistent management of behaviours across both school and residence minimises disruption for other pupils. During the inspection behaviour was outstanding. Pupils who have social and emotional difficulties are provided with the support they need to build resilience, sometimes with the involvement of specialist local and national services. Attendance levels are high.

Through religious education and personal, social and health education lessons, pupils learn a strong moral ethic. They also learn how to keep themselves safe through lessons on subjects such as drug awareness and e-safety and display a very high level of knowledge about such subjects. Pupils are extremely courteous and supportive of each other. It is clear that relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are founded on mutual respect and genuine care and consideration.

A very small number of pupils expressed concern about bullying but the vast majority who completed questionnaires say that bullying is rare and are confident that if it occurs it is managed well because of the excellent and supportive relationships. The school council plans to have a 'bullying box' so that any incidents can be reported and everything possible can be done. Safeguarding is excellent. Parents and carers and pupils are very confident that the school keeps pupils safe.

Leadership and management

All staff who replied to the questionnaire are very proud to work at St John's and believe that it is well led and managed. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said that they would recommend the school to others, several commenting on the noticeable rapid improvements their children have made. They greatly appreciate the school's highly imaginative work to ensure their involvement, despite the distances many live from the school.

The overall effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding. Senior leaders and managers have full regard for the safety of pupils and have improved their policies and procedures to ensure checks on staff are robust. The school is aware of the need to ensure that policies are reviewed regularly. The governing body has been strengthened since the last inspection and their improved knowledge of the school means that they are able to ask probing questions that hold senior leaders to account. The accuracy of analysis of the school's performance ensures improvement

work is focused appropriately. Teaching is generally well managed, although more rigour could be applied to the monitoring of lessons to ensure it continues to improve.

The curriculum is outstanding and innovative. It is enhanced by the excellent partnerships the school has forged with other providers and services. Since the last inspection changes to the curriculum have been made to meet more effectively the needs of a changing population. The new performing arts suite reflects the focus in the curriculum on developing communication skills. Pupils take part in the English Speaking Board Exams and in the Shakespeare Schools Festival, building confidence and participation.

The governing body and senior leadership team have improved policies and procedures to ensure that safeguarding practice is highly effective. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. The school has taken steps to promote equality and tackle discrimination by improving pupils' understanding of racial awareness through work to achieve the Stephen Lawrence Award. The school shapes its provision to meet the needs of each and every pupil. Staff and members of the governing body share the senior leadership team's determination to continue to be accountable for every pupil's success. The track record shows that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Residential provision

The overall effectiveness of the residential facility is outstanding. Pupils receive high quality care from a consistent, dedicated and highly competent staff team they trust. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. Pupils said staff are 'fantastic'. The management team provide effective, efficient and supportive leadership for care staff which enables them to promote pupils' independence and social development, which results in some exceptional personal outcomes for pupils. Pupils say they gain in confidence and achieve a level of independence they never thought possible.

Extensive links with health professionals enable pupils' specific health needs to be met. The on-site nurse and therapists are dynamic and innovative in involving and encouraging pupils to be healthy. Procedures and significant training for the administration of medicines are robust. Pupils are provided with a healthy, varied and nutritious diet. Mealtimes are very enjoyable, social and well organised occasions.

A vast array of participation and consultation methods means pupils' views are heard. Their opinions are highly valued and make a difference. Pupils said the combined residential and education experience is 'brilliant' with both aspects contributing to highly positive outcomes. Care staff understand the importance of education and there is excellent liaison between education and residence to ensure a consistent approach and support for learning. Shared strategies to improve and manage pupils' behaviour are exemplary and bring about positive changes. Staff encourage pupils to learn through well planned activities such as sports, leisure and life skills. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in a meaningful way and the award of 'star of the week' is something they strive for. Pupils readily involve themselves in social outreach events, showing an awareness of the needs of others. The residential

environment unquestionably reflects pupils' individuality and takes account of their need for privacy, comfort and support. A programme of refurbishment is significantly improving the communal areas. The younger pupils delight in showing the lounge area where they have chosen new furnishings and decoration. Older pupils are thrilled with the new kitchen and enjoy using it.

Pupils' induction to the school and transition on to the next stage in their lives is organised in an adaptable, holistic and sensitive way. Parents describe the arrangements as 'flexible' and at the right speed for their child. Pupils' comprehensive placement plans assist staff to meet their needs. Staff receive extensive safeguarding training and are highly effective in keeping pupils safe from the risk of harm and in helping them understand how to keep themselves safe. Parents are confident their child is safe at the school and pupils say bullying is not an issue.

Relevant policies are appropriate and reflect current practice in the school. The school is putting in hand a system to ensure regular review of the policies. Recommendations from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. The school meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	1
Quality of residential provision and care	1
Residential pupils' safety	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	1

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils and Students

**Inspection of St John's Catholic School for the Deaf (Boston Spa),
Wetherby LS23 6DF**

Thank you for the welcome you gave my colleagues and I when we visited your school recently. We were particularly grateful to those of you who showed us your work and talked to us about what you were doing.

We found that St John's is a good school. The headteacher, leadership team and staff all work hard to make your time in school successful. Staff in both school and residence, care for you exceptionally well and keep you safe. It is clear that you trust and respect them. You say that staff help you to learn a great deal in lessons and in activities in school and in residence. We agree that the quality of teaching is good and that the curriculum provides outstanding opportunities to enable you to follow your interests and learn about the world outside. In particular, the post-16 department gives you fantastic chances to meet with students in other colleges and to receive the support you need so that you leave with good qualifications for the jobs you want to do. Through the work of the school you clearly become very confident and independent young people.

To make the school even better, we have asked that staff think about what they want each of you to achieve in every lesson and to encourage you to investigate and explore topics more for yourselves.

We believe that you have a very good experience in school and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Ward
Lead Inspector

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