

St Luke's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126547
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	360103
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David McAllister
Headteacher	Jane Cordes
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. During the inspection, 12 lessons were observed and 11 different teachers were seen. Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders, students and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including planning documents, students' work, assessment and tracking data, and safeguarding policies. A total of eight parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire.

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

- How well the school has improved attendance.
- How assessment has improved since the last inspection.
- How effectively the provision meets the needs of girls.

Information about the school

St Luke's is an average sized school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. A few have additional autistic spectrum disorders. There are only three girls in the school spread across three different age groups. Nearly all students come from Swindon, and a few come from the surrounding areas of Wiltshire. A new headteacher took up post in January 2011.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Luke's is a good school. As a result of good leadership and management it has improved in almost all areas since the last inspection and standards are rising. The school has an excellent relationship with parents and carers who are very pleased with the school and rightly say that their children feel safe and secure at school. Students agree with them and the vast majority say that they enjoy their time there. 'We make a bond with the staff which you do not get in other schools' was a typical comment from a student. The overwhelming majority of students attend well with one class this year attaining 96% attendance so far. A very small minority, however, have a long history of non-attendance, do not come to school regularly enough and attend well below the expected level. The vast majority of students behave well and respect the school's rules. The good quality of care, support and guidance that the school provides enables them to improve their behaviour and their social and emotional skills, preparing them well for learning. As a result the school is calm and orderly. Rigorous behaviour management procedures help students to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Students' awareness of how to lead healthy lives is good. They make effective use of the extensive grounds and the sporting facilities at the school to keep fit and make healthy choices at lunchtimes.

Students achieve well during their time at the school. By Year 11 the majority attain a good range of vocational and academic qualifications including GCSEs. They develop confidence and self-esteem through their successes. Teaching across the school is good and engages students in some exciting activities from the rich and varied curriculum. In one lesson, for example, a student commented: 'I love this lesson, I would rather be here than at home any day.' Students with additional special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with autism, make similar progress to their peers. Good improvements to the assessment and tracking system have resulted in a clear view of each pupil's progress. However, the very small number of girls at the school means that there are not always sufficient opportunities for them to form friendship groups or take part in group activities with other girls of their age.

Leadership and management are firmly based on ongoing evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. The school has established itself in the local community as an effective source of expertise for helping students with behavioural and learning needs. The headteacher, together with the senior leadership team, has successfully built on previous good management to securely embed many new initiatives and develop strong partnerships to help the school move forward. Staff have built productive links with local schools and businesses which have broadened opportunities for students to learn about the world of work. This helps them in their work-related courses. The governing body provides satisfactory support to leaders and staff and is aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. School development planning is good, a result of effective monitoring and accurate self-evaluation that show leaders what is working well and what needs

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improving. The school's leaders have established a solid track record of ongoing improvement in all areas over the last few years. These factors mean that the school has a good capacity to continue improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance, particularly by the small minority of students who do not come to school often enough, by working closely with students, parents, carers and support agencies.
- Develop provision for girls so that they have more appropriate peer groups, choices and opportunities to develop friendships.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

All groups of students, including boys and girls, achieve well during their time at the school. From exceptionally low starting points, the majority of students make good gains in all aspects of learning. In 2010, for example, students at the end of Year 11 achieved an average of 6.9 passes at GCSE. They achieved well in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. School assessment data show that students in the current Year 11 are on track to exceed last year's results. Students in Years 7 to 9 make a good start at the school, achieving well and improving their literacy skills in particular. This was evident in an English lesson in Year 7, for example, where students made good gains in learning about the use of speech marks in their writing. Because the teacher provided a good demonstration using the interactive whiteboard as a model for writing, students were able to break their task down into small achievable steps. Students also use their literacy skills well in other subjects. This was exemplified in Year 8 where students showed good investigation skills as they researched the causes of hurricanes based on the recent Hurricane Katrina. They improved their literacy skills as they rearranged words to form sentences and read about the causes and effects of high pressure on hurricane formation. In Years 10 and 11 students concentrate on gaining useful qualifications. They benefit from exciting opportunities which engage them fully in learning. As part of the national Open College Network Diploma, for example, three boys were busy identifying and disassembling a real car engine. They were excited by the task, fully focused and keen to do well. As a result they made some very good progress as well as learning how to use tools safely.

Students' good behaviour is evident in and around the school and is reflected in their positive views. They are mainly engaged and confident and share a positive view of the school. Students say that they enjoy school and feel safe. They say that teachers deal effectively and quickly with any bullying that may arise. Girls feel that they are treated appropriately and feel safe. Students say that racism is very rare. The vast majority say that they like the school better than their previous schools because the counsellors are good, there is 'lots of sport and the fun days are great'. The school council has a positive impact on the running of the school, including being involved in staff recruitment. Students contribute well to the community through work experience and thorough raising money for charities. Attendance is still below the national average for mainstream schools because of a very small number of students with a background of persistent absence at their previous schools. Nevertheless, St Luke's can point to some impressive examples of positive outcomes where other provision has failed. After students join the school, there is

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a dramatic improvement in their behaviour and very little disruption to lessons. Most understand the rules and routines well and almost all adhere to them. This is because they value the opinions of staff and want to succeed. Because of the success the school is having in improving personal development and raising standards, students are prepared well for their futures. They are regularly involved in fund raising, recently raising a significant amount of money to support their link school in Africa. Their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

A high level of training in the past few years has resulted in improved quality of teaching and learning. The majority of teaching is now good and there is a clear focus on assessment. A strong emphasis on visual learning due to the effective use of technology helps to keep students interested in their tasks. This was evident in Years 8 and 9 as students navigated the internet to research different logos. They showed good skills as they used editing tools to create their own logo, following instructions carefully. They tried to extend their skills as much as possible because, as one commented, 'we are trying to achieve Level 4 and maybe Level 5', showing good involvement in assessing their own work. Questioning is a particular strength of many lessons providing valuable opportunities for teachers to check students' understanding. Just occasionally the pace of learning dips because not enough work is expected.

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The rich curriculum provides very well for all groups, including those with additional special educational needs and/or disabilities. Girls and boys have equal access to the wide range of trips, residential experiences and sporting activities. The girls, however, feel, with some justification, that they would like to have more access to female friendship groups. A strong focus on work experience in places like local shops and relevant college links ensure that students are well prepared for their futures. Sporting links are good and play a valuable contribution to students' healthy lifestyles. Opportunities to visit local churches and the local mosque enable students to learn about the different faiths in their community.

Good quality care, guidance and support have resulted in behaviour and attitudes improving across the school. Very strong links with parents and carers, including their full involvement on a daily basis, has resulted in behaviour improving rapidly. The school is working hard with external agencies to improve the attendance of the small minority of students who do not attend often enough. Leaders have actively identified successful ways to improve exclusion rates and have some impressive evidence of case histories showing success in these areas. Rigorous procedures and links with education welfare services are also strong reasons for these improvements. Students with additional special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported, ensuring that they achieve as well as their peers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The new leadership team has built successfully on previous improvements so that all aspects of the school have improved. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future. She is embedding her ambition and driving improvement through rigorous monitoring, accurate self-evaluation and regular assessment of how well each area of the school and each pupil are doing. Other senior leaders and staff are very supportive and proud of their achievements. Through rigorous monitoring and high levels of training, leaders have increased the percentage of good lessons. This has had a positive impact on raising standards and improving achievement. Members of the governing body know what needs improving and support the school well. Several are new to their roles, however, and as a result they are not yet as challenging to leaders as they could be. Leaders have established excellent relationships with parents and carers and as a result most are working closely in partnership with the school to successfully improve their children's behaviour and attendance. Strong partnerships with outside agencies and other local schools, through both training and outreach support, are having a positive impact on provision. The school actively promotes equality and works hard to eliminate

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discrimination. Leaders are well aware of the need to improve opportunities for girls to socialise more widely and have already begun to do so. Safeguarding procedures fully meet current requirements. There are rigorous procedures to keep students safe and secure. The school has developed a good strategy for community cohesion, with positive local partnerships and productive links with other schools including one in Berkshire and one in Africa, both helping to improve students' awareness of other cultures and lifestyles.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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

A low number of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Those who responded are very pleased with the school and rightly believe that it keeps their children safe and secure. 'The school is fantastic. My child has developed enormously during his years at St Luke's' commented a parent. A quarter of those parents and carers who responded say that their child does not enjoy school. However, in the discussions with groups of students during the inspection, almost all students said that this school was better than their previous one and they liked coming.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Luke's School 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 eight completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 66 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	25	4	50	2	25	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	7	88	1	13	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	75	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	50	4	50	0	0	0	0
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)	6	75	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	75	2	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	88	1	13	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	88	1	13	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	75	2	25	0	0	0	0

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 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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 pupils' 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.



9 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Luke's School, Swindon SN2 7AS

Thank you for your help on our recent visit to your school. This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out during our visit.

- Your school gives you a good education, which means you learn how to be ready for life in the wider world.
- You told us that you enjoy coming to school and most of you try to come as often as you can.
- You make good progress and achieve well in your courses.
- You told us all about your healthy lifestyles and we know you do lots of exercise.
- Most of you try hard to be polite and you work well together.
- Your leaders keep you safe and secure.
- We are impressed by the way that you improve your behaviour during your time at the school. Congratulations for this.

We are asking your school to do two things to help you to do even better.

- To make sure that the girls have more opportunities to meet other girls.
- To make sure that all of you come to school as often as you can.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Denise Morris

Lead inspector

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