

St Ann's School

Springfield Road, Ealing, London, W7 3JP

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- St Ann's has made year-on-year improvements since the last inspection as a result of, at all levels, increasingly good leadership and management, including that of teaching. The governing body has been strengthened and supports and challenges the school well.
- The school has adapted its curriculum well to meet the increasingly complex needs of its recent and current students. The post-16 provision is also good.
- Teaching is mostly good and sometimes outstanding. Its great strength is the strong focus on communication and cooperation that supports the excellent relationships between staff and students.
- All groups of students achieve well overall. This is because the school knows their starting points when they join the school and the end points that are possible for the students.
- Students make excellent progress in their social skills and behave well. They feel safe and secure in school and attend regularly despite many challenging medical conditions.
- Many of the school's improvements have been brought about by intensive training for the staff and by the involvement of several in research and post-graduate study that is applied to the practice within the school.
- Partnerships with local colleges are developing well so that most students are able to make smooth transfers to the next stage of their education and training. Post-16 students benefit greatly from the phased transition from school to college and no student leaves St Ann's without a placement.
- The school works very hard to involve parents and carers as fully as possible in the education and training of the students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The new procedures to gather information on the students' attainment and progress are good but they are not yet well enough established to inform fully the students' next steps at the end of each 12-week review.
- Staff mainly plan well to involve additional adults in checking students' progress but this is not always so. In some lessons and over lunchtime, too little is expected of them, and of supply staff, in helping the students' development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed ten lessons and made 12 other visits to lessons, the latter jointly with the headteacher.
- Informal discussions were held with a group of students from across the different areas of the school. There were discussions with the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding, the link officer from the local authority and the headteacher and deputy headteacher, as well as informal discussions with a number of the staff.
- There were 17 recorded submissions to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and inspectors took account of the school's own surveys for parents as well as of the views of 53 staff who returned questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information on students' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sheila Nolan, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Peter Gabony

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Ann's School provides for students with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, and for those students with a combination of complex conditions and autistic spectrum disorders. The latter group forms the largest proportion of students within the school. Class groups are often mixed age, depending on the developmental readiness of the students.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs. Well over half are non-verbal and many have challenging medical needs. Boys outnumber girls and very few students join the school other than at the start of the school year in Year 7. All but one of the students requires organised transport to and from the school.
- Currently, the majority of the students are from a very wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and for three quarters of the students, English is an additional language. A very few are at the early stages of learning English. Black African students form the largest groups.
- Over half of the students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding provided by the government for those students in the care of the local authority, or from service families, or known to be eligible for free school meals. No students in the school are looked after by the local authority or from service families although students are looked after as vulnerable adults. All pupils in Year 7 are in receipt of the catch-up premium.
- Some alternative provision is used by the school for post-16 students who attend courses at Southall College and West Thames College. There is early entry only in so far as students are put forward for external accreditation from Year 10 at the times most suitable to their circumstances. The overwhelming majority of the students remain on the school's roll from Year 7 until the end of Year 14.
- Sixth-form students are integrated fully into the various groups within the school, depending on their main areas of need. They are not taught in separate groups.
- The school has been accredited with a nationally recognised award for signing and with the International School Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' quality of learning still further by:
 - ensuring that the systems and procedures to track students' achievements are used effectively by all staff at the end of each cycle to inform the next goals for learning
 - inducting long-term supply staff more fully into how to match daily planning to the needs of individual students
 - rapidly taking forward plans to encourage independence and social skills during the main lunchtime meal.
- Ensure that support staff are effectively deployed in all lessons by:
 - sharing the excellent practice in some classes in directing teaching assistants to assess effectively students' small steps in learning
 - highlighting the importance of consistency in signing throughout lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students in all groups make good progress in the core skills of communication and early number and thinking skills. They achieve particularly well in developing their non-verbal communication skills. A very few students are able to read familiar words by sight but none is able to read for understanding. They also make good progress in classifying objects and in making choices.
- All students gain some form of external accreditation from very low starting points. Students are really keen on art, food technology and sport at college. They make good gains in independence through attendance at college courses as they proceed through the school. Between Years 10 to 14, each student gains some modules in such areas as creativity, science – looking after our world, technology, hobbies and pastimes, daily living skills, and world religions at levels appropriate for his or her stage of development. The allotment project provides weekly opportunities for students to contribute usefully to the community through growing produce which is later used in cooking.
- The impact of spending from the Year 7 catch-up funding, used to smooth the difficult transition from Year 6, is seen in the ease with which students move from their primary schools to St Ann's. This has had the effect of lessening regression between Year 6 and Year 7 and has a marked impact on attendance, which improves for all students as they gain success in their learning.
- Other students, eligible for the pupil premium, make good gains in modifying behaviour patterns so that learning is not hindered. This is because of the additional interactions the school can provide as a result of the funding. The information on progress in learning shows rapid gains in making choices, in intended actions such as pressing a switch to indicate wishes or response, and in recognising and responding to directions and instructions.
- Despite the good gains in relation to the challenging targets of individual students in each group, including the many minority ethnic groups and those with languages other than English, school staff recognise that there are still missed opportunities within the school day to extend and develop students' potential. This is particularly so during lunchtime, for example, where students are given too few occasions to choose for themselves and gain greater independence in life skills.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is mostly good and sometimes outstanding. This is because most teaching staff have a sound understanding of the level at which the students are working. Staff teams within lessons generally provide well for students' additional needs through supportive structures such as signing, and using symbols and pictures as well as objects of reference. In a few classes, however, there is sometimes a lack of consistency in teaching assistants' use of signing over the course of a lesson and this can hinder the reinforcement of learning for some students.
- Nevertheless, the school's intense focus on communication and interaction has had a very positive impact on the trusting and harmonious relationships that exist between staff and students. As a result, students engage well in lessons and are secure enough to tackle new knowledge and skills as well as practising and applying previous learning.
- The recently established system for tracking students' skills and progress against targets is enabling staff to record successfully and more effectively than previously the tiny steps in students' development in lessons. This is done particularly well in some classes where there is constant direction by the teacher of what support staff should be evaluating for each student. This was clearly demonstrated in an art lesson for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The teacher regularly reminded the team to watch whether or not the students could follow the moving toy with their eyes.
- The good practice above, however, is not always shared across all staff. There are still lessons where teaching staff do not engage support teams fully in checking students' learning but rather

allow them to concentrate on the physical care of the students.

- In the most successful lessons, the tasks and methods are highly personalised to each student. This was seen in an outstanding personal and social education session for a group of girls within the severe learning difficulties cohort. The personal care and hygiene topic was managed sensitively but in a matter-of-fact manner which allowed the students to feel comfortable and make their responses through signs, symbols, the use of technology and music. Students were very engaged, interested and concentrated exceptionally well.
- The school has concentrated on intense programme of training and development for its permanent staff. However, although long-term supply staff are inducted into what is expected of them, not all temporary staff working with students with complex profound to severe learning difficulties have the skills to match the work well enough to the students' stages of development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students enjoy school and are very happy to attend regularly. Their attendance is above that seen in special schools nationally. They feel safe and form warm working relationships with the staff team around them. As a result, their behaviour patterns improve significantly from the time when they join the school. There is a marked reduction in incidents of challenging behaviour as the school year progresses and students settle back into their routines. There are no exclusions, either permanent or fixed term.
- Staff model very positive relationships well so that students quickly adapt to visiting adults and are welcoming in their own ways. The students with some speech were very pleased to report how much they like school and they 'don't like the holidays'. They confirm that there is always someone to help them and deal with any matters arising both inside and outside of the school. Students know about bullying and understand that it is not to be tolerated in any form.
- Students involved in the school council were very clear as to what constitutes right and wrong. They were able to indicate that they knew about e-safety and that out of school they had to be mindful of dangers both through new technology and other situations.
- Those students who have difficulties understanding social situations are supported exceptionally well, sometimes even by their peers. Behaviour management is well focused on making sure all students can gain the greatest benefit from their time in school. Students are generally willing to participate in the varied programmes, including a range of therapies and other opportunities provided by the rich curriculum.
- Students appreciate their school and benefit greatly from the close observation that enables those with the most complex needs to be represented when decision about their treatment plans or futures are under consideration. Parents are unanimous in their agreement that the students are very well cared for and that their children are safe and make good progress.
- The attendance and safety of those students attending college courses are carefully checked. Students are always accompanied by adults well known to them and who know them well. As a result, they are able to sustain the good behaviour patterns expected of them in school. They were proud to present inspectors with a video of their work in horticulture after a morning at college. This captured well their wonder at the basil they had grown from seed.

The leadership and management are good

- There have been significant improvements in the school since the last inspection. All areas from that inspection have been addressed. Senior and middle leadership has been strengthened by the appointment of additional senior staff. Groupings within the school have been restructured to take account of the increasingly complex needs of the students and the curriculum adapted successfully. Training and coaching activities have effectively targeted improvements in teaching and senior managers have an accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching. Fairly recent appointments to the teaching staff have strengthened the expertise of the staff, as has the involvement of several teachers in research-based accreditation. Salary progression is well linked

to the effectiveness of teachers' classroom practice.

- The quality and consistency of the recording of students' learning in lessons have been improved not only through sharpening practice but also through the establishment of new procedures that involve checks on a regular basis on students' developing skills. The new procedures, however, have not been in operation long enough to be used fully to set the next targets for the students based on the analysis of the completed 12-week review cycle. Additionally, the school rightly recognises that further rigorous moderation across a range of schools would confirm more robustly their own evaluations of students' progress.
- The school team works very effectively with parents and other partners, including the local colleges, to ensure that the opportunities on offer for the students are relevant to their needs and promote their learning, health and well-being. Regular workshops for parents are among the many ways that the school supports the needs of the families as well as the students. St Ann's strives to tackle any discrimination effectively and is fully inclusive so that each student feels valued. It also makes sure that all safeguarding is treated very seriously.
- Staff and parents agree wholeheartedly that the school is well led and managed and that the students' best interests are at the heart of all that it does. There is genuine teamwork across the school, with a common understanding of the place of St Ann's in the local community. The local authority offers 'light touch' support for what is a school eager to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are very committed to supporting and challenging the school. They are aware of the issues related to identifying how well a school of this nature is doing given the limited data for national comparisons. Regular visits and case studies of students as well as reports from the headteacher and the local authority all combine to give governors a realistic picture of the students' progress and of the quality of teaching. The performance management of the headteacher is carried out rigorously and governors have a secure overview of how teachers' pay links with classroom performance. There is a good working knowledge of the school's finances and close attention to the safety of the students. Governors monitor expenditure and scrutinise the impact of the Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding. They are experienced in the processes of safer recruitment. They also play an active part in the future direction of the school and in the proposed new building arrangements. As a group, governors take advantage of training opportunities regularly to further their capacity to challenge the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101971
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	404793

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community Special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eric Prentice (Acting)
Headteacher	Gillian Carver
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 March 2011
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