

St John's School (Seaford)

Firle Road, Seaford, East Sussex, BN25 2HU

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| 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.

- Students achieve well at St John's, improving their academic performance and developing into confident and articulate young adults. They are well prepared for the next stage of their life, usually moving on to a further education college.
- Teaching is good, marked by effective teamwork across all the adults involved in the students' education.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The excellent relationships that staff have with the students help them to manage behaviour well when necessary. Students' safety, care and well-being are good.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet the specific needs of the students. Students respond well to the innovative opportunities to develop the skills that will serve them well throughout their lives. The sixth form is good.
- The Principal leads a staff team which is highly ambitious to provide the best possible service for the students and their families. These ambitions are reflected in planning which takes account of the accurate evaluation of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. In this process, the leaders are supported and challenged well by the governing body.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding. Teachers' marking does not give students sufficient guidance on what they have to do to improve. Teachers' planning does not provide students with sufficient opportunities to make their own informed choices or to develop more advanced life skills without support from the adults.
- For those students who struggle with their reading, staff have not had sufficient training to enable them to adopt consistently effective strategies.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons during the visit to the school, taught by seven different members of staff. In two of the lessons, the inspector was joined by a member of the senior leadership team. The inspector carried out two learning walks involving visits to lessons. On one of these learning walks, he was accompanied by a senior leader.
- The inspector heard students read and looked at students' work in books, online and on display around the school.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and middle leaders including members of the care, medical and therapy teams. A meeting was held with two members of the governing body including a parent governor. The inspector had a telephone conversation with a parent or carer who requested to talk with him and considered the views of a parent or carer in a letter sent to him. The inspector had separate meetings with two groups of students: post 16 students and students in Year 11.
- The inspector reviewed the school's procedures for safeguarding, including risk assessments of individual students and of different activities. The inspector looked at leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the long- and short-term planning arising from that analysis. He looked at the school's monitoring records of the quality of teaching. The inspector looked at the school's tracking of students' academic progress, attendance records, documentation arising from the governance of the school and the school's recording of incidents of poor behaviour, including different forms of bullying.
- The inspector took account of the inspection questionnaire returned by 13 members of staff. The inspector reviewed Parent View (the online questionnaire), but there were too few responses on the system to provide an analysis.

Inspection team

Timothy Feast, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's is a small school which provides for students with severe and complex needs. All the students have a statement of special educational needs, the majority are on the autistic spectrum continuum, but many are identified as having more than one difficulty or disability.
- A large majority of the students are boys and nearly all the students are from White British backgrounds. All students have English as their first language at home.
- About a third of the students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional support for those in care of the local authority, those with families in the services and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. This is higher than the national average.
- A majority of the students are in Years 13 and 14.
- About half of the students board in the school's residential accommodation.
- The school's curriculum provides opportunities for the students to study additional accredited courses at the charity's college in Brighton or at another local college.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching so that students' achievement is raised by:
 - teachers providing greater guidance in their marking of what students need to do to improve their work
 - teachers planning further opportunities in lessons for students to develop their life skills without the intervention of adults, where appropriate
 - teachers planning greater opportunities for students to make their own informed choices.
- Improve the reading skills of students further by:
 - providing all staff with professional development that helps them to use agreed strategies consistently with students who struggle with their reading.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students are admitted to the school at various ages and at different times of the school year. Their attainment on entry is usually low, often reflecting the difficulties they have had previously.
- Students make good progress, improving their attitudes to learning and often their relationships with other students and with staff. This enables them by the time they leave the school, usually aged 19, to have attained a wide range of externally accredited qualifications and developed skills that will help them to deal well with the next stage of their life. The range and number of examination passes have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The range of passes at increasingly higher levels represents good progress from the starting points of all groups of students, including girls, day and residential students and those with more complex needs. Observations in lessons and a review of the school's progress data of students currently on roll confirm this good progress for all groups of students. Students were building on the skills recognised last year in accredited courses in areas such as English, mathematics and information and communication technology and preparing to take examinations at higher levels this year.
- Students taking the Diploma in Sports and Active Leisure demonstrated a good capacity to lead sessions, demonstrating new football skills, and those being taught responded well to coaching from their fellow students. Students taking the Award in Home Cooking made good progress in the lesson in preparing a risotto, building on previous skills learnt in making other dishes from around the world.
- Students who attend courses at further education colleges progress well. One of the students talked proudly about the horticultural course he was taking at a local college and his hopes for a career in this area in the future. Other students talked about how much they had learnt on their work experience placements through the charity's café 'Scrummies' or in the printing enterprise 'Inklusion'.
- Many students make good and sometimes outstanding progress with their reading skills. A few do not make as much progress and not enough is yet done to accelerate their progress by all staff using systematically recognised schemes and strategies in all their lessons.
- About a third of the students are eligible for the pupil premium. From their work in lessons and from analysis of the school's data they are making similar and sometimes better progress than students generally. They are all fully involved in the range of opportunities offered to students and helped by staff's generally high expectations.
- The students who were interviewed thought they had made good progress since being at the school and their views were echoed by the parents and carers who contacted the inspector. One commented, 'The impact St John's has had on him has been life changing.'

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good across the different tutor groups and across subjects. Lessons start promptly and students settle to work quickly. Teachers plan a range of activities which effectively motivate the students, for example, working on different strategies to improve students' strokes and their capacity to swim longer distances for the National Swimming Awards.
- There is a good focus on improving students' literacy and communication skills. Staff regularly share key words with students and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge of and ability to use these words in lessons. Students are encouraged to write extended pieces and to read widely. In their interview with the inspector, they demonstrated good skills of speaking and listening. Students achieve a range of functional skill levels in literacy, as they do in mathematics, for example, in the use of money.

- Teachers do provide sufficient time for students to practise their skills, for example, in their ability to use formulae and to format text in information and communication technology, or to finish cooking their risotto. On occasions, teachers do not allow students enough opportunity to tackle these tasks unaided. The multi-sensory room is well used to enable students to make their own informed choices and staff plan well for this, but such opportunities are not consistently planned for across all lessons.
- Adults in the classroom have a very good understanding of the particular needs of every individual student and work effectively as a team to minimise the barriers to learning.
- The good teaching results in students enjoying their lessons and other activities. Students indicated in their interviews that they particularly enjoyed physical education, music, information and communication technology, mathematics and English. One student was particularly proud that her extended writing had been included in the latest parents' newsletter.
- Staff mark work regularly, their positive comments providing a good way to raise the self-esteem of the students. Less evident in the marking was guidance to students as to what to do next to improve their work.
- The parents and carers who contacted the inspector were extremely positive about how well they thought their children were taught, noting the expertise that staff have to meet their children's particular needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are extremely positive about the school and this is reflected in their good attitudes to learning and the progress they make. Students and parents and carers noted particularly how much students' behaviour and attitudes improve while they are at the school. Students flourish. Parents and carers commented that whereas previously they were often isolated from other students, they now participate in a range of sporting and cultural activities. Students are proud of the success of their football team and their participation in the school Christmas production of 'Little Red Riding Hood' is a source of joy to many. Students are actively involved in a range of charitable activities, both local and wider afield.
- The attendance of the majority of students is good and above that of the figure for secondary students nationally. There was a big improvement in attendance last year and this level has been maintained this year. This improved attendance reflects both the positive attitudes of the students to the curriculum they are being offered and the impact of the care, medical and therapy teams in reducing the level of absence, particularly for medical reasons.
- Students' behaviour is typically good and the incidence of poor behaviour has reduced significantly since the start of the school year. Students sometimes get agitated or distressed in lessons or around the school. The school has clear procedures for dealing with such incidents and staff manage such behaviour extremely well. Students indicated they had adults who they could talk to about concerns and who do their best to sort them out where possible.
- The student council is extremely proactive, with increasing numbers of students being involved. Their suggestions are well received by staff and acted on where possible.
- Students' safety is good. The school provides good opportunities for students to develop a good understanding of risks they might face and how to deal with them. Students confidently talked about how they would handle incidents of cyber bullying, which reflected well the strategies they had been given, for example, through e-safety lessons. The school records show that incidents of any forms of bullying are rare and dealt with well by staff. Opportunities are provided for students to develop their confidence in using public transport, and health and safety considerations are foremost in lessons such as cooking, swimming and design and technology.

The leadership and management are good

- There have been considerable improvements to St John's since the last inspection in 2011 and this is recognised by students, parents and carers, staff and governors. The Principal and his leadership team have a clear vision of where they want the school to be in a short period of time and they are well on their way to turning the vision into reality. They have achieved this through creating a cohesive team which provides a 'wrap around service' to meet all the needs of the students. Middle leaders including subject leaders have embraced the ambitions of senior leaders and this is reflected in the adoption of innovative approaches to learning and the extension of accredited courses.
- This improvement has been achieved by planning carefully for what have been decided are the most important priorities. These priorities are appropriate and reflect leaders' accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Initiatives are evaluated and good practice is built on.
- Considerable efforts have been made to extend the range of accredited opportunities for students and this is reflected in the students' results. High-quality practice has been recognised by the moderation of external examination boards. A range of innovative opportunities for work experience has been provided and these are greatly valued by the students and their families. The curriculum offers extensive opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes and this is reflected in an ethos where diversity is recognised and celebrated and discrimination is not tolerated.
- The school has used funding for students eligible for the pupil premium to good effect although the school's website does not reflect its successes in this area.
- At the heart of the improvement has been a focus on the performance of all staff including teachers. Teaching is rigorously monitored. Evaluations are accurate. Areas for improvement are identified and teaching has improved. The governing body has adopted a pay and performance management policy and receive full information about the quality of teaching which they use to make decisions about staffing.
- Safeguarding is central to the school's work and the well-being of students and staff are a demonstrable focus. School leaders liaise regularly with local authority officers from where their students come and participate in the meetings of special schools locally and further afield. Statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding are fully met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have been both supportive and challenging to the school's leadership in terms of the transformation that has been embarked upon since the last inspection. They share the ambitions of the Principal and this has been reflected in the resources allocated to improved provision, based on their good knowledge of the school's performance including the impact of the funding received for students eligible for the pupil premium.
 - Their work in the school, the training they have received and their commitment to, and their ambitions for, the future of St John's help to underpin the school's considerable capacity for further improvement.

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

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| Unique reference number | 114677 |
| Local authority | Brighton and Hove |
| Inspection number | 426391 |

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

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|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Non-maintained special |
| Age range of pupils | 14–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Boys |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 25 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 15 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ken Parkyn |
| Principal | Mark Hughes |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16–17 November 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01323 872940 |
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