

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

Church Street, Boston Spa, West Yorkshire, LS23 6DF

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- School leaders have continued to build upon the good standards identified in the previous inspection report. Rigorous checks carried out on the quality of teaching have ensured pupils' achievement is good overall.
- Governors are well informed and have a very good understanding of school data. Their knowledge and skills have directly contributed to pupils' continuous good progress over time.
- The small number of children who attend the early years unit settle well and work hard on developing their language skills.
- Students who attend the sixth form unit make excellent progress both in school and at college. They benefit from a very well-planned curriculum, which enables them to pursue a wide variety of career options and ensures they are very well prepared for the next phase in education or the world of work.
- Behaviour across the school and in the residential provision is good. Staff know pupils well and are skilled at meeting their needs. This, coupled with the consistent use of the behaviour management system, ensures that any incidents are effectively managed.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and when they stay in the residential unit. A recent school focus on internet safety ensures pupils know how to keep safe both inside and outside school.
- Teaching is nearly always good, with some examples of outstanding practice. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school because the vast majority of staff make learning interesting and fun.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Provision in the early years does not support all areas of learning. As a result, children make less than good progress in developing their physical and creative skills.
- In a small number of instances, work set does not always match the needs of pupils sufficiently closely and learning slows.
- Marking and feedback does not consistently give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in lessons and parts of lessons from across the school taught by teachers and support staff. Several lesson observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. The inspection team also examined the quality of work in the books of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and work in the folders of sixth form students.
- The inspection team held meetings and discussions with pupils, the headteacher, middle leaders, members of the school's staff and the care team. The lead inspector and social care inspector met with two members of the governing body.
- The social care inspector spent time with pupils and staff in the residential unit. She also and met with staff, pupils, the headteacher and the head of care.
- The inspection team took into account the views of the 14 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also took into account the views of the 22 staff members who returned questionnaires to the inspection team.
- The inspection team studied health and safety documentation, pupils' attendance data and the school's system for checking pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Katherine Halifax

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a non-maintained special school which meets the needs of 65 pupils aged between three and 19, all of whom are deaf.
- A rising number of pupils have more complex needs including learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), speech and language difficulties, sensory impairment and physical difficulties.
- Pupils who attend come from across the country and many are resident at the school.
- A broadly average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged (pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority) and are supported by the pupil premium. However, the school does not receive its full allocation of either the pupil premium or primary school sports funding from all authorities.
- The small number of nursery and reception-aged children are all educated together. The large majority of these children are educated full time.
- The majority of sixth form students who attend the school also receive education at York College or Askham Bryan College, dependent upon the courses chosen. They complete a variety of courses, the majority linked to work-based and life skills. School staff accompany students to this provision offering support to students and college staff and ensuring students' safety
- The residential accommodation is located within the main school buildings.
- The school's residential provision was inspected in March 2014 and was judged to be outstanding in all areas.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the provision in the early years so children are able to access all areas of learning by:
 - improving the quality of play equipment and the access to outdoor play in order to accelerate their progress in physical development
 - offering more interesting and exciting activities within the classroom in order to improve children's creative skills.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring learning activities closely match pupils' needs in all lessons
 - improving the quality of marking and feedback so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Use targets from the new assessment framework of residential pupils' progress to demonstrate how individual pupil's care, education, health, communication and sensory plans support their growth and development.
- Encourage younger pupils to adopt routines for healthy eating by offering a greater variety of fruit and vegetables at every meal.
- Further improve the records of fire safety checks to include checks of fire escapes and fire doors.
- Consistently review records of sanctions and complaints to ensure they include the views of young people about all incidents and concerns.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led and managed well by the forward-thinking and well-organised headteacher and senior leadership team. They have a clear vision of how to move the school forward, which is shared by staff. An effective plan is in place for continuous improvement which focuses on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils still further.
- The leadership and management of the residential unit are good. The headteacher and care manager work closely together to ensure good outcomes for pupils.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching is carried out regularly by senior leaders. As a result, improvement has continued at a good pace since the previous inspection. Evidence of this improvement can be seen in the increase in the numbers of pupils successfully attaining national accreditation at the end of Year 11.
- This year the school has a small number of children in the early years of education for the first time for several years. The vast majority have received cochlear implants, (small surgically implanted electronic devices which provide a sense of sound for children who are deaf). Whilst teaching is effective in supporting their development of language and speech, activities provided do not support children's development sufficiently well in other areas of the curriculum. As a result, learning slows in children developing their physical and creative skills.
- Provision in the sixth form is outstanding and leads to excellent results for all students. Regular attendance at college ensures they learn independence skills and have an excellent range of opportunities for further learning or to join the world of work. This is clearly evidenced last year when all school leavers found places in education or training.
- Middle leaders have recently been appointed and are already beginning to play a role in monitoring the quality of teaching in their subjects. They are starting to contribute to the achievement of all groups of pupils. This is evidenced by the increase in standards in mathematics at the end of Year 11 last year.
- The headteacher and the governing body ensure performance targets for staff link directly to pupils' achievement and targets in the school improvement plan. Checks on the performance of staff are undertaken regularly and robustly and this information is used to make decisions on teachers' pay progression.
- Staff have very high expectations of what every pupil can achieve and this message is at heart of the school's ethos. The senior leadership team ensures that all are welcomed into school and every pupil is given an equal opportunity to succeed because the school challenges discrimination and fosters good relations. As a result, pupils in all groups make good progress academically, socially and emotionally.
- The curriculum is well planned and subjects are successfully linked. It meets the new requirements for the teaching of British values and through, for example, visits to London enables pupils of all ages and abilities to gain an understanding of life in modern Britain.
- The school curriculum is enriched with a myriad of visitors and visits away from the classroom. These experiences bring learning to life for pupils. For example, skiing trips and trips to Rome and France widen pupils' horizons and understanding of the world, which contribute to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Parents who made their views known through the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) unanimously support the work of the school, as evidenced by their 100% recommendation of the school to others.
- School leaders are justifiably proud of the sporting accomplishments of their pupils. The small amount of primary sports funding received is used effectively, as evidenced by the school's recent achievements in inter-school competitions in cross country and tag rugby.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body have an excellent range of skills and experience which they have updated by undertaking further training. As a result, they are able to offer good levels of challenge and support to senior leaders on the achievement of pupils and quality of teaching.
 - Governors manage the pupil premium funding prudently and this careful management and the devolvement of extra school funds has enabled them to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. As a result, last year this group made good progress overall in school, demonstrating that gaps in learning for this group are closing.
 - In partnership with senior leaders, governors have developed an effective system for checking the performance of all staff which rewards good teaching and addresses underperformance.
 - Safeguarding procedures and policies meet current requirements. Governors undertake regular child protection training and carry out regular checks on the premises and school buildings.

- The finance committee ensures that financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively and, as a result, a planned deficit budget is due to be resolved this year.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding and child protection policies and practice meet requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils across the school and residential provision show good attitudes and behaviour. This, coupled with the skilful support given by staff, ensures that learning in classrooms is very infrequently interrupted by difficult behaviour. These positive attitudes to learning have contributed directly to the improvement in pupils' achievement across the school.
- A nurturing and caring ethos which is promoted throughout school is reflected in the caring attitudes pupils show to each other and adults alike. 'This school is brilliant and can't get any better', commented several pupils, reflecting the views of many. This is further evidenced by pupils' good levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Parents hold the view that behaviour is good and often better, that their children are safe and happy at school and that the school prepares pupils well for the future.
- School records show that no pupil has been excluded in the past two years. Incidents of difficult behaviour rarely escalate because of the effective way in which the behaviour policy is consistently applied across the school and residential unit by skilled staff.
- Sixth form pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. Experiences away from the classroom help them to develop mature attitudes and enable them to make outstanding progress towards developing life skills.
- Children in the early years behave well and settle quickly when they first start school because of the nurturing attitudes shown by staff.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Safeguarding training is undertaken regularly by all staff and effective work is undertaken with outside agencies to ensure pupils' safety both inside and outside school.
- Pupils in school and those who access residential care agree they feel very safe and secure because staff are there to help them day and night. They feel there is always someone there who will listen should they have concerns.
- Whole-school training on keeping safe on the internet ensures pupils are able to understand how to make safe decisions now and in the future.
- The school's recent anti-bullying week highlighted to pupils the different forms bullying can take. Those pupils who spoke to the inspection team, both formally and informally, showed clear understanding of the many forms bullying can take and were adamant it did not happen in their school. They were also clear about where to turn should an incident occur.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of pupils' learning across the school is good overall and stems from the good teaching they receive.
- Evidence of good progress seen in pupils' books and folders supports senior leaders' belief that the quality of teaching is good over time.
- Communication skills, reading, writing and mathematics are taught well across the school as evidenced by good and better progress made by the majority of pupils.
- Planning for future learning is accurate overall because staff understand pupils' needs and ensure work set meets the needs of pupils. This enables most groups, including those who are disadvantaged, to make good progress overall. However, in a very small number of lessons, often lower down the school, work set does not match the needs of pupils closely enough and this slows their progress.
- Homework is set, where appropriate, and pupils often take pride in completing it. Parents agree it helps pupils to practise their skills and improve their work.
- All staff share high expectations for the progress of the pupils in their care. Effective teamwork and

planning are apparent within the majority of classrooms and results in pupils' increased enjoyment of learning, which reflects in their good attitudes and behaviour.

- Currently, pupils are making good and sometimes even better progress in reading, communication and mathematics. The school employs speech and language therapists who are skilled in working with pupils who are deaf. This highly integrated multi-professional approach contributes directly to pupils' good achievement, both academically and socially and emotionally.
- Extra sessions planned for pupils who need extra help with their learning are targeted closely to their needs and are carefully monitored. As a result, these pupils make the same good progress as others in the school.
- Pupils' work is regularly and diligently marked. However, marking and feedback are often just encouraging comments which do not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- Pupils are offered a wide range of different learning opportunities through their studies in religious education, personal and social education, and art and design. These opportunities promote and develop their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good overall and for some it is outstanding. Current school data show that the majority of groups, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress across the school.
- Pupils with additional needs, for example, those with learning difficulties or ASD, make good progress because of the highly individual curriculum provided for each pupil.
- Current school data show pupils across the school are making good progress from a variety of different starting points and are set to make even greater gains than last year. Lesson observations, a scrutiny of pupils' work and staff records, support this view.
- Two years ago pupils' progress in mathematics dipped. A different approach to teaching this subject has reversed this trend and has improved pupils' achievement overall. Comments made by pupils such as: 'I really enjoy maths because I love solving problems' and 'maths is hard but my teacher makes it fun' demonstrate pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning which have contributed to their improved progress.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and are developing a love of reading through reading in class and through trips to the school library.
- The small number of primary age pupils make good progress because the curriculum is well organised and is highly individualised to meet their often very complex needs.
- Key Stage 4 students access a diverse range of different curriculum options, including GCSE English and mathematics, physical education and life skills, including cooking and shopping for themselves. This broad curriculum ensures they leave with a range of skills and accreditations which prepare them well for their transfer to the sixth form provision or the world of work.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to others in the school. This demonstrates the effective use of pupil premium funding which is added to by school funds and is used to provide extra support to boost pupils' achievement in a variety of different ways, including one-to-one and small group sessions. There is a very small number of pupils who take GCSE examinations so it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons with the attainment of non-disadvantaged pupils in school or nationally.
- The most able pupils achieve well, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4, because they are challenged and stretched in their learning by the work they are given.
- Because of the well-targeted support, the majority of groups of pupils make equally good progress in English and mathematics as their peers. This shows the school's continued commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The early years provision requires improvement

- Outcomes for children who join the early years require improvement. This is because the activities offered in the unit and in the outside play area do not allow children to access all areas of the curriculum. For example, there are too few opportunities for pupils to choose from a range of different activities and to play independently and creatively which slows their progress in developing creative skills.
- Outdoor play activities are limited and the play area is not freely accessible from the classroom. For example, there are too few opportunities for children to develop their physical skills in climbing, balancing

and pedalling. This slows development of their physical skills.

- The majority of children have cochlear implants and staff are very skilled in encouraging these children to speak and develop language skills. As a result, they make good progress in speaking and listening.
- Nursery-age children work alongside reception-age children and are offered similar activities. Staff have started to measure their progress against national guidance, but this process is at an early stage of development and, as a result, further analysis of progress is at an early stage of development.
- Staff know the children well and children settle quickly into the routines of the unit. They enjoy coming to school and behaviour is good overall.
- Leadership and management and the quality of teaching require improvement because activities set do not always accurately meet the needs of children who attend. A lack of opportunity to promote independence skills means that children are not always as well prepared as they could be when they start Year 1.
- This is the first year for a number of years that school has had early years children. Current progress indicates that achievement requires improvement for all groups, including those for whom the school receives extra funding and the most able.
- Snack time promotes good manners and turn taking, as well as healthy eating. Opportunities such as these promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Staff work very closely together and provide a nurturing environment for the children in their care. They support and guide children well.
- Relationships between staff and children are strong, as evidenced by the way children quickly settle despite their often long journey from home and develop an understanding of how to behave.
- Parents feel that the early years unit gives their children a good start in school. They comment on the warm and friendly approach of all staff and appreciate their support in helping their children to learn.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Students who attend the sixth form provision make excellent progress from a range of different starting points.
- Students love coming to school and appreciate the exceptionally well-organised curriculum which enables them to achieve a wide range of accreditation.
- Students who join are predominantly Year 11 leavers who have previously attended the school. All say they look forward to becoming sixth formers: 'almost grown-ups', as they say. They make a smooth transition to this phase in their education because they are already familiar with school routines and staff.
- The curriculum is exceptionally well balanced and offers a wide range of opportunities for accreditation. Students build on academic qualifications gained at the end of Year 11 and some access A-level courses although none are doing so this year.
- School leaders are justifiably proud of the accomplishments of sixth form students. Current students are gaining qualifications in childcare, catering, plumbing and joinery. Past students have been highly successful in a range of subjects including media studies and several have entered university.
- As a result, all students leave with a range of qualifications and accreditations which prepare them exceptionally well for the next phase in their education or the world of work.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. The vast majority show very mature attitudes in lessons and quickly learn the social skills required, for example, to order a meal in a busy college café. Several have recently gained awards from the college staff for their positive attitudes and excellent behaviour in class.
- The unit is very well led and managed by the sixth form leader who manages the complex range of courses on offer and monitors the quality of teaching overall. As a result, teaching is excellent and leads to outstanding outcomes for all students.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	is good
Residential pupils' safety	is good
Leadership and management of the residential provision	are good

- Safeguarding and pupils' health are top priorities for the school. Staff are recruited with great care. Staff know what to do when they have concerns about pupils' safety and are confident in the leadership provided by child protection officers. The school nurse provides clear and inspirational guidance to ensure staff know, understand and meet the unique health needs of pupils. Residential students are well supervised. They feel safe in school and in the residential environment. Pupils say, 'There is no bullying in this school. Staff really help us to feel great and get on with each other.'
- Pupils recognise the progress they make through attending the school. They are empowered because they become confident and effective communicators who readily share their views and opinions. Pupils have open and warm relationships with staff which are built upon honesty and respect. Pupils say they can discuss matters that affect them with school leaders within the elected care and student forum meetings.
- Records and documentation reflect the uniqueness of each individual and effectively contribute to the good quality care provided. A minority of records such as some sanctions and complaints do not consistently record the views of young people. However, the impact of this is minimised because of staff's knowledge of the residential pupils.
- Staff are aspirational for pupils and care about their welfare. They encourage pupils to participate in a range of sporting and creative activities, as well as visit community resources and places of interest. Overall, the food provided is well balanced and nutritious, although younger pupils are not routinely offered a choice of fruit and vegetables at teatime. Older pupils learn to take increasing responsibility for meal planning and preparation, as well as other aspects of becoming good citizens. By the time they reach their late teens, they possess a range of outstanding skills in social communication, self-help and making a positive contribution to wider society.
- The leadership team ensures that the school development plan includes continuous improvement for the residential environment to offer safe and comfortable accommodation. A comprehensive fire risk assessment and subsequent improvement plan is well under way. There is delay in the implementation of some identified aspects, such as records of regular checks of fire escapes. Nevertheless, pupils are clear on the evacuation process because they regularly participate in escape drills, which mean they are able to evacuate safely in an emergency.

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>

Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	108120
Social care unique reference number	SC001535
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	447934

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	65
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	22
Number of boarders on roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Winfield
Headteacher	Ann Bradbury
Date of previous school inspection	29 February 2012
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