

## INSPECTION REPORT

**St Vincent's School for the Blind**

West Derby Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104734

Headteacher: Mr Anthony MacQuarrie

Reporting inspector. Anne J Hayward  
16417

Dates of inspection: 14 – 16 February 2000

Inspection number: 188491

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special school for blind and partially sighted pupils
School category:	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils:	4 - 17 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	68 Yew Tree Lane West Derby Liverpool Merseyside
Postcode:	L12 9HN
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Appropriate authority:	Catholic Blind Institute
Name of chair of governors:	Miss Cathy McCann
Date of previous inspection:	1 - 4 July 1996

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Vincent's school is a non-maintained residential mixed special school for 87 pupils between the ages of 4 and 17 who are blind or partially sighted. The school is administered by the Catholic Blind Institute with a governing body and a board of trustees. All pupils have a visual impairment and a number have significant additional needs such as learning difficulties and emotional problems. Currently, there are 35 pupils who board weekly. The school's roll has been falling steadily over the past few years with pupils being integrated into mainstream provision and currently there are only 19 pupils in the primary department. There is an increasing number of pupils entering the school with more complex difficulties. Eighteen of the primary pupils and 48 of the secondary and post-16 pupils are registered blind. Nine pupils are eligible for free school meals and 2 pupils have English as an additional language. Pupils attain below national standards on entry.

The school is situated in pleasant surroundings with plentiful well-appointed accommodation. Many pupils come from a wide area including Lincolnshire. Day pupils are taxied in and some of these pupils have long journeys. All teaching staff are fully qualified to teach pupils with visual impairment and the majority have taught at the school for a significant length of time. The headteacher has been in post three years.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school is very effective in providing a good quality education for its pupils. The standards that pupils achieve are good in relation to their individual targets and pupils leave school with a good range of external accreditation that enables them to go on to college or work. Teaching is good, often very good, and sometimes excellent. Staff work very well as a team and create a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils have access to a high quality residence provision which prepares them very well for life in the community. The day-to-day management of the school is very effective. The governors and trustees are committed to the school. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching is good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and meet the needs of pupils with visual impairment very well.
- Pupils show excellent attitudes to their work. Behaviour around the school is very good and the very good relationships between staff and pupils enable pupils to flourish.
- The quality and range of the curriculum is very good. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- Achievements of pupils across the curriculum are good.
- Music is a strength of the school.
- The quality of the residence and care of pupils is very good.
- The links with parents are good; parents value the quality of support given by the school.
- The headteacher has made an effective contribution in enabling the school to raise standards.

#### **What could be improved**

- There is a lack of a strategic vision and forward financial planning for the school.
- The teaching and curriculum for pupils who have significant additional learning needs.
- The school has very generous staffing levels which require review.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in July 1996. Overall, the school has made a good improvement. Very good progress has been made in the links between the care and teaching staff in planning the 24-hour curriculum. This is now a strength of the school. There has been significant investment in upgrading the library, music technology suite and in residential areas, all of which are of a very high standard. Improvements have been made in the quality of teaching with a high proportion being very good and some excellent. Extensive training has been put in place for staff in the use of information communication technology, which has had a positive impact on the progress made by the pupils. Curriculum co-ordinators have clear job descriptions and training but links between key stage 2 and 3 with regard to joint planning are still underdeveloped. The senior management team now have clear roles and responsibilities but there is still insufficient whole school monitoring undertaken. Satisfactory progress has been made in the devolvement of budgets and good budgetary systems are in now place; however, unsatisfactory progress has been made in the ability of the school to strategically plan its budget.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key
speaking and listening		A	A	A	very good A
reading		B	A	A	good B
writing		C	B	B	satisfactory C
mathematics		B	B	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education		A	A	A	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*		A	A	A	

\* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

Standards of achievements across the curriculum are good. Throughout the school, pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening. By the time they leave school pupils achieve satisfactory standards in reading; for younger pupils the necessity to master Braille impacts upon their reading fluency. Overall, pupils make very good progress in English and in Key Stage 4 achieve good results in GCSE in relation to their individual targets. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and science across the keys stages, very good progress in history and excellent progress in music. Across all other areas of the curriculum pupils make good progress. Pupils with additional needs make satisfactory progress overall. By the end of the pupils' school life they achieve very well in relation to their individual targets in GCSEs, certificates of education, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Youth Award Schemes and other examinations in life skills and the world of work. Pupils make very good progress against their personal targets, particularly in mobility and in the development of their confidence and self-esteem.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils respect one another's feelings and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very Good. Pupils are courteous, polite and friendly in lessons and around school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils play an active part in the life of the school, support and care for one another and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good.
Attendance	Very good.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are very enthusiastic. They show a positive interest in all school activities and participate in the wide variety of extra curricular opportunities given to them. Pupils behave very well in and outside school and show respect for their own and other people's property. By the time they leave school pupils have confidence in their own abilities to succeed. Pupils personal development is very good and they show respect for all members of the school community, additional time and expertise is required for those pupils with significant additional special needs in order that they make the same progress.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall		Very Good	Good	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Ninety-five per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better, 41 per cent is very good or better and 5 per cent is unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching across the key stages is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are particularly skilled in the teaching of Braille. This thorough teaching enables the pupils to have competency in this medium for reading, recording and communication. All the teachers are fluent in Braille and some of the support assistants are also competent which enhances their ability to contribute to the pupils' learning. Mobility is well taught and is a strength of the school. The pupils' self-esteem is improved by their continuing success in their mobility and their strive for independence. The quality of teaching in English, literacy, mathematics, numeracy, science, history and personal and life skills is good and sometimes very good across the school. Pupils are constantly acquiring new skills and building on their previous knowledge. The teaching of music is excellent and inspirational. As a result, pupils learn skills which enable them to perform at the highest levels. The teaching of some pupils with significant additional special needs is unsatisfactory due to the lack of teacher specialist knowledge, and some of the activities are inappropriate.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall the curriculum is very good. Mobility training and the teaching of Braille contribute to the high standards achieved by the pupils. The very good range of accreditation in Key Stage 4 and post-16 is a strength of the curriculum. There is a weakness in the curriculum for pupils with significant additional special needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	This is good and all the needs are met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is excellent and a strength of the school. The provision permeates the whole of the curriculum and all aspects of the life of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is of a very high standard. The residence is a strength of the school and care plans are informative and meet the needs of the pupils.

The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are very good. The school has in place an appropriate statutory curriculum, which is enhanced by a range of additional specialist features including mobility training, teaching of Braille and Moon, extended support within the residential provision, and expertise of therapists and psychologists, all of which are of a very high quality. Particular strengths in Key Stages 1 and 2 are music, history, literacy and numeracy and the very good range of accreditation offered at Key Stage 4 and in Year 12. The curriculum for pupils with significant additional needs lacks clear policy and a framework and is unsatisfactory. The 24-hour curriculum is a strength of the school. The very good after-school activities include youth club, swimming, sports and community projects. The residential provision is a strength of the school pupils are cared for very well and the quality of the accommodation is of a very high standard.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has worked hard since his appointment and has established very effective systems for communication in the school. The senior management have clear roles but have not developed a whole-school approach to monitoring and evaluating school performance.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body and trustees understand and carry out their role effectively. They appreciate that the school will need to review its current position to meet the changing requirements of its pupils. Currently, there is a lack of strategic vision for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has established satisfactory targets for pupil performance. The school has worked hard and succeeded in improving standards and the quality of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and post-16.
The strategic use of resources	This is satisfactory. The School Development Plan is a useful document but does not contain enough information on financial implications and costings.

The headteacher has established an effective range of meetings which results in good communication throughout the school. The school management plan has realistic targets, although the financial implications and costings are insufficient to inform future planning. The headteacher is very approachable and this is appreciated by pupils, staff and parents. Monitoring systems have been put into place but are too new to judge their effectiveness. The staffing levels are very generous and the senior management team is particularly large for the size of school. The chair of governors works very effectively with the headteacher and is aware of the need for a clearer strategic vision for the future. The school is in an early stage of applying the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The standards that the pupils achieve.</li> <li>• How the school helps pupils whatever their ability, to learn and make progress.</li> <li>• There is a genuine partnership between teachers and parents.</li> <li>• Children care for one another without being asked.</li> <li>• The headteacher is approachable and very realistic.</li> <li>• The youth club is very good and day pupils can attend and stay overnight.</li> <li>• Sessions that are put on by the school to help parents learn Braille.</li> <li>• The upgrading of the recording studio and the library.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very small minority of parents would like greater access to mobility training, speech and physiotherapy.</li> <li>• The amount of homework is too much for some children.</li> <li>• A lift to be installed for those pupils with mobility problems.</li> <li>• To be better informed about their children's progress.</li> </ul>

The access that pupils have to mobility training is good. The increasing number of pupils with additional needs means that the school will need to review the amount of therapy available and consider the installation of a lift. The amount of homework seems appropriate; however, the school does need to look at managing better the pressure that homework places on pupils. Communication with parents is generally good, although the school does need to involve parents more in Individual Education Plan reviews. The school is very anxious that parents discuss any particular problems and arrangements will be made to support the pupil.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Standards and achievements**

1. It is inappropriate to judge pupils against national standards due to their wide-ranging special needs. Therefore, comments will be made about pupil's progress and achievements. The standards that the pupil's achieve are good across the curriculum. In Key Stage SAT's pupils do not achieve national standards but make good progress against their personal targets.
2. By the end of Key Stage 1, many pupils can recognise names and sound of letters and are able to blend sounds to make words. By the end of Key Stage 2 they are able to read very simple material in Braille. Higher-attaining pupils can construct several sentences from newspaper headlines. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher-attaining pupils can access a wide range of reference material and are able to consider the way that text is adapted to various media. By the end of Key Stage 4 and post-16, pupils gain passes in a wide range of GCSEs and other external examinations which shows very good progress. In English, throughout the school, pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening and attain good standards in this aspect of their work. They listen attentively and are able to recall an extensive range of information. They speak articulately and with confidence about wide-ranging issues related to their lessons and personal interests across the Key Stages. By the time pupils leave school they achieve satisfactory standards in reading. For younger pupils the necessity to master Braille impacts on their reading fluency. However, over time they make excellent progress and some older pupils are able to read fluently and have an appreciation of texts which include *Billy Liar*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Fat Tony*. Pupils produce good quality writing when they are creating their own works of fiction and poetry.
3. Mathematics is a challenging curriculum area for pupils with a visual impairment. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress, they know how to express chances of probability and are able to make accurate predictions with regard to simple probability questions. By the end of Key Stage 3 progress is good. Pupils can recognise coins and count out the correct numbers of coins using shape identification. They make good progress in all aspects of number. At the end of Key Stage 4 the higher attaining pupils are achieving in line with national expectations. Pupils are able to use specialist equipment for measuring angles and can plot graphs competently.
4. In science, the adaptation of experimental work for pupils who have a visual impairment is a strength of the school and enables pupils to make good progress across the school. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils know the definition of microorganisms and that microorganisms can sometimes get into bodies and cause illness. They know how to use a speaking thermometer to record a temperature rise in fermenting fruit. They understand the need for protective clothing when doing experiments. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils know the parts of a flowering plant and can describe the functions of the separate parts. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils can carry out experiments independently and with confidence.
5. In all other areas of the curriculum the majority of the pupils make good progress. In music, pupils make very good progress in composing music which is performed in front of large audiences. They can use music technology with flair and confidence and produce work of a national standard. The high quality teaching impacts significantly on the very good progress pupils make. Some pupils who have significant additional special needs do not make as much progress as they are capable due to the staff's lack of experience and knowledge of their needs.

#### **Teaching**

6. Ninety-five per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better, 41 per cent is very good or better and 5 per cent is unsatisfactory. This is a good improvement on the last inspection. Overall, the quality of teaching across the key stages is good, often very good and sometimes excellent. Teaching is often excellent in music, history and in the infant classes. Teachers have very

good subject knowledge and show enthusiasm for their subject. Planning is very detailed in all subjects. Particular attention is given to extend pupils' thinking and research skills; this is particularly evident in design and technology, where pupils make practical games, and in music, where pupils compose and record their own material. In history, pupils are given a very good range of artefacts, which they can touch, and listen to accounts of the Second World War in their local area. Through this approach pupils acquire a true understanding of what life was like and are able to write vivid accounts. The teachers' very good subject knowledge in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, but particularly in Key Stages 1 and 2, enables pupils to make very good progress in these areas.

7. Braille is well taught in the primary department of the school, and at the end of Key Stage 2, some pupils are able to read fluently with expression. This thorough teaching enables the pupils to have a competency in this medium, both for reading and recording when they are in Key Stages 3 and 4. All the teachers are fluent in Braille and some of the support assistants are also competent in this medium, enhancing their ability to contribute to the pupils' learning. Braille is well reinforced throughout the curriculum.
8. The teaching of life skills is a strength of the school. There is a very clear life skills programme that teaches the pupils the skills to be able to live independently as they move into adulthood. All issues are dealt with sensitively, thus enabling the students to develop high self-esteem.
9. Mobility is well taught and is a strength of the school. The school has increased the level of staffing since the last inspection and this enables the pupils to have more opportunity to develop their mobility skills. There is a good mobility policy and scheme of work, and this aspect of the school's work, which is of great importance for pupils with a visual impairment, has improved since the last inspection. The mobility programme, which contains attainment targets, touches on aspects of numeracy work and this cross-curricular feature is a strength. The pupils' self-esteem is improved by their continuing success in their mobility.

### **Attitude and behaviour**

10. The pupils' attitude towards school is excellent. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy coming to school. All the pupils show a positive interest in school and take a full part in the activities that the school provides. They are polite and courteous to one another and to adults. Pupils greet one another at the start of the day with warmth and genuine affection. At lunchtimes pupils show care and concern for others who may need extra help; often pupils are deep in conversation about the lessons or the activities that are on offer in the evening. Some day pupils stay on after the end of the formal school day to use the facilities and equipment that the school has to offer to do their homework. Others stay to do homework and then participate in some of the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school facilitates. Pupil's behaviour is very good; they are polite to one another and to adults. They are aware of the impact of their behaviour on other people. There is an absence of any oppressive behaviour, including bullying. They show respect for their own and other people's property. Overall the pupils' personal development is very good; they show respect for all members of the school community; the pupils have good self-esteem and show good personal responsibility. The school prepares them well for life in their own community.

### **Curriculum**

11. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are very good. The school has in place an appropriate statutory curriculum, which is enhanced by a range of additional specialist features, including mobility training, teaching of Braille and Moon, extended support within the residential provision, and the expertise of therapists and psychologists, all of which are of a very high quality.
12. The breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum throughout the school is good. For the youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 the quality of learning opportunities is excellent. The school has adapted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies very well, and this is having a significant impact upon pupils' acquisition of skills in their English and mathematics

lessons. The school enables pupils to participate in a very wide range of learning opportunities outside the classroom, including residential visits to Exmoor, Lourdes, the World War 1 battlefields, and participation in inter-schools sporting events, both nationally and internationally.

13. Pupils' personal, social and health education is a high priority for the school and they have made very good provision in lessons and through the wider curriculum to encourage pupils to have confidence to discuss issues of sensitivity. Staff have cultivated a secure and caring ethos that is instrumental in preparing pupils for taking personal responsibility for their actions and developing an understanding of how these may affect others.
14. The oldest pupils in Key Stage 4 and Year 12 are given very good opportunities to experience the world of work, and the support the school receives from the LEA careers service is of a very high quality, thus enabling pupils to make informed choices about their future. These pupils pursue a wide range of accredited courses, including GCSE, AEB, NVQ and ASDAN Awards in the majority of subjects.
15. The school has developed very positive links with the local community, which is having a significant impact upon the quality of the music curriculum, which is excellent. Pupils regularly work with members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra to develop their skills in composing and performing a wide range of music. This is further enhanced by the provision of an excellent music suite and very good technology.
16. Relationships with partner institutions are very good. Staff with expertise in teaching pupils with visual impairment are enabled to share their knowledge and skills with teachers in mainstream schools. This, in turn, facilitates the inclusion of individual pupils in mainstream schools for some of their learning experiences. The school has devised some excellent strategies to teach English to pupils whose ages and abilities are very wide ranging. Since the time of the last inspection the school has made good progress in developing this aspect of its work.

### **Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development**

17. The provision made for pupils' personal development is excellent. It is coherent and appropriate to the ages and needs of the pupils. Pupils have a clear knowledge and understanding of health issues and are able to make informed choices about matters relating to their own health and well-being. Issues relating to sex education and drugs awareness are dealt with sensitively and in accordance with the school's policies.
18. Pupils' knowledge and insights into the values and beliefs of others are excellent and enable them to reflect positively upon their own experiences in a way that promotes their spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. The strong Christian ethos and philosophy of the school permeates every strand of pupils' daily lives. Staff instinctively promote these experiences by seizing moments which arise in everyday life, such as discussions over meals about emotive items of national and international news, through developing a love and appreciation of music, and by planning acts of collective worship which are founded upon the celebration of self-worth.
19. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of the morality which underpins their own excellent social competence. Staff provide excellent role models for pupils. They consistently promote and foster social values of honesty, fairness and respect for truth and justice. This is further enhanced by wide-ranging and well-chosen literature for pupils to study during their English lessons and through the valuable experiences gained by pupils living in the residential community. The very good range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and in Year 12 plays a significant part in enabling pupils to take on responsibility, demonstrate initiative, and to contribute to the wider community. Pupils regularly raise money for charitable causes including Cafod, St Vincent de Paul and The Good Shepherd.
20. Pupils' awareness of their own culture and that of others is excellent. The school actively promotes a deep knowledge and understanding of the ethnic and cultural diversity of British

society by providing an extensive programme of visits to places of interest, including a local mosque, and also by inviting a wide range of visitors into the school. Pupils are currently working with members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra appraising and composing music. Through their history lessons, pupils learn about the rich legacies left by invaders and settlers including the Romans and Vikings. Literature is used well in English lessons to widen pupils' appreciation of the customs and beliefs of different peoples. This is enhanced further by the regular celebration of both Christian and non-Christian festivals, including Ramadan and the Chinese New Year. Adults sensitively develop pupils' understanding of their own particular culture, as members of the visually impaired population, through the importance they place on Braille within the school as a means of communication for both the sighted and non-sighted community.

21. Since the time of the last inspection the school has made good progress in developing this aspect of its work to such a high standard and it is now a significant strength.

### **Residence and care**

22. The residential aspect of the school is a strength. The care plans that are prepared for each residential pupil are well-structured and clearly define the steps in the daily living skills curriculum. The pupils each have assigned to them a key worker, who supports, teaches and monitors their progress. The key worker also acts as a confidante for the pupil, which enables the pupils (and their parents) to have confidence in the residential setting.
23. The leadership and management of the care team is a strength of the school. The team has a strong sense of identity. The care staff liaise well with the education staff for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The residential accommodation is arranged into five family units. The accommodation is of a high standard with the majority of pupils in single or shared rooms. One unit has recently been refurbished to a very high standard, with the rooms having *en suite* facilities. The pupils were consulted regarding the refurbishment of the unit. The units have sufficient areas for the pupils to enjoy their leisure time.
24. The pupils have breakfast and tea in the units and the primary pupils also have lunch in their unit setting. All the day pupils are attached to one of the residential units. Some of the day pupils choose to stay after the school day has finished, to participate in some of the wide range of after-school activities that are provided, and to take advantage of the very good range of specialist equipment available to the pupils.
25. The 24-hour curriculum is a strength of the school. After school, there is a wide range of activities in which the pupils may participate. These activities include music club, book club, swimming and goal ball. The youth club council contributes to the success of the youth club. Pupils from a local catholic mainstream secondary school, who are participating in community projects, join the pupils at the youth club and this contributes to its success.
26. The school is very effective in caring for its pupils. Welfare, safety and child protection arrangements for pupils are very good. There are nominated staff who have responsibility for dealing with matters relating to child protection, and all staff are conversant with procedures outlined in the school's policy. Pupils with additional special needs are given very good support by a range of skilled professional specialists, including visiting therapists, the educational psychologist, school doctor and nurse.
27. The school is very good at monitoring the pupils' academic performance and personal development. The procedures the school has implemented are very good as they give detailed information about pupils' progress and achievements. They are frequently updated to reflect each individual goal pupils have attained, both in class and in the wider learning environment. Pupils receive very good support and guidance from all staff, which enables them, as they get older, to contribute positively to setting their own learning targets. As a result, pupils have confidence to discuss, during 'form time,' their own strengths or weaknesses. This involvement makes a significant contribution when teachers are using assessment outcomes to inform their planning for future teaching and learning activities.

28. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent and staff are skilful in developing pupils' understanding of appropriate ways to behave. Pupils know it is unacceptable to bully others and have a clear understanding of the repercussions for any rare misdemeanours. Staff consistently reward pupils for their good work and excellent behaviour. Pupils achieve great satisfaction from having these successes acknowledged by the adults with whom they work. They are particularly eager to share the contents of their Record of Achievement which reflect pupils own, self-imposed, high standards. Pupils talk confidently about how the school would deal with any incident of harassment and were insistent that this need had never arisen.

### **Partnership with Parents**

29. The school has full and effective partnership with parents, who work very closely with the school to ensure that the best education is provided for their children. An annual conference day is held to which all parents are invited and attend. This gives parents a valuable insight into what support is available for them. Parents come into school on a termly basis to work in classes in Key Stage 1 and 2, and there is an active Parent-Teachers Association which raises considerable sums for the benefit of the school.
30. The home-school agreement which is signed by both parents, pupils and school alike, is well understood and appreciated as a basis for providing sound discipline and education within the school. There are regular home-school visits by key workers if problems arise, and parents are involved in their children's annual review. However, some parents are keen to have more information on their children's progress. There is an open door policy for parents to contact school at any time if they have cause for concern. The annual report to parents, newsletters and school prospectus are all very informative about the work of the school. The positive arrangements that are in place for the involvement of parents adds to the pupils' quality of education at the school.

### **Leadership and management**

31. The headteacher has worked hard since his appointment to establish effective systems of communication and decision-making. There are regular meetings of staff, a good staff training policy and reports to the governors are detailed and informative. The day-to-day management of the school is very good. The senior management works well as a team and has clear roles and responsibilities. Curriculum co-ordinators have clear roles, which represents an improvement since the last inspection; however, there is still a lack of planning between Key Stages 2 and 3. The monitoring of teaching and learning in the school is in an early stage of development, although there is a very good policy in place. The School Development Plan is a useful, practical document which provides realistic targets for the school to achieve. The senior management have worked hard to provide a clear direction for the school in a rapidly changing environment where numbers are falling and the level of need is becoming more complex. However, they still do not monitor the work of the school sufficiently. The school has set a sound range of targets to meet in raising the standards of its pupils and is beginning systematically to review progress. The chair of governors is very closely involved with the review of the school and has a very good understanding of all the issues.
32. The school has implemented a good staff development policy for teachers, support and care staff. This has had a positive impact on the ability of teachers and support staff to deliver and use information communication technology. This is a good improvement since the last inspection and has made a significant impact on the good progress that pupils make in this area. Considerable additional resources have been put into the upgrading of the library, music technology suite and the residential areas since the last inspection, which represents very good improvements and valued by the pupils, staff and parents.
33. The headteacher, supported by staff from the central services of the Catholic Blind Institute, has worked hard to establish good budget and planning procedures to support curriculum development. Budgets are now allocated to specific areas and some monitoring procedures are in place. However there is a lack of strategic financial planning, which hampers future

development.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Developing a strategic vision and financial planning for the school**

34. There is no clear strategic vision for the school to guide future developments. This is particularly important as over the past four years the school has undergone falling roles particularly in the primary department. The staffing structure has remained the same and there has been an increase in pupils with more complex difficulties entering the school. The current School Development Plan does not give a clear direction for the future. The governing body and the headteacher have had informal discussions but there is no agreed strategic plan to direct the work of the school in forthcoming years.
35. Although improvements have been made since the last inspection in budget planning, there is no clear strategic financial planning mechanism. This means that it is difficult for the school to plan ahead and budget effectively. Regular updates on the budget are not given routinely to the governing body and this therefore proves problematic for them to plan strategically and monitor spending on resources. There are no effective mechanisms for the governors to ascertain the effectiveness of their spending. The headteacher does not have a fully delegated budget and this makes planning for the school problematic. The Catholic Blind Institute has supported the school's deficit budget over the past five years by £1,047,547; currently the projected deficit is £287,085. There has been little improvement in this area since the last inspection.

### **The teaching and curriculum for pupils who have significant additional needs**

36. There are a small group of pupils in the school with significant additional needs. Teachers lack experience and specific training in the teaching of pupils with significant learning difficulties. The minority of lessons observed, which were unsatisfactory, lacked detailed planning or specific and measurable targets for individual pupils; the pace of lessons was slow and the activities inappropriate. The staffing levels are very generous in some classes and this occasionally leads to pupils becoming over-dependent on staff thus preventing the development of independent learning, particularly for those pupils with additional needs. In addition, support staff are not always managed effectively or used.
37. The quality of the curriculum for pupils who have significant needs is not planned to incorporate the small steps required as a result of their difficulties. It is therefore not relevant or appropriate. As a result, the progress of this small group of pupils is insufficient. The school has yet to devise a curriculum policy and scheme of work for this small but increasing group of pupils.

### **The school has very generous staffing which requires review**

38. The school is very generously staffed compared with similar schools of this type. The senior management team is very large for the size of school. Although the senior management team have clear role and responsibilities, which is an improvement since the last inspection there is still a lack of systematic monitoring of the work of the school. There is insufficient cohesion in planning the curriculum between Key Stages 2 and 3, which leads to a lack of a whole school approach, although this has improved since the last inspection. With the shrinking number of pupils there is a need to review the staffing structure in order to meet the changing requirements of pupils.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

39. The school has undergone a fall in the number of pupils over the past three years, particularly in the primary age range, and there has been a rise in the number of pupils with more complex difficulties. It is therefore very important for the school to develop a longer-term strategy to meet these changing needs.



- The trustees, governors and staff of the school need to establish a clear strategic vision and financial plan for the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and range of curriculum for pupils who have significant additional learning needs by:
  - Establishing a curriculum policy and scheme of work that includes guidance on assessment and recording strategies;
  - Putting into place a staff development and training programme;
  - Implementing systems to monitor the provision on a regular basis.
- Review the staffing levels and responsibilities of the school teaching staff in order to meet the changing needs and numbers of pupils.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### **Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection**

Number of lessons observed

66
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Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

45
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### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
18	23	36	18	5	0	0

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

### **Information about the school's pupils**

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

No of pupils
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Number of pupils on the school's roll	87
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Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	9
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#### **English as an additional language**

No of pupils
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Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2
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#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

No of pupils
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Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
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Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0
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### **Attendance**

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	8.2

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.1

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

There were no pupils attaining Level 2 or above in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 1 standards assessment tests (SAT's). Out of five pupils entering Key Stage 2 SAT's one pupil gained a Level 4 in English, mathematics and science. In Key Stage 3, five pupils gained Level 5 in English and mathematics out of twenty pupils. In Key Stage 4 and post-16 (Year12), out of twelve pupils eligible, one pupil achieved 5 or more A-C's, four pupils achieved 5 or more A-G's and seven pupils achieved 1 or more A-G's. Pupils achieved qualifications in life skills and the world of work; certification in a range of subjects including child care religious education, English and mathematics, National Vocational Qualifications in administration, and the Youth Award at bronze, silver and gold award status.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	
White	81
Any other minority ethnic group	

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White		
Other minority ethnic groups		

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y1-12**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	32
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	2.7
Average class size	6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y1-12]**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	408

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998/99
Total income	1,855,749
Total expenditure	2,087,900
Expenditure per pupil	24,278
Balance brought forward from previous year	-
Balance carried forward to next year	-

There is a deficit budget of £232,157 which is absorbed into charitable funds.

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	87
Number of questionnaires returned	59

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	29	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	39	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	26	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	42	7	4	5
The teaching is good.	71	27	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	32	10	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	29	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	55	39	5	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	73	24	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	37	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	34	5	3	12

46 parents attended the parents meeting. Some parents were concerned at the amount of homework that their child received and also the lack of a lift in the school. A small minority of parents wanted more speech and physiotherapy.