



St Ann's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102698
LEA Merton LEA
Inspection number 276755
Inspection dates 17 January 2006 to 18 January 2006
Reporting inspector Greg Sorrell AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Bordesley Road
School category	Community		Morden
Age range of pupils	3 to 19		SM4 5LT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8648 9737
Number on roll	87	Fax number	020 8640 5185
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Zafar Hasnain
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Tina Harvey

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 19	17 January 2006 - 18 January 2006	276755

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Ann's School caters for 87 boys and girls aged 3 to 19 from the borough of Merton and other boroughs nearby. All have statements of special educational needs. More than three-quarters have a primary need related to severe, profound and complex learning difficulties. Of these, one-third are also on the autistic spectrum. Other pupils have additional sensory, motor, medical and behavioural needs. In recent years, more pupils with complex and challenging behavioural needs have been admitted. Over one-third have English as an additional language and boys outnumber girls by approximately 2:1. The school recently gained Healthy School status; Activemark; Investors in People and a curriculum award for Dance. The school is subject to re-organisation planning.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school, inspectors, parents and learners all agree that St. Ann's is a good school. It provides good value for money. The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher gives excellent leadership, to a dedicated staff team. The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness, although it could do more to find out the views of parents and learners. The ethos of the school is extremely positive and enables the pupils and students to achieve well. Their personal development and well being is outstanding. Children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress due to high quality leadership, management and teaching. Many opportunities are provided to give all learners practical experiences that assist them in becoming as independent as possible. Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Support assistants make a significant contribution to ensuring that learners' needs are met and their well-being is assured. The curriculum is good and has improved since the last inspection. This is in response to the increasingly diverse and complex needs of the learners. A good range of additional activities are offered at lunch-time. These make an important contribution to all learners' social, cultural and physical development. Significant progress has been made in addressing the weakness identified in the previous inspection. The school has a good capacity to improve further. Current uncertainties regarding the budget and potential re-organisation have an adverse effect upon the school's ability to plan effectively for the future.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good because the good teaching ensures the students achieve well. Their personal development and the attention given to providing students with relevant practical experiences within the school and local community is also good. Accreditation is well established and effective in recognising their achievement. Leadership and management of the sixth form has recently been re-organised and has yet to make a significant impact although very good support is provided by the senior management team and ensures the provision is good.

What the school should do to improve further

* At the earliest opportunity establish clear funding arrangements that will enable effective strategic planning for school development; * Extend self-evaluation procedures to take a more formal account of the views of parents and learners as appropriate.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress because of the close attention to their needs in all areas of learning, particularly communication, language

and literacy. The pupils in Key Stages 1 to 4 make good progress in relation to their capabilities. The vast majority of pupils achieve the targets set by teachers. Where pupils achieve more than expected, new challenges are set and this reflects the high expectations held for the pupils. At the end of Key Stage 4, some pupils achieve success in externally accredited courses in art and music. In the sixth form pupils achieve well and complete courses and achieve accreditation in Skills for Working Life, Media Studies and the Accreditation of Life and Living. As a result of appropriate assessments, planning and teaching, there are no significant differences in the achievements of any particular groups, including those with different ethnic origins or educational need. Discussions with staff related to tracking progress confirm that the school has an accurate view of how well the pupils do.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

All learners enjoy coming to school, a view endorsed by parents. Their attendance is excellent and is only interrupted occasionally for medical reasons. The learners respond very well to the high expectations held for them. By the time they leave the school they are very well prepared for life afterwards and have contributed to the choice of their next destination as fully as possible. In the sixth form, the students have a representative on the school council where they are able to offer views about improvements. This recent initiative is worthy of extending throughout the school. All learners express preferences during lessons and communicate their choices verbally or by using symbols, gesture or by the Picture Exchange Communication System. (PECS) Behaviour is excellent in lessons and during break times when the learners are actively encouraged to mix socially. Frequently, one pupil will help another and receive encouragement and praise from their peers. The pupils and students are aware of the school rules and most do their best to follow them. They learn about what is harmful to them, to eat healthily and how to relate to others. Staff ensure that the school is a safe place where the pupils enjoy being. Learners are given a range of responsibilities which help the school to run smoothly, and some older students achieve well on work-experience. The learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They respond very well to the wealth of rich experiences the school provides. For example, in assemblies they are encouraged to reflect upon the beauty of nature at the same time as considering moral issues that may harm the environment such as pollution. By extensive use of the local community, including local schools, they develop their abilities to socialise in different settings and learn how to relate to others. Their cultural development benefits from participation in creative arts such as music and drama from a wide range of cultures. During the inspection, visiting singers from a gospel choir provided an outstanding experience for older pupils who enjoyed the occasion immensely.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is much good teaching and some that is outstanding. The high quality planning and assessment ensures individual needs are well met. This close attention to learners' individual targets in lessons promotes good quality learning. Increasingly, all staff make effective use of PECS and information and communication technology (ICT), such as interactive whiteboards, to support learning. Relationships with learners are strong and significantly aided by effective communication. They respond well to praise and prompt feedback to re-inforce learning. For example, they are frequently praised for 'good listening and good looking' when paying attention to staff. Lessons are typified by good humour which results in pupils' enjoyment of lessons. The teachers have strong subject knowledge which they use to set interesting tasks. Expertise is shared effectively within the school, such as the attention to individual learning needs overseen by the advanced skills teacher. Visiting specialists, for example, musicians, make an outstanding contribution. The close working relationship between teachers and other staff is a key feature of successful learning. Teaching assistants are well briefed and have developed appropriate support skills to ensure that opportunities to learn are maximised. They observe the learners' responses very closely and make timely interventions. In order to meet the diverse needs of learners speaking a first language other than English, specialist teaching is provided to communicate with pupils. This support is carefully co-ordinated so that the learners' communication skills are developed to access the whole curriculum. Other specialist expertise, including that provided by physiotherapists and speech and language therapists is very well integrated into many interesting learning experiences. ICT assessments are effective in enabling learners to access the curriculum by use of switches and other technologies.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with many strengths, notably the attention given to communication and the meeting of individual needs. The school makes very effective use of national strategies and the extensive skills of staff to plan interesting and exciting tasks for the learners. Great emphasis is given to first hand experiences that maximise opportunities for learning and the development of independence. The broad curriculum has a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and personal, social, health education and citizenship. Learners with additional complex learning needs access the curriculum with an emphasis on their sensory capabilities. Many learners also take part in competitive sports with other schools which aid not only their health and fitness but also their social development. The school provides good opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 4 and students in the sixth form to gain national accreditation in a range of creative and vocational subjects. The school has rightly identified the need to extend the range of accredited courses. The accommodation has several strong features that enhance the provision, yet there are also considerable limitations that have an adverse

effect upon the curriculum and as a result, the achievement of learners. The outdoor play areas afford a wide range of opportunities for sensory and creative play. The re-furbished swimming pool is a most valuable asset and makes an excellent contribution to the learners' fitness and well-being. The food technology resource is now well used and this is an improvement since the last inspection. In the main school, many areas are somewhat cramped and there is a lack of appropriate storage for mobility aids. Other areas for therapies and small group teaching are at a premium.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, advice and guidance to safeguard learners is excellent. The school places a very high value on ensuring all learners receive the best possible provision. Individual education, care and behaviour plans are frequently reviewed and used effectively. As a result, learners are assisted in achieving maximum independence with appropriate support. Child protection procedures are well known by all staff who are acutely aware of their importance. Recent training has focused upon effective care and handling of learners and support staff show high levels of respect for learners' dignity and independence. Parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for and they appreciate the commitment shown by all staff, saying for example; 'they add personal touches' and 'they care immensely, it's much more than just a job'. Staff remain vigilant at all times to ensure a safe environment and any incidents are properly recorded and followed up. Links with external agencies, such as careers guidance, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and social services are very well established so that additional support and guidance is provided as required. The on-site nurse works very well with staff, learners and parents. Parents overwhelmingly report that communication between them and school staff is effective. A small number indicated that they would like more information about their child's progress. The school has an excellent website, but is unsure as to how many parents access this valuable resource.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher give outstanding leadership and have a precise awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are well supported by other senior managers. Collectively they have ensured good improvement since the last inspection. Firmly established performance management for all staff is effective in maintaining and improving the school's overall provision. As a result the school's capacity for further improvement is good. All staff are committed to improving the quality of teaching and access to the curriculum for all learners. The teachers receive excellent guidance on planning and assessment that indicates the high expectations held by leaders. The school has a good range of self-review procedures that identify where improvements are needed. Current priorities in the school development plan are designed to raise the achievement of all learners. Although parents' opinions are

gathered informally the school does not carry out a formal survey to gain their views of its performance. Governors are effective in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met. Their strategic role is very evident in negotiations with the local education authority to secure a solution to budgetary concerns, planned deficits and potential reorganisation. The present uncertainty has an adverse effect on the school's ability to plan ahead.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for helping me to find my way around your school and for making me so welcome.

I agree with the staff and your parents that St Ann's is a good school. The school is a friendly place to be and you are happy at school. I can see that you enjoy the lessons you have each day. The teachers and all other staff help you to do well in lessons, especially improving reading, writing, mathematics and in letting everyone else know how you feel. You also do very well in becoming more able to look after yourselves. You get on well with the staff and do your very best to see that everyone can and learn in class. I could see that you help other children when you can. You told me that you feel that you can share problems with the staff and that you feel safe at school. I was very pleased to see the many different things you do during the day, especially using the computer and when learning new music. You also do lots of other exciting things like art, drama, swimming and horse-riding. When you are older you can get some awards and this is good to show other people.

There are only a couple of things that I think your school could do to improve. One is to be sure that you can have more space for you to learn. Your school can also do a bit more to find out what you and your parents think. These things will help the school to add to all the really good things that happen already.