



# St Vincent's School for Blind and Partially Sighted Children

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104734  
**LEA** Liverpool  
**Inspection number** 277213  
**Inspection dates** 19 October 2005 to 20 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Michael McDowell CfBT Lead Inspector

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	68 Yew Tree Lane
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special		West Derby
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 17		Liverpool, Merseyside L12 9HN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 2289968
<b>Number on roll</b>	79	<b>Fax number</b>	0151 2305070
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr T Bates
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 February 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen Roberts

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 17	<b>Inspection dates</b> 19 October 2005 - 20 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 277213
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

## **Description of the school**

St Vincent's provides for blind or partially sighted pupils. It is a registered charity and its governors are appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Catholic Blind Institute. It offers both day and boarding places to pupils drawn from many parts of England. They are mostly white, and British, with just a few from British Asian families. None is at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language. Three pupils are in the care of local authorities. On entry to the school, pupils' standards are mostly below or well below average.

## **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 views its effectiveness, overall, as good and that of its sixth form as satisfactory. Inspectors agree that the effectiveness of the school is good but also judge that of the sixth form to be good. Assured leadership and management are now moving the school on after a period of instability and change. The good and very good features that were reported in the last inspection have been maintained. Several aspects of provision are now outstanding. The school has begun a process of rigorous review. It has a clear idea of its strengths, and what should be improved. This is important because the standards of pupils entering the school, whether in the Foundation Stage or later, are increasingly below or well below average. This is because of their more complex needs. The school does not yet collate the data that it gathers about pupils' overall progress. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good, however, and good teaching at all stages enables pupils to learn and achieve well and come to show regard and consideration for one another. Personal development is outstanding as pupils respond to rich and varied learning opportunities, as well as to the excellent care and guidance they are given, to become confident, articulate, and happy young people. Their welfare is very well safeguarded both during the school day and in the residential provision that meets their needs so well. They like the school very much. Parents in the main express very positive views about the school and the way in which it cares for their children and enables them to overcome their difficulties and achieve well. The school is well placed to continue to improve and it gives good value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judges the effectiveness of the sixth form to be satisfactory but inspectors found its effectiveness to be good. At present, the sixth form provides an opportunity for students to stay on for an extra year to finish externally accredited courses, such as GCSEs, that they are unable to complete by the end of Year 11. Students need this extra time because their learning difficulties or disabilities make the task of completing course work both time consuming and physically tiring. As the needs of learners become more complex, the school recognises that it will be necessary to provide different Post-16 courses to meet these specific needs. However, as presently organised, the sixth form meets the requirements of learners and, as results show, enables the students to do well.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 1**

The school was not required to make a separate judgement about the effectiveness and efficiency of its boarding provision in its self-evaluation form. The Commission for Social Care Inspectorate, (CSCI), in their latest report judge the boarding provision in the school to be of a high standard. A variety of boarding arrangements is made available, including the opportunity to board one night a week in order to join with

friends in activities such as the Youth Club. The CSCI report in October 2004 found a "high standard of care practices and competence". Pupils and professionals who work alongside the school were found to rate it highly and there were "many examples of positive outcomes for children". Most care standards were "fully met" and, the remainder, were "almost met with only minor shortfalls". In the present OFSTED inspection clear evidence that the school has since addressed and eliminated the shortfalls identified in the CSCI report was provided. Leadership of the school's care and boarding arrangements is excellent, and the pupils said that the provision makes a very strong contribution to their personal development and feelings of well-being. Because residential workers work closely with teachers and fully understand the needs of the children they look after, the opportunities to learn for such children are also greatly extended. Provision for boarders is at least good in nearly all respects and some elements, including provision for personal and academic development are exemplary.

The CSCI report can be accessed at [www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk).

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Ensure that data describing pupils' progress is made available in a form that makes it easier to analyse whole school performance.

Develop the curriculum, especially in the sixth form, so as to meet the needs of learners with more profound and complex learning difficulties.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. A minority of pupils entering the school, either in the Foundation Stage, or later, has standards that are about average. For most, however, standards are below, or well below, average. Many have complex learning difficulties and disabilities, in addition to visual impairment. Whatever their starting point or their capabilities, pupils very soon begin to make good gains. By the time they leave school, standards, overall, approach those of learners of similar age in mainstream schools, and sometimes exceed these. Support for vulnerable pupils is very effective and this enables them to achieve more than expected. Pupils and students flourish in the positive climate for learning provided by the school and they make good progress towards the challenging individual targets that are set for them. Basic skills develop well. Attentive listening and confident speaking are prominent features in lessons across the age range, and reading and writing, using Braille or print, is of a standard that supports pupils' learning at every stage. Pupils' skills in number also develop sufficiently well to support their learning both in the classroom and beyond it. Those with the greatest capability go on to success in GCSE examinations while others do well in Entry Level Certificate courses and in gaining Unit awards.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils like the school very much and enjoy their education. They say that the school is much more caring than others they have attended. They like being treated as individuals who can and will succeed. Because of these very positive feelings, the behaviour of learners is also outstanding. While attendance is just below 90%, there is little unauthorised absence. It is good, overall. The shortfall in attendance is chiefly accounted for by the fact that many pupils must, occasionally, be absent for medical appointments. Pupils are keen to come to school whenever they can. It is an outstanding feature that learners fully express the social, moral, and spiritual values they are taught by their appreciation of, and their cheerful consideration for, others. They are keen to help people whether close to home or abroad. They readily give of their talents, by, for example, playing music in a care home, or, of their time, by collecting for those in need. Prayer and reflection are part of the daily life of the school and are reverently observed. Learners develop good skills to aid their future economic well-being. Outstanding among these is the ability to travel safely within the school and outside it. They learn this very well in mobility lessons. They know how to look after their bodies by taking exercise and eating a healthy diet and they understand, and stick to, simple rules to preserve their safety inside and outside the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are positive about their pupils and expect them to do well. They thoroughly assess their work and, as a result, are clear about what it is that each pupil knows, understands, and can do. The records of these assessments, however, are not collated to give an instant impression of progress made over time. This makes the prediction of future outcomes more difficult. Good account is also taken of the specific difficulties each learner must overcome in order to succeed. Lessons are then carefully adapted to ensure that full access is gained to what is taught. Work set, is carefully matched to capabilities, so that all pupils can experience both challenge and success. Teachers have appropriate training, and sufficient experience, to help pupils develop their reading and writing skills in the manner that best suits their need, be this through Braille or through print. The expertise of teachers in the subjects they teach is mostly good, and in some subjects, for example music, outstanding. As a result, pupils are happy and confident learners who achieve well. Relationships between teachers, teaching assistants, and pupils are very positive. Pupils say that they like and trust those who teach and support them and are sure that they can turn to them for help. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and that of others and they are given good guidance on what they must do in order to improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judges the curriculum to be good for the school, overall, and satisfactory for the sixth form. Inspectors judge both to be good. National Curriculum and examining bodies' requirements are fully met. Learners are given access to the National Curriculum at a level that suits them and the Sixth Form provides students an opportunity they would not otherwise have, to gain external accreditation of their work. There is strong provision for teaching Braille and mobility. Those with complex learning difficulties are encouraged and challenged as much as those for whom General Certificate of Secondary Education, (GCSE), success, is predicted. Presently, learners' needs are met well but more will need to be done if, as predicted, future pupils have more, profound needs. Pupils and students are taught how to keep healthy, sex education is given in accordance with the school policy, and pupils are taught about the dangers of smoking and drug abuse. The curriculum is enriched by the many opportunities to learn that are provided beyond the school day and which increase pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school judges this as good but inspectors judge it outstanding. The impact of care, advice, guidance, and support on learners' progress and personal development is extremely positive. Pupils are very confident and cheerful because they feel very strongly that they are part of the school family and that they are valued. They are certain that their views are taken into account and frequently acted on. The caring ethos of the school does not make them dependent but, rather, boosts their self-confidence.

When pupils become angry or distressed, very well judged adult help is always to hand so that the vulnerable pupil is supported and others are not disturbed. There is no recent evidence of oppressive behaviour but the school remains vigilant to prevent it. The safety and welfare of learners is very well secured. Procedures to ensure protection are well known to all staff members. Progress and personal development of pupils are assessed and this information is used well to guide them. Very good guidance is given about careers, college courses, and life beyond school. Learners understand risks and dangers they might encounter and how to deal with these. They emerge from their school as confident and independent young people.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management have been effective in bringing about good provision and outstanding care and support for learners. The recently appointed headteacher has made a good start and necessary changes have been made to enable the school to continue to offer a relevant service. There is now a fully delegated budget that is

well managed by the headteacher with the oversight of the governing body. The headteacher, governors, and staff share a clear vision of the direction the school must take. A suitable leadership structure has been established with a proper emphasis on accountability for all those in leadership roles. The school has made a satisfactory start in evaluating its performance; staff and governors contribute to this process but more needs to be done in order to gain and maintain an overview. Data collected to describe pupils' progress, for example, is not yet available in a form that makes it easy to analyse whole school performance. Overall, the governors carry out their responsibilities well. They are well informed about the school, and, through regular visits, monitor the curriculum and the residential facilities. The school welcomes the views of parents and the voice of pupils is listened to and respected. Very careful attention is paid to the needs of vulnerable children including those looked after by local authorities. Liaison with outside agencies is strong and productive. The management of the boarding facility is very effective. There is little turnover in teaching staff and teachers are well qualified for their roles by training and experience.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2	NA
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
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

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3	
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	2	
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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 being so helpful and polite to us when we visited your school. We greatly enjoyed talking with you and hearing your views. It was very clear from what you said that you like your school very much and feel proud of it.

Those of you who are in the School Council told us that the school listens to your ideas and suggestions. You particularly enjoy music lessons and the chance to spend nights at the school as a boarder so that you can be with your friends. You told us that your teachers expected you to work hard but that they were always ready to give you help if you need it. You said that you feel very safe and think that there is very rarely any bullying. You are sure that the adults in the school will sort out any such problems if they happen.

We agree with you that your school is good. We believe it is well run. You are given interesting and often exciting things to do by your teachers, who teach you well. We think that you are very well looked after and given every opportunity to be the best that you can be. You show, in your very good behaviour, in the way in which you care for others, and also in the good results that you achieve, that you appreciate what you are offered and really benefit from it.

We also found that your teachers know you very well and what you can do, but that this information is not always written down in the way that is most useful to the school. There are also some of you who will, in the future, need the chance to do work that is different from GCSE courses.

To help the school become even better, we have asked that information, about how well you get on over your time in school, be put in a form that is easier to understand. We have also asked that different courses be provided for those who have the most difficulty with the work that is usually done.

On behalf of Sue Hunt and myself,