



St John's School (Brighton)

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114677
LEA Brighton and Hove
Inspection number 279429
Inspection dates 9 May 2006 to 10 May 2006
Reporting inspector Charlie Henry HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Firle Road
School category	Non-maintained		Seaford
Age range of pupils	7 to 19		East Sussex BN25 2HU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01323 872940
Number on roll	115	Fax number	01323 872940
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Jane Molyneux

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7 to 19	9 May 2006 - 10 May 2006	279429

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St John's is a non-maintained special school for pupils and students who have a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The main school centre is at Seaford and is for pupils aged to 16; a second centre is in Brighton, where provision is for older students. The post-16 provision also has 32 students who are funded by the Learning and Skills Council. Many pupils also attend local mainstream schools part time. Over the last two years there has been an increase in the number who have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties or who have autistic spectrum disorders. Other pupils have severe or moderate learning difficulties; at times most have difficult behaviour. All pupils and students have statements of special educational needs and attend from a wide area of the country, although increasingly from the south east region. This has led to a growth in those who attend daily. Twenty four pupils are looked after by their local authorities. Almost half of the pupils are residential; about a quarter are female. Most are of White British ethnic heritage. No pupils have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St John's School provides a good education for its pupils and students. The inspectors consider the school's self-assessment overemphasises the weaknesses within the provision and, therefore, evaluate it to be more effective than the school's own view.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well, given their special educational needs and their levels as they enter the school. This is as a result of good teaching and effective planning for individuals. The quality of care, support and guidance is high throughout and helps the pupils to make particularly good progress in their personal development and well-being. They enjoy school, feel safe and behave well.

Teaching and learning are good overall. Staff know their pupils very well and work very effectively in teams. They work very hard to build very good relationships with their pupils. Pupils are involved in setting themselves challenging targets within individual education plans. These are used well to focus on the most important areas for learning. Pupils' progress towards these targets is good and reviewed regularly. However, the resulting data, together with information on the quality of teaching and learning, is not analysed well enough at whole school level to refine the direction of further improvements and further increase pupils' progress.

Leadership and management are good. The new Head of School has continued to build on the strengths of the school, ensuring that pupils' needs are at the centre of any decisions taken. The school has successfully tackled areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. It demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The post-16 provision is satisfactory. Students' personal development is good. However, due to inconsistent use of the targets set within individual learning plans, overall progress is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and staff work successfully together to build trust with their students. The quality of care, support and guidance is good; the management of improvement in students' behaviour is particularly effective. There is a wide range of courses that ensures each student has a relevant individualised overall programme. Leadership and management are sound although there is a need to ensure greater consistency of the best aspects of teaching and use of targets, through more effective monitoring.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The provision for pupils who board at the school is good. The very good communication between care, teaching and medical staff ensures that pupils are safe, feel secure and enjoy their time here. The staff provide a very good range of interesting activities for

pupils to enjoy including skiing, canoeing, swimming and the very popular youth club. Pupils benefit from very good support to develop their independence and they gain much from making their own meals, for example, and meeting with staff to decide on how the provision could be improved. The accommodation is good. Pupils enjoy sleeping in single rooms and they find the accommodation comfortable. They love the extensive grounds and staff take full advantage of them when planning activities. The head of care works closely with the head of school to manage the provision well and ensure that all pupils' needs are met. The residential provision within the school was last inspected by the Commission for Care Standards Inspections (CSCI) in September 2005 (<http://62.73.173.233/CSCI/RSS/66/DS0000050366.V252033.R01.S.pdf>). This report judged that almost all of the minimum standards were being met, with many areas at commendable levels. The school has addressed the very few remaining issues within this report.

What the school should do to improve further

- Analyse more rigorously achievement data and information on teaching and learning to refine priorities for school improvement and further increase pupils' progress.
- Ensure that the targets in individual learning plans are used more consistently for post-16 students to ensure lessons lead to good learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

As a result of their learning needs, pupils enter the school with standards that are well below those expected for other youngsters of their age. However, due to the quality of the education they receive, pupils' achievements are good and they make rapid progress towards their challenging targets in all areas of their development. In 2005, for example, at least 80 per cent of pupils met or exceeded their targets in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). In reading, while pupils make steady progress overall, the shortcomings in the use of reliable assessments prevent their reading progressing more quickly. While pupils' achievements are similar to those reported in the previous inspection, those in ICT are significantly better and reflect the good work done to improve the teaching of skills. Pupils did well in the 2005 national tests at Year 9, and all attained levels expected of them. Older pupils make good progress towards GCSE work, particularly in mathematics where they achieved nine passes last year. Some of the pupils' best achievements are in their personal development. Many come to the school with severe emotional and behavioural problems but very quickly show significant improvement. The high expectations of staff, combined with clear targets for pupils, help pupils to manage their own behaviour very well, and this enables them to make good progress in other areas. There are no significant differences between the progress made by different groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of pupils is good. They enjoy lessons and work conscientiously to improve their skills. Attendance is good, and often significantly better than at pupils' previous schools. Pupils speak highly of the strong relationships between the staff and themselves. A group of pupils was adamant that the best thing about school was the 'brilliant teachers who always have time for you'. Behaviour is good, and pupils respond well to the school's very clear and positive system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils are confident that they will not be bullied and feel safe because of this. They have a very good understanding of the need to live and eat healthily, and enjoy the fruit and vegetables that they have grown themselves. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils think deeply about important issues and develop a very good sense of right and wrong. They are keen to take responsibility, and members of the School Council show impressive levels of maturity when making recommendations to improve the school further and take care of the environment. For example, they were responsible for the school changing the way it handled kitchen waste, which is now used to make compost for the pupils' vegetable plot. Pupils are well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers generally plan very well to make sure that pupils of different abilities have every opportunity to make good progress. However, targets in individual learning plans are not used consistently enough to improve the learning of the oldest students. A strength of the teaching lies in the very good relationships between staff and pupils. This is why pupils have such confidence to attempt hard work without the fear of failure. For example, in a very effective mathematics lesson the teacher very carefully coaxed a pupil who found it hard to work out a complex problem. The pupil gradually started to grasp the strategies needed and beamed with delight when he got the right answer. Teachers' high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour mean that they make the most of their time in lessons. Teachers are supported very well by skilled teaching assistants who ensure that pupils who need extra help get it. This particularly helps vulnerable pupils and those with severe emotional difficulties who flourish with so much individual support. The assessment systems are good, and provide teachers with clear evidence of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is planned well to provide an interesting range of activities that are relevant to the needs of all groups of pupils. The main school is very good at planning work for individual pupils with clear targets and good evaluation of progress towards them. In the post-16 provision use of targets to plan is not so consistent. The school rightly focuses on enhancing pupils' future economic well-being with good provision for teaching basic reading, number and ICT skills and very good opportunities for older pupils to prepare for college and the world of work. The very well planned personal, social, health and citizenship programme plays an important part in helping pupils understand their own feelings and keep safe. The programme of physical activities and healthy eating contributes well to helping pupils take care of their health. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school which are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The staff's very good knowledge of pupils' needs enables them to set achievable targets and provide effective guidance to help them meet them. Child protection procedures are rigorous and all staff have pupils' welfare very much at heart. The school's very good partnership with parents does much to enhance the quality of care, support and guidance. This has improved a lot since the last inspection and has made a big difference to the quality of support and guidance offered to pupils. Parents are well informed about the school's activities and how well their children are doing. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments are good and ensure that pupils are well cared for. The specialist support provision is good and these professionals are working increasingly closely with teachers and care staff. The effectiveness of their joint working is particularly evident in the successful implementation of strategies to improve behaviour and personal development. A good range of work experience opportunities, college visits and links with Connexions contribute effective support and guidance for pupils as they prepare to leave school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The leadership and management of the school are good. The new head of school is continuing to provide clear direction and vision. She has been successful in gaining the trust and support of staff to drive further improvement since her arrival last year. Pupils' needs and well-being are at the heart of any strategic decisions taken. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through the detailed knowledge that is held about each pupil and the rigorous review and planning procedures. The school has very good

relationships with other schools and the local community that do much to support pupils' learning. The management of care and support is strong.

The senior management team works well together and in most cases knows what it needs to do in order to improve. Details of individual pupils' achievements are collected and the quality of teaching and learning is monitored regularly. The school does not, however, use this information rigorously enough to analyse how effectively it is performing overall. Consequently, too much of the school's self-evaluation is overly critical. The limited analysis also means that fine tuning areas for development is less easy. The management of the post-16 provision is sound, but monitoring is not resulting in full consistency of good practice. Governors support the school well and are well informed. They recognise the need to increase the formal monitoring of progress against the school improvement plan and are now involved actively in the self-evaluation process. Financial planning and value for money are good. Overall accommodation and facilities are good although the science classroom is in a poor state. There has been considerable progress on all the issues identified in the previous inspection report. The use of ICT has improved and is now satisfactory and communication with parents has been strengthened. The school demonstrates good capacity to improve provision even further.

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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
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	3
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?	2	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	3
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	2	
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

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

As you know, we visited your school to inspect the quality of its work. I would like to thank you all for your co-operation and assistance during our visit. I am writing now to tell you about our findings.

St John's is a good school. It does many things well and I've listed these below:

You learn well and make good progress.

You told us that you enjoy your studies and we saw how hard you work.

Your personal development and well-being are good, especially the improvements you make in your behaviour and in how you deal with any difficulties.

Teaching and learning are good. Staff teamwork is a real strength.

Each pupil receives a well thought through, individualised curriculum.

The quality of care, support and guidance is good.

Staff work closely with specialist support and medical staff.

Parents are very positive in their praise for the school.

Leadership and management are good.

I have also identified two areas where further improvement could be made. The school needs to look at information on your progress and about the quality of teaching together to see how to improve progress still further. Also, staff need to make sure they use the information about targets for the post-16 students more consistently.