

St John Vianney School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106167
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309043
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael McDowell

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	94
6th form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Dr G F Byrne
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen McMorrow
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Rye Bank Road Firswood Stretford Manchester Lancashire M16 0EX
Telephone number	0161 8817843
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a special school maintained by the Diocese of Salford for Catholic pupils. Until July 2007 the school operated on two sites, one for primary and one for secondary age pupils. It has now amalgamated on a single site. Both the age range and the nature of the special educational needs of pupils who attend it have changed since the last inspection. It now provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and those with complex learning needs including autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Because of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities their attainment is well below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small number come from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is also a very small number of pupils who are looked after by their local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that respects the aspirations of its pupils, builds on their strengths and challenges them to do as well as they can. It gives pupils the guidance and support they need to become considerate and sociable young people. Parents report that their children enjoy going to school and are pleased by their increasing confidence and success.

Achievement is good. Standards remain below national averages because all pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the great majority make good progress from their starting points and achieve the challenging targets set for them in their individual learning plans. Pupils do particularly well in English and science. Achievement in mathematics, while good, is less marked, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The good progress made by pupils is brought about by effective teaching. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers understand pupils' difficulties and are skilful at stimulating their interest in learning. They assess them accurately, give them clear guidance about how well they are getting on and fully involve them in setting their own targets for further improvement. The curriculum is good and meets external requirements. It addresses the needs and aspirations of pupils well.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their spiritual and moral development is strongly reflected in the concern they show for others. They feel safe and are pleased to be part of the school community. They respond very well to issues such as bullying and they understand that they have a role to play in discouraging it. The pupils' excellent attitudes to work and very good behaviour are a tribute to the outstanding care, guidance and support that the school provides. All who work there are fully committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and policies and measures to protect pupils are kept under review.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, who is in the first year of her appointment, has ably led the school through a period of change and uncertainty and brought about much needed stability. She has a realistic view of the educational direction the school must take. The leadership takes appropriate steps to review the school's effectiveness and has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. It is refining its monitoring processes. A suitable scale for assessing and tracking pupils' progress has recently been put in place. However, the school does not compare their progress with that made by similar learners elsewhere. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress and their views are sought. Governance is good. Governors are well informed and very supportive of the school. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The use of resources is efficient and the school provides good value for money. It has good capacity for continuing improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is newly established and has not yet completed a full year. It is designed to offer continuity of learning to those who, at the age of 16, are not ready to move on to a college or workplace. There are very few students at present but numbers are expected to increase significantly soon. Students are well taught and receive exceptionally good care, guidance and support. Achievement is good and the students make good progress in further developing their communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They enjoy opportunities to pursue their own interests. They increase their independence as

learners and are prepared well for their future economic well-being. Their personal development is exceptionally good. The sixth form has very effective links with external agencies and other providers. It is led well and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate and consistency of progress in mathematics especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Compare the progress made by pupils with that made by similar learners elsewhere so that the success of the school can be more fully evaluated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

By the end of Year 6 pupils have made a good start. They have developed useful communication skills. Most speak and listen well and their literacy and numeracy skills provide a good base for further learning. Pupils with complex learning needs, including autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) make effective use of alternative or augmentative communication systems such as picture exchange communication. In Years 7 to 9, students make significant gains, especially in English and science. Their progress in mathematics, while good overall, is a little slower. The school attributes this to past staffing difficulties that interrupted learning for some students. Pupils also achieve well in other areas of the curriculum. Progress is good in physical education, design and technology and art. By the end of Year 11 most students have successfully completed externally accredited courses at entry level. A majority of students also complete at least one Foundation Level GCSE course. Most students reach the individual and challenging targets set for them within the time prescribed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils believe that theirs is a good school. They show that they enjoy being there by good attendance. They have excellent relationships with teachers and those who support their learning. Their attitudes are very positive. They do their best in lessons and happily collaborate with others. Behaviour is exceptionally good. Pupils feel safe and trust their teachers to deal with any difficulties. Members of the school council are proud of their role. They contribute to decision making in the school to some extent but would like to take on further responsibility. They are aware that they could play a major part in making sure that oppressive behaviour or bullying is reported and dealt with. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and sufficient exercise. They know that they need to behave safely and they do so in practical lessons. They are calm in their movement around the school. Older students make excellent use of the extensive opportunities the school provides to explore the world of work. They prepare as best they can for economic independence. Pupils are keen to contribute to the community of the school and to the broader community beyond it. On their own initiative, groups of pupils have combined to raise funds for good causes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers take full account of the individual learning needs of pupils. They set work that is well matched to their capabilities and learning styles. Good use is made of resources, including ICT and there is a strong and helpful emphasis on active learning. Pupils with ASD and complex difficulties are well supported. They are provided with a reliable means of communicating using picture exchange. This reduces their anxieties and helps them to benefit from lessons. Pupils are given a clear understanding of how well they are succeeding and in discussion with their teachers they set their own targets for further improvement. Behaviour is managed well. The support that pupils are given by support workers in the classroom helps them to fully understand and concentrate on their work. It is crucial in encouraging them to become more independent learners who believe they can succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum provides many learning opportunities that pupils enjoy. It contributes strongly to their personal development. They are well served by good arrangements to develop their communication, literacy and ICT skills. The specialist provision made for pupils with ASD is well based on sound methods. The curriculum for older students encourages them to follow their interests. It offers them the chance to gain qualifications. They pursue vocational courses at local colleges and other training providers, have work experience and take part in cultural and leisure pursuits and sport. Many good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn outside of the classroom. Through residential visits and after school clubs they take part in sport and outdoor and adventurous activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school considers that ensuring the care, safety and support of its pupils is its first concern. It takes very effective steps to make sure that pupils are happy and ready to learn. Because many have long journeys to school, breakfast is provided. The time before lessons commence is used informally to provide a calm introduction to the school day. Attendance has improved in response to this and other measures that the school has taken. The physical and developmental needs of pupils are given sufficient priority. A high level of medical oversight and therapeutic support is provided for pupils. Equality is very strongly promoted. The staff give an excellent example in ensuring that the small proportion of pupils with more complex learning needs or from minority ethnic backgrounds are esteemed equally with others. Pupils are kept fully aware of their progress through continuous helpful dialogue with their teachers and by detailed marking of their work. Arrangements to ensure the protection, health and safety of pupils are extremely thorough. In particular, the school is vigilant in safeguarding the most vulnerable amongst its pupils. When necessary it takes the lead in marshalling support from external

agencies for pupils, families and carers who are in difficulty. Pupils are given very good support and advice about careers and their next step beyond school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

All staff members share with the leadership the common aim of serving the learners' needs as best they can. This shared sense of purpose has aided the leadership in steering the school through recent significant changes. The amalgamation of the senior and primary schools on one site has been accomplished successfully. Suitable accommodation, resources and equipment have been put in place to support the learning of pupils across the age range. The re-designation of the school has introduced a sixth form, which, through good management, has got off to a good start. In addition, the school now makes provision for pupils with more complex learning needs, including ASD. Staffing overall is sufficient and teachers and teaching assistants are well trained to carry out their new roles. The leadership keeps an eye on pupils' achievement. It has introduced a good tracking system that uses a means of assessing progress that is very well suited to the pupils' rate of learning. Challenging individual and group targets are set based on this tracking. Records of each pupil's progress in relation to starting points are clear. The school does not, however, compare the progress of its pupils more widely, for example, with that of similar pupils in other schools. This omission deprives the leadership of an important means of assessing how successful the school is. Planning for improvement identifies suitable priorities. The governors critically examine all plans and contribute to their implementation. They are supportive of the school and well informed about its strengths and areas for development. They carry out their role well. Parents rate the school highly and confirm that it includes them as partners in their children's education.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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	1	

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	1

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

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so helpful when I inspected your school. As I promised, I am now writing to you to tell you what I found out.

Those of you who talked to me gave me some very important information. First of all you agreed that your school was good. Some of you went as far as to say that you are much happier at St John Vianney than at the schools you went to before. You clearly know a good deal about keeping safe and healthy, although one or two of you were honest enough to say that you sometimes cannot stay away from the burgers and chips. You like sport and you mentioned lots of different activities including swimming, football, badminton and trampolining. You are not afraid of being bullied and said you can trust your teachers to help you and keep you safe. Most of you agreed that your work was just about at the right level. School councillors seemed to be very keen to be as helpful as possible and would like to do more.

I agree with you that yours is a good school. You make good progress in your work and your behaviour is mostly excellent. You are thoughtful of others and have excellent attitudes in class. You are taught well and teachers and assistants help you to learn. The things you are given to do are interesting, challenging and often fun. You are kept safe and are looked after exceptionally well. Your school is led well by the headteacher, her leadership team and the governors.

In order to improve your school further I have asked the headteacher to make sure that you do as well in mathematics as you do in English and science. You can help by paying full attention in class and always doing your best. I have also asked her to compare the progress you make with that made by boys and girls in other schools like yours.

Thank you once again for your help and good luck in the future.