

St Anthony's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119037
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326929
Inspection date	10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Stanion
Headteacher	Neil Rees-Davies
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2006
School address	St Anthony's Way Margate CT9 3RA
Telephone number	01843 292015
Fax number	01843 231574

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the proven capacity of leaders, managers and governors, at all levels; the exemplary features of personal development and well-being and care, guidance and support; and the extent to which all students make good academic progress across the curriculum. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Anthony's was redesignated as a school for pupils with behavioural and learning needs just before the time of the last inspection. The school previously catered for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and as these students have moved through the school the proportion of those with behavioural difficulties has become an increasing majority. In the primary department there is additional provision for 12 pupils with severe emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Pupils are admitted to the school at any age, although the beginning of Year 7 is a key time for admissions. Pupils of all ages characteristically enter the school with skills that are exceptionally low, as expected in relation to their complex learning and behavioural needs. Some have had missed periods of schooling prior to admission. The school no longer admits children to the Nursery and there are often very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. There are no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage currently and there is no evaluation of this key stage in this report.

Boys outnumber girls by three to one. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and approximately one fifth are looked after by a local authority. Over one third of pupils are entitled to a free school meal.

There have been several changes in staffing over the past six months. The headteacher and chair of governors took up their posts in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Staff and governors quite rightly judge that St Anthony's School provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Year after year pupils achieve the challenging goals that are set for them, which lead to good academic progress and outstanding personal skills and qualities. This means that by the end of Year 11, pupils gain a range of nationally accredited qualifications and this, together with very good attitudes to learning, stands them in very good stead to continue their education at college. It is not a surprise then that parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the school. They acknowledge the outstanding care and guidance from staff, which not only enables their children to become independent and confident but also supports their families when they need help.

When he took over the leadership of the school, the headteacher quickly set to work to build upon the existing good practice. A highly skilled team was already in place and together with new staff appointments and changes in membership of the governing body, the whole team has risen to the challenge to take stock of what they do well and to determine the way forward. For some, this has meant taking increased responsibility and different ways of working. Some things have already changed and have made a difference to the pupils, and appropriate plans are in place to further strengthen the provision. For example, the school's positive approach to managing pupils' behaviour has been refined. This has increased the staff's confidence, particularly in addressing more complex behaviours, resulting in less exclusion and a more flexible approach to managing behaviour in class. The governing body are going through a period of change, but they too are taking the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of how they carry out their business. Over the years, they have been steadfast in their involvement and support for the school, fulfilling all requirements across the full range of responsibilities. But, they acknowledge that they have not always been well enough informed to challenge the work of the school sufficiently.

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support goes hand in hand with pupils' outstanding personal development. One of the key features of the school is the supportive ethos that helps pupils to manage their own behaviour and anxieties. This makes a difference to pupils in several ways. It means that new pupils settle quickly because they come into a calm, purposeful learning environment where staff manage behaviour well and where other pupils are good role models because they know the right thing to do. It also helps pupils to get back on track quickly when things are difficult for them. This in turn means that pupils have access to the full curriculum, including practical work with tools, scientific equipment, computers and educational trips and visits. Staff respect pupils' views and individuality, and pupils respect the support and challenge that they get from staff. Pupils trust the adults to help them to do well. All in all, this helps pupils to feel exceptionally safe and secure, increasingly confident in themselves, and positive about their future. They demonstrate empathy for others, a strong sense of 'moral fibre' and build lasting friendships. This is made possible by the attention to detail by staff. Through experience and outstanding contacts with a range of other professionals and support agencies, they are able to pre-empt problems, as well as to take firm, speedy and decisive action when issues arise. For example, the welfare officer works diligently and very effectively with pupils and their families to improve attendance and to ensure the welfare of those with medical needs. She keeps a particularly close eye on those who are looked after by the local authority. Her work is held in high regard by staff, pupils and their families and is

characteristic of the whole team who 'go the extra mile' because they know that their actions will make a difference to the life chances of the pupils.

Attention to detail is also characteristic of the school's tracking of pupils' attainments. A simple, straightforward system allows senior staff to track and measure the progress of individual pupils rigorously. The targets set ensure high expectations and, with the majority of pupils meeting or exceeding them, this ensures that their learning is extended and nurtured. This system has been in place for the past 18 months and the information is not yet used systematically by teachers and subject coordinators in their plans. Similarly, although pupils have social and behavioural targets, and undoubtedly make exceptional gains in their personal development and awareness, these skills are not tracked and measured as well as those for their academic attainment. As a result, the wealth of information available about the full range of pupils' skills is not used as well as it could be to personalise activities and strategies in lessons.

The quality of teaching and learning, and the curriculum, are both good with elements that are outstanding. The effectiveness of actions taken to build upon the existing good practice demonstrates the capacity for these aspects to be as outstanding as the school wants them to be in the future. A particularly good feature in lessons is the use of information and communication technology, used well by teachers to enliven and explain learning clearly, and by pupils to work independently at tasks. The curriculum serves pupils particularly well in preparation for life after school. The range of vocational courses at the local college and within school has developed well since the last inspection and continues to expand in response to the changing needs of the pupils. Although standards remain exceptionally low when compared to pupils of similar age, because of the extremely low starting points, good progress means that pupils regularly leave school with NVQ qualifications at Levels 1 and 2, Entry Levels for GCSEs in English, mathematics and science, as well as a range of ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) awards. With a view to developing teaching and the curriculum further, staff are looking to make the curriculum more creative. Their monitoring shows that where changes have been made, pupils are more engaged and active in lessons. In addition, changes to improve the teaching of reading, as identified at the last inspection, have been implemented recently. While the early signs are that primary pupils are beginning to benefit from a more systematic approach, plans to support older pupils with reading are not yet fully in place. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop good cultural awareness and the school works well as part of the local community, for example with the local college. But wider aspects of promoting community cohesion are not well developed. Nevertheless, under good leadership and management, good self-evaluation and a track record of improvement, the school is well placed to develop the provision improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of information on pupils' academic progress and personal development when planning lessons.
- Increase the governing body's knowledge and understanding of the school to improve further their ability to challenge.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Anthony's School, Margate CT9 3RA

When I came to inspect your school just before half term I was very impressed with what I found. I wasn't able to talk to all of you but I had good look at your work so that I could see how well you are doing. I would like to say a special thank you to Year 9 for the long discussion that we had about school. Please thank your families too for the questionnaires that they filled in for me. I have thought about everything that I saw and about the things that people told me. Now I want to let you know what I found out about St Anthony's.

I think that St Anthony's is a good school and I know that you are very pleased to be there. The staff take care of you extremely well, especially helping you to manage your own behaviour. So when you need help, they talk to you about how to solve the problem. But it is not only the staff that help you, because your friends help you too. When you first come to the school you settle down quickly and other children in your class help you to know what to do and how to behave well. When you get to Year 11 you are able to take exams in many subjects that help to get you ready for going on to college.

There have been lots of changes in school this year but staff have made sure that things carried on running smoothly while new staff, governors and pupils settled in. Mr Rees-Davies and the senior staff run the school well and have started to make changes so that your school does even better. I have asked them to work with the staff on two things that I think will help. Firstly, staff know a lot about how well you are doing and now need to use the information when planning activities for you in lessons. Secondly, the governors need to ask staff more questions so that they can check on how well the school is doing.

It was a pleasure to come to your school. I wish that I could have stayed longer to talk to more of you.

I wish you well for your future.

Yours faithfully,

Heather Yaxley HMI