

Victoria School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 103601 |
| Local Authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 336110 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 October 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Sue Aldridge |

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

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 181 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 41 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Anne Barnes |
| Headteacher | Jim Kane |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 June 2007 |
| School address | Bell Hill Northfield Birmingham |
| Telephone number | 0121 4769478 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and pupils. Discussions were also held with other stakeholders including medical staff based on the school site and staff in schools supported by the outreach service. Inspectors observed the school's work, including a harvest festival celebration. They looked at important policies, records of pupils' progress and a wide range of data linked to the school's evaluation of its work. Questionnaires completed by staff and 61 parents were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of specialist status on the outcomes for pupils
- the quality of the analysis of progress and use of comparative data to evaluate pupils' achievement
- how partnerships with external agencies and the wider community impact on the provision and outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

Victoria caters for pupils with mainly physical difficulties and associated learning difficulties that vary in severity from moderate to profound and multiple. It acts as a regional resource for 15 pupils with multi-sensory impairments (MSI). One in three pupils in the school has a degenerative or life-limiting condition. Just under half of pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are significant proportions from minority ethnic groups, mainly of Asian heritage. Although most pupils have communication difficulties there are no pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. All pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). The proportion eligible for free school meals is above average. Most students over 16 are taught in the Round Table Centre (RTC), a separate building on the same site as the school. The school's outreach service, funded by the local authority, provides consultancy and support to mainstream and special schools. The on-site community medical team works with school staff to support pupils at Victoria and those with physical difficulties in mainstream schools. In September 2007, the school was designated as a Specialist Arts College, with a focus on music, art and drama. It works collaboratively with a number of education partners, including an 'academy' of seven secondary and three special schools. The work of the school has been recognised by a number of awards including Investors in People, Healthy Schools, Arts Mark Gold, Sports Mark, Basic Skills Quality Mark Primary and Secondary and Inclusive Schools. There is some uncertainty about the school's future role while there is consultation about the SEN strategy in South Birmingham.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Victoria is an outstanding school and provides exceptional value for money. An excellent drive for further improvement, skilled and dedicated staff and exceptionally good working relationships with partners have led to outstanding improvement since the last inspection. Self-evaluation is wide ranging and successful in diagnosing areas that need improving. The school's capacity to improve further is excellent.

Specialist status has had a significant and beneficial effect. Parental satisfaction is very high and those schools that receive outreach support greatly value this and say that it has empowered them to meet the needs of pupils with physical difficulties and include them fully in school activities. High levels of satisfaction are the result of excellent collaborative work between the medical team and school staff, who support schools in the community as well as the pupils and parents at Victoria in making sure that individual needs are met most effectively.

All groups of pupils, whatever their gender, ethnic background or needs, achieve well. They make good progress because of the good quality of teaching, an increasing proportion of which is outstanding, and the careful tracking of their progress and well-being. There are many strengths of teaching. While there is some excellent planning of lessons and rigorous recording of every sign of progress, this is not consistent across the school.

The curriculum has been greatly enhanced by the range of partnerships forged by the school. It provides pupils with a wealth of enjoyable experiences, including opportunities to have their achievements in the arts recognised and celebrated locally and nationally. Through a variety of means, including their performances inside and outside school, involvement in enterprise activity and fundraising for charities, pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider communities. The school council is most influential, meeting with governors to discuss proposals about school uniform, for example. An excellent programme of personal and social education ensures that pupils are very well aware of healthy living and how to keep themselves safe. Outstanding arrangements to secure high standards of care, support and guidance give pupils great confidence that they are safe in school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Relationships across the school's cohesive community are excellent and so is pupils' behaviour. Most pupils attend well, and unauthorised absence is low. However, attendance is below average because the overall figure is affected by illness and hospitalisation. Pupils increase their basic skills at a good rate and acquire independence skills, self-confidence and maturity so they are well prepared for leaving school at 19. The buildings are a constant theme in the school's development plan and new building

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work has improved classrooms for many secondary pupils. The increasing need for pupils to have a range of equipment has put pressure on existing storage areas, space in primary and post-16 classes, and outdoor play areas for primary pupils. Staff work very hard to ensure that this does not disadvantage pupils in any way, through careful risk assessment, for example. Some students over 16 find it difficult to manoeuvre wheelchairs through doorways in the RTC, because they are too narrow. Although the school manages its budget wisely and well, setting aside capital for improvements to the building, it does not have sufficient funds to make all the necessary improvement and is liaising with the local authority on the matter.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all lesson planning identifies clearly the learning intentions for individuals and/or groups of pupils in such a way that these can be used to assess and record progress in lessons.
 - Liaise with the local authority to improve the school's accommodation and outdoor facilities so that there is
 - sufficient storage space for equipment and resources
 - enough space in the RTC for all students to be taught there and wider doorways to ease access
 - ample space in primary and post-16 classrooms
 - ample play space outdoors for primary pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Staff make effective use of assessment information as well as their thorough knowledge of pupils' personal and medical needs to set challenging individual targets based on level gains. The proportions of pupils that have successfully achieved these within the timescale set have been good in the past. Since the last inspection, the school has looked widely for ways of comparing pupils' performance with that of pupils in similar schools, and has now settled on a reliable means of doing this. Although this work is at an early stage, indicators support the school's evaluation that pupils make good progress and their achievement compares favourably with similar groups nationally. Learning and progress in lessons are also good, and occasionally outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and those who need help cooperate fully with the adults who support them. Those who can, ask as well as answer questions, and show a genuine interest in what they are learning about. Enjoyment is particularly evident in the sessions where staff make use of sensory stimulation to encourage communication. Pupils respond well to sounds, light and touch by smiling, vocalising or reaching out, for instance. They are well motivated and so they persevere with tasks that they find difficult, such as stretching to reach a ball in a physical education session. They glow when they are given well-deserved praise. Those who are able to work independently do so well, concentrating on tasks and making good use of new technology to consolidate

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their learning or communicate.

Pupils and their parents are fully confident that pupils are safe in school. Older pupils learn effectively about health and safety in the workplace when they follow courses leading to accreditation, take part in experiencing the world of work through visits or participate in challenging outdoor activities during school residential journeys. Pupils' self-esteem is fostered very effectively through the opportunities they have to shine, such as performing in the choir or taking part in drama workshops outside school. Every pupil is included, and pupils with MSI recently won an award for their sculpture work. Much emphasis is placed upon pupils' rights as disabled people, and the school's 'communication bill of rights' is implemented well, ensuring that all pupils have a means of communicating effectively with others. This underpins pupils' effective social development. Older pupils know the importance of challenging racism and discrimination, the difference between rights and responsibilities and how to be a good citizen. Specialist status has brought increased opportunities to take part in substantial community activities, such as participating in a musical showcase at the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra centre. Pupils also work with local artists, learning their crafts, and they help to run The Gallery shop in school, marketing a range of art and craft products as well as exhibiting the work of professional artists.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | * |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 2 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms | |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

How effective is the provision?

Through the specialist school's initiative, the provision has been greatly enhanced. Additional staffing has been effectively utilised to train staff and support them in using resources, including new technology in classes and a sensory drama studio. As a result, new technology is used very well to support learning, give pupils access to the curriculum and it adds huge enjoyment to many activities. Staff with expertise in music and drama have been appointed and this has strengthened subject expertise and opened up new opportunities for pupils, including those leading to accreditation in the arts.

In lessons, resources are used effectively to encourage learning. For instance music is widely used to create atmosphere, and sounds and light provide additional stimulation and enjoyment for pupils in the swimming pool. Teachers assess pupils accurately and check this with one another so that they are sure. They use the information to plan well. In the best examples, pupils' individual targets are taken into account and detailed plans show how the activities in the lesson will help pupils to move towards their targets. Learning intentions are clear so it is simple to say whether each pupil was successful or not, and this evaluation is then used to identify the next steps. In less useful planning, learning intentions are not precise or individual enough to support evaluation, and records are not helpful in showing progress or informing subsequent plans.

Teachers and support staff work very well together, ensuring that transitions or changes in the positioning of pupils occur seamlessly without unduly interrupting learning. Staff show great respect for pupils' privacy and dignity in attending to their personal care needs and make sure that they are comfortable when learning. Because staff give the right amount of help and do not intervene too soon, pupils are not over-reliant on adult support. Effective teamwork between medical staff and school staff underpins the high quality of care and support provided. For instance, programmes designed by therapists are implemented well by staff in school. Weekly 'family support' meetings are attended by professionals from many different agencies and these consider carefully individual pupils' specific needs and suitable action to support them. The school could not do any more than it currently does to encourage attendance. Support and guidance are provided for parents too. For instance, the school provides assistance to those who find it difficult to complete forms and involves them fully in the target setting, annual review and transition planning processes. The school systematically offers parents advice on how to support their children's learning, and responds very well to parental concerns. For instance, it opens its hydrotherapy pool every second Saturday in response to their request. Governors have responded well to parents' concerns, about the lack of suitable

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provision for young adults with disabilities in the area, for example, by raising and discussing the matter with service providers locally.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 1 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management responsibilities are widely shared and all play a most effective part in monitoring and evaluation and contributing to school improvement. Teamwork is highly developed and staff morale is high. Governors have an annual Saturday meeting with senior staff to discuss improvements and they monitor the progress of the well-constructed school development plan. They also visit the school to focus on aspects of its work. Although they are not systematically involved in self-evaluation, they ask questions, make suggestions and respond well to parental concerns. They have been proactive in discussions with the local authority on the future role of the school.

The safeguarding of pupils has a high priority and staff supervision ensures that pupils are kept safe. Staff and governors are well trained in child protection and matters such as manual handling. Risks are carefully assessed and suitable action taken to minimise these.

There is a very strong commitment to equality of opportunity and a determination that no pupil will be disadvantaged in any way. Staff and governors actively promote the rights of those with disabilities in school and beyond. All pupils, whatever their needs, have opportunities to shine and succeed. Staff are very well trained to meet the needs of all pupil groups and the school works effectively in partnership with others to return pupils to mainstream schools or support them in maintaining their placements there.

The school has conducted a detailed audit of what it currently does to promote community cohesion and evaluates existing activities thoroughly, such as its partnership activities and outreach service. Implementation of its action plan is at an early stage, and so this has not yet been evaluated. The school is a harmonious community in which diversity is acknowledged and celebrated.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |

| Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 1 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 1 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good liaison with parents ensures that staff know the children and their needs well when they arrive. The strong emphasis on structured play suits children well. The quality of teaching is good and children make good gains in communication, social and emotional development, movement and control, as well as personal skills such as feeding and toileting. A recently introduced system for planning and assessing children's progress is developing well, and the assistant headteacher responsible for the provision recognises that this need to become better established to accelerate children's progress. The care and support given to children is excellent and they clearly feel secure and trust the adults around them so they enjoy all the activities, especially swimming. Occasionally, children make such good progress that they are able to move to mainstream schools.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Sixth form

The RTC provides a separate and more adult environment with a distinctly different curriculum and accredited courses that offer good opportunities for students to mature and prepare effectively for the next step. These emphasise basic skills, physical development, vocational studies, personal, social and health education, the community

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and recreation. Teaching is good, and students make good progress and achieve well. The high quality of care, guidance and support in the main school extends as well to the RTC. The accommodation, however, is not really fit for purpose as it is not spacious enough to accommodate all those who are over 16 and some are taught in the main school as a result. There is no common room for the students. Students use facilities in the main school, such as the swimming pool. Links with agencies such as Connexions are very good, and students are given expert guidance about the opportunities that are available once they are 19, including visits to colleges. Work-related learning opportunities have been extended since the school became a specialist arts college. Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation makes effective use of data on students' progress and the assistant headteacher in charge and governors are actively pursuing improvements in post-19 provision in the locality.

These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 2 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

Parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children. Several were effusive in their praise, describing the MSI provision as 'brilliant and invaluable', for instance. The vast majority feel very well informed. One summed this up as ' We are fully aware of what he does on a daily basis, even how well he eats his meals - which is of course vital...'. Another noted that 'the school regards parents as partners in the education of their children'. Several commented on the welcome they get at school, and the accessibility of the senior staff. Inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Victoria to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 181 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 49 | 79 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 47 | 76 | 14 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 44 | 71 | 16 | 26 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 38 | 61 | 23 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 48 | 77 | 13 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 36 | 58 | 25 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 36 | 58 | 25 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 29 | 47 | 30 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 46 | 74 | 16 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 34 | 55 | 25 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 37 | 60 | 23 | 37 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 40 | 65 | 21 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 49 | 49 | 49 | 49 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Victoria School, Birmingham, B31 1LD

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit you recently. We enjoyed our visit very much. We came to see how well you are all getting on and whether there are any ways that your school could be improved.

We decided that Victoria school is outstanding. Several of your parents think this too. You make good progress towards your targets and achieve well. Your behaviour is excellent and so is the way that you are positive about learning in lessons. We were very pleased to hear that you feel so safe in school and that older pupils learn about health and safety in the workplace. Your school council does an excellent job, making suggestions and helping to shape decisions that are made. You are becoming well known for your music and drama performances as well as your art, and it is great that everyone has the chance to show off their skills in public. The staff at school work very well with medical staff to make sure that you all take the sort of exercise that suits you best. You eat very healthily at school too. Staff care for you extremely well and it was good to see that everyone at Victoria gets on so well together.

We have asked staff and governors to improve two things. Staff are going to make sure that when they plan lessons they make it really clear what each of you should be learning, keep a record of how well you do in each lesson and use this to plan the next steps. Already, the staff and governors are planning to improve the building so that is a better place for you to learn and for the staff to work. They are going to continue to do this so that there is more space for you to learn and play together.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge

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