

# Victoria School

Bell Hill, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 1LD

**Inspection dates** 2–3 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Teaching, throughout the school, is highly effective in meeting the wide range of individual needs of its students. Teachers use their specialist skills, such as in signing and the use of symbols, very successfully in their efforts to provide the very best they can for their students.
- Students make exceptional progress in improving their ability to communicate and become much more independent. They achieve very well in a range of subjects, especially in the arts. Those with the capacity to read make very good progress.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students in the sixth form achieve very well, benefiting greatly from their move this term into the main school building. The school recognises, though, that there is still scope to develop this further to provide older students with a wider range of learning experiences.
- Students thoroughly enjoy being in school and show excellent attitudes to learning. Their excellent behaviour in and out of lessons helps to ensure that the school is a very safe environment.
- The school is led by an inspirational executive headteacher who, together with other senior staff and the governing body, strive to ensure that the school is a centre of excellence. This is ensuring that teaching and learning is of the very highest standards.
- The highly developed skills of staff working in the multi-sensory impairment unit and the very effective activities offered have a profoundly positive impact on the lives of the students it supports.
- The school is an integral part of the local community and parents are very positive about the support it provides for their children.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons taught by 18 teachers and two higher level teaching assistants. They also undertook a 'learning walk' where they sampled teaching and learning in a number of classes.
- Inspectors held meetings with a group of students and members of staff. Meetings were also held with the eight members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the School Improvement Partner.
- The inspectors looked at students' work, teachers' lesson plans and tracking data showing students' progress.
- School policies were sampled and the minutes of recent governing body meetings reviewed.
- The inspectors took account of responses from seven parents in the online Parent View survey and a parental letter.

## Inspection team

Charles Hackett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynda Walker	Additional Inspector
Andrew Phipps	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Victoria School caters for students with a range of disabilities and special educational needs. Almost all students have severe physical disabilities, many also having profound and multiple learning difficulties or severe learning difficulties.
- The school has a unit for students with multi-sensory impairments, many having no or very little sight or hearing.
- An above-average number of students are known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium.
- A higher-than-average number of students come from minority ethnic groups.
- The school is federated with another special school and led by an executive headteacher and one board of governors.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the range of learning activities available for older students through improving their accommodation even further.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students achieve very well in lessons. Teachers ensure that the work matches their different ability levels extremely well and challenges all of them to make further progress. For example, in a primary mathematics lesson, although a higher ability student started the lesson completing a similar task to another student, by the end of the lesson he was able to complete a much more difficult task.
- Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties extend their ability to interact with others. They learn how to make choices, such as when deciding their own musical preference from a choice of two or three songs.
- Students with severe learning difficulties make good progress in recognising signs and symbols. They use these well to communicate effectively with each other and staff. Those students with the capacity to read make excellent progress and begin to gain a real enjoyment of books.
- Excellent progress is made in numeracy. Students benefit from staff taking every opportunity to encourage them to count out items in many different situations.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress. They respond exceptionally well to the very good resources available and make significant progress in learning how to respond to each other.
- The progress of students in the sixth form is outstanding. Students make excellent progress with their practical skills, as shown in lessons where they baked a pizza and in science where they connected up a circuit.
- The school's data on achievement shows how well students achieve. Data demonstrates that students make excellent rates of progress when compared with the national expectations for students from similar starting points. Those students for whom the school receives the pupil premium and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same excellent progress as all other students.
- Students' own individual records are meticulously maintained and they contain excellent annotated photographs which demonstrate students' wide variety of achievements. Rigorous moderation of teachers' assessments of students' achievements confirms the validity of these assessments.
- Students in the specialist multi-sensory impairment unit make life-changing progress in their ability to interact with the world around them. They show vastly improved confidence and pleasure in exploring their environment and begin to experiment as to what will become their preferred method of communication.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers have very high expectations for all students to achieve well. They make excellent use of their detailed knowledge of each student to plan activities designed to enable them to make even further progress.

- Teachers constantly challenge pupils throughout lessons by asking probing questions. They positively encourage students to think for themselves and come to their own solutions for challenges set. This thrust for students to be as independent as possible ensures that they take a real ownership of their learning.
- Teachers are very well supported by assistants. This effective teamwork enables individuals and small groups to be very well supported in their learning in each classroom.
- Teachers make very good use of an imaginative range of resources, including many different forms of technology, to make learning interesting and enjoyable for students. For older students, very effective use of tablet computers is made to record their achievements.
- Teaching in the multi-sensory impairment unit is exceptional. Its excellence transforms the lives of students, many of whom have no sight or hearing. The expertise of its staff team is shared with other parts of the school and many other schools.
- Teaching in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form is very age appropriate and characterised by the very effective use of resources.
- The teaching of reading and the development of literacy skills are highly effective. Teachers use a variety of methods, including the teaching and blending of letter sounds (phonics) where appropriate. Equally effective is the use of symbols to enable students, especially those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, to communicate their needs.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Victoria School is a very safe environment. Students themselves stress how much they enjoy being in school and how much they know that all the staff support, teach and care for them extremely well. One student stressed, 'I learn at school and see my friends.'
- The exemplary behaviour of students contributes greatly to the positive learning environment in the school. In lessons, students work together enthusiastically and this allows teachers to focus on supporting their learning rather than managing inappropriate behaviour.
- Students clearly enjoy the company of each other. This is often typified by those students who are more physically able showing very careful consideration for those in school who are less fortunate.
- Staff, parents and pupils all have very positive views of behaviour and safety in school. School records confirm that there is no evidence of bullying and no reported incidents.
- Students make valued contributions to the school through expressing their views via the school council. The improvement to the outside play area is an example of changes made following student suggestions.
- Staff give very careful attention to those students with complex needs who require an increased level of support to manage their behaviour. Individual behaviour plans for these students are very detailed and provide all staff with the information necessary to ensure consistency in the management of each student's behaviour.

- Students' attendance is affected by their medical conditions. However, the school works very effectively with parents and staff from health departments to enable students to attend as often as possible. As a result, attendance rates have improved over the last year and are now good.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The school has increased its effectiveness since its previous inspection. This is because throughout the school there is a very strong drive for excellence in all that the school offers.
- Being part of a federation has been used very positively to support the sharing of good practice between the two schools. The skills of the executive headteacher have ensured that there is no detrimental impact on Victoria as a result of her increased responsibilities in managing two schools.
- A strong focus has been put on developing the quality of teaching and learning. Where outstanding practice has been identified, there are very effective systems in place to share this across the school. Staff training opportunities have enabled effective strategies, such as signing and the use of symbols, to be used consistently well throughout the school.
- The school has rigorous staff performance management arrangements. These include the setting of challenging targets for teaching assistants. The positive impact of these can be seen in the increasing effectiveness of their support in lessons on students' learning.
- The school has been rigorous in its own analysis of its effectiveness. Where weaknesses have been identified, effective improvement plans have been put in place. These include the much improved use of outside areas to provide students with increased opportunities to choose how to spend their recreation time.
- Safeguarding is given a very high priority and includes regular health and safety checks carried out by the governing body. Thorough risk assessments ensure the safety of students at all times.
- The activities on offer are well organised to address the different needs of students. Those in lessons are well supported by a range of activities at lunch times, such as a media club where students enjoy creating their own musical arrangements linked to video clips.
- The school puts a strong focus on developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, there are many opportunities for students to extend their cultural experiences through the school's strong emphasis on the arts. Very positive links with the community, including the local church, further extend these experiences.
- The financial management of the school is given very careful attention. The additional money provided for students through the pupil premium is used well to assist those students to have their own mobile computer tablets. These are having a very positive impact on supporting their communication and learning needs.
- The local authority has relied on the use of a School Improvement Partner to provide additional support to the school. It recognises the staff expertise available within the school and makes regular use of this in the support of other schools within the local authority.

### ■ **The governance of the school:**

- contributes very positively to the aspirational drive for excellence that exists throughout the school
- is rigorous in the manner that it challenges and holds the school to account for the quality of its work
- ensures that finances are managed well and policies are regularly reviewed.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103601
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	403771

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	187
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	27
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Catherine Robinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Justine Sims
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 October 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 476 9478
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