



St John's Catholic School for the Deaf (Boston Spa)

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108120
LEA Leeds
Inspection number 283966
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Jeffery Plumb CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Church Street
School category	Non-maintained special		Boston Spa
Age range of pupils	3 to 19		Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 6DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01937 842144
Number on roll	100	Fax number	01937 541471
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Fr D Harrison
Date of previous inspection	4 June 2001	Headteacher	Mr T Wryne

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is a non-maintained special school, managed by a Corporate Board of Trustees. It makes day and residential provision for pupils with hearing impairment. All pupils and students in the sixth form have a statement for their special educational needs. Hearing loss ranges from moderate to profound deafness. In recent years, pupils with additional and more complex needs have been admitted to the school. At the time of the inspection there were no children in the Foundation Stage. Post-16 provision is shared between the school and two colleges. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. There are few minority ethnic pupils and none of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry varies, but overall is well below average because of delayed development in language prior to being admitted to the school.

The school is preparing a bid to be considered as a specialist status school for sensory impairment. Strategic thinking and planning has taken place, including a restructured staff model to be implemented from September 2006. This is aimed at providing training for teachers and outreach support to colleagues working with deaf children in mainstream schools, whilst maintaining a high quality of education for all pupils on roll in the school. The school had a Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in February 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The school knows itself well but is far too unassuming about its successes. Pupils' achievement in communication is outstanding across the school. This enables pupils who are deaf to become confident and independent communicators. Exceptional achievement in reading means that pupils can take responsibility for their learning. Their thirst for learning is amazing. They love to research using both computers and books. By Year 11 students achieve good GCSE results from a low starting point. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding throughout the school. Excellent progress is sustained in the sixth form. Value for money is outstanding. Personal development and well-being are excellent, as is the quality of care. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils enjoy school and their attitudes to learning are overwhelmingly positive. Attendance is above average. The residential provision is good. There is an innovative and creative curriculum tailored to the needs of pupils and students who are deaf. The support given by speech therapists and the school's audiologist makes a very significant contribution to pupils' outstanding achievement. Leadership and management are excellent. There is a clear vision to develop the school as a centre of excellence for pupils who are deaf. Robust strategic planning and a remodelled staff structure to be implemented in September 2006 are aimed at enabling this exciting vision to be fulfilled. But the bid to achieve specialist status is dependent on funding being made available from the Board of Trustees. Effective steps have been taken to bring about improvements since the last inspection. Under the direction of a creative and reflective senior leadership team, capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Provision in the sixth form is excellent. Skilful management and an innovative and quality assured service level agreement with York College and Askham Bryan College ensure that post-16 students access a wide range of courses, tailor made to their needs. At the same time, they have excellent speech therapy and audiology back up provided by the school. Their achievement is outstanding and they are well prepared for university or the world of work. Retention on courses has been excellent since this arrangement was set up. Students are fully included with their hearing peers at college. They join in sporting activities and go on residential trips. In school they support younger pupils. They coach younger pupils in sport and help out in the primary department. Their personal development is outstanding. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The recent CSCI inspection recognised that almost all of the National Minimum Standards of Care were met. Since then, the school has responded well and ensured

that recommendations made have been successfully implemented. Handover arrangements at the start and end of the school day are effectively managed. Relationships between pupils and students and care staff are excellent. Pupils and students in residence have well established routines, are happy, and say that the provision contributes to the success they achieve in school. They consider that they are treated with dignity and feel safe. The boarding curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' and students' enjoyment and develops their social and communication skills well. There is a regular evening homework club which is appreciated by pupils. Care staff support pupils in joining in village community life in the evenings and at weekends.

What the school should do to improve further

- The senior leadership team and governing body to continue to work in partnership with the Board of Trustees to secure funding for the strategic plan to create a specialist centre of excellence for pupils and students who are deaf.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards measured against a very low starting point are outstanding. Pupils make rapid gains in speaking and listening because of the effective method used to promote their communication skills. Progress in reading is excellent. By age 16 the vast majority of pupils are confident readers and well equipped to become life-long learners. Throughout the school, progress is very good in English, mathematics and science. Many pupils who enter Year 7 with well below average standards in English, mathematics and science achieve grade B and C passes at GCSE in these subjects at the end of Key Stage 4. Progress in art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education is outstanding throughout the school, and pupils achieve very well in these subjects.

Robust academic targets set for pupils are met and often exceeded. Those pupils with additional needs achieve very well, as do the few minority ethnic pupils. Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding and celebrated by a wide range of accreditation by Year 13, ranging from Entry Level GCSE to A-Level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school. Their attitude to learning is overwhelmingly positive as evidenced by their concentration in lessons. Behaviour is excellent. Attendance is above average. The school has a vibrant school council which enables pupils' views to be heard and acted upon. During the inspection they debated the merits of vending machines in a school and whether their retention is compatible with a healthy school. Social development lies at the heart of this school and pupils are well equipped to communicate their needs independently and effectively. Older pupils are given many opportunities to support younger pupils. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is outstanding.

The school very successfully promotes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthy food and excellent provision is made for physical exercise. There is a strong focus on enjoyment in learning. This builds confidence and fires pupils' imagination and thirst to learn, as seen in an outstanding music lesson in Year 8. Pupils' economic well-being is promoted exceptionally well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Interactive whiteboards and artefacts are used effectively to provide important visual cues: a very effective strategy to support pupils with their learning. Because teachers know the problems pupils experience from time to time with their hearing aids, they can intervene quickly if anything goes wrong to ensure pupils can hear again and access their learning. Specific tailor made teaching methods are used successfully to improve pupils' communication skills, and the teaching of reading is superb.

Because relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent pupils are not afraid to take risks in a safe setting and so discover new learning. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, as well as considerable experience and knowledge of working with pupils who are deaf. Activities in lessons are well planned to meet the learning needs of the pupils. High expectations, cracking pace and real interest and enjoyment are typical of the vast majority of lessons. Consequently, pupils make outstanding progress throughout the school. A quite exceptional feature is the effective teamwork between teachers, learning support assistants, speech therapists and the school's audiologist to ensure that all pupils are well taught and are able to access learning. Everything possible is done to remove barriers to learning for children who are deaf. Pupils' work is marked carefully with positive comments and they are told clearly by their teachers exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Innovative and creative planning results in tailor made programmes which promote independence, dignity and effective communication for pupils who are deaf. A programme to develop speaking and listening skills for pupils aged 5 to 11 is a magical ingredient. It enables pupils to make excellent progress in communication and so improves their confidence.

The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is outstanding. The component on 'deaf' culture is excellent. Work-related learning promotes pupils' economic well-being exceptionally well. A wide range of accreditation opportunities enables all pupils to experience success. Excellence and enjoyment are promoted through the arts, music and sport. The breadth and balance of the curriculum at post-16 is outstanding.

A good range of lunchtime clubs enhance pupils' enjoyment for learning. Effective use of visits and visitors enhance the curriculum. Pupils in residence access a wide range of opportunities to develop their social and communication skills, as they attend a local youth club and the Guides group in the village.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Every child is valued. The needs of all pupils are known and catered for. Child protection procedures are robust. Risk assessments are thorough and detailed. Thorough checks are made to ensure staffs' suitability to work with children. The residential provision meets the National Standards of Care. Pupils say that they feel safe. They are confident about approaching an adult about any problems they have. Pupils say, 'There is no bullying in this school: any teasing is quickly dealt with by staff.' Parents say, 'Staff are extremely caring and they ensure that our children are safe and well cared for.'

Within school the speech therapists and audiologist ensure that pupils' needs associated with their deafness are well met. External support for pupils with challenging behaviour and emotional needs, related to their special educational needs, is exceptionally good. Careers guidance is tailor made for deaf pupils: they are encouraged to realise that they can excel in the world of work. The system for tracking pupils' academic progress is outstanding. All pupils have academic targets and their progress against those targets is rigorously monitored. Consequently, they reach and indeed often exceed, these targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's clear vision which focuses on the highest achievement for all pupils in a distinctive Christian school is shared by all staff. There is a commitment to manage the school effectively in the interest of the pupils and students. Consequently, by the time they leave school students are well equipped to go out into the world as effective and independent communicators. The members of the senior leadership team are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Systems to analyse data and use it to plan to raise pupils' achievement are excellent.

Middle managers are very effective. They benefit enormously from the school's commitment to develop them professionally. The servicing of pupils' hearing aids and other equipment to enable them to access learning is very effectively managed. Health, speech and educational needs are well managed. There is a team approach to eliminate barriers to learning for pupils who are deaf.

Systems for checking the school's performance are excellent. There are clear, funded priorities on the school's development plan which raise pupils' achievement. Governance is good. The strategic vision to create a centre of excellence for deaf children has captured the imagination of all staff.

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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

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 behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
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; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
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 are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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

We greatly enjoyed talking with you about your learning and aspirations for the future. We have judged your school to be excellent.

What we most liked about your school

- Your achievement in communicating effectively, and in reading.
- Good GCSE results.
- Outstanding achievement in the sixth form.
- The teaching you receive is outstanding.
- Your excellent behaviour and overwhelmingly positive attitude to learning.
- The high quality of care and support you receive at school and in your residential provision.
- The fact that you enjoy school and take such responsibility for your learning.
- That you are well prepared to go on to university or enter the world of work.
- That the leadership and management of your school are excellent.

What we have asked your school to do now

- We have asked your headteacher and governing body to work at securing funding to ensure that your school is a centre of excellence for deaf children, and so that it can support even more deaf children than it can at present.

Please keep up your hard work.