

# St Johns Catholic School for the Deaf (Boston Spa)

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108120
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	333079
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Honoree Gordon HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

---

<b>Boarding provision</b>	
<b>Social care URN</b>	
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Sarah Urding

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	79
Sixth form	0
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Fr D Harrison

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 January 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	333079

<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs A Bradbury
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 October 2008
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Church Street Boston Spa Wetherby West Yorkshire LS23 6DF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01937 842144
<b>Fax number</b>	01937 541471

<b>Age group</b>	3-19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20-21 January 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	333079

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was an integrated inspection of social care and education and was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and a social care inspector.

## Description of the school

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf is a residential special school run by a governing body and a board of trustees. This is designated a specialist school for sensory impairment, providing for the needs of pupils with varying degrees of deafness, many profound. In recent years an increasing number of pupils also have other additional learning needs. Two thirds of the pupils board at the school during the week and a small number of these stay at weekends also. All pupils have a statement specifying the additional provision that must be made to meet their specific needs.

Pupils enter the school at different ages but mostly at around age 11 or 12. On entry to the school pupils' attainment is typically well below average, because their deafness has proved a barrier to more rapid learning.

At its previous inspection, in October 2008, the school was given a notice to improve because at that time it did not comply with all the current requirements for safeguarding children.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement.

Since the previous inspection in October 2008, the school has swiftly put matters right and all the procedures that are currently required to help safeguard children are now in place. The care, support and guidance offered to pupils are now judged to be good. The overall effectiveness of boarding is good, with only a few minor shortfalls.

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf provides a good education, with several outstanding features. The school is well led and managed; it has made good improvement since its previous inspection and it has good capacity to improve further. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good and in the sixth form it is outstanding.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. The teachers are highly skilled, lessons are enjoyable and as a result pupils are keen to learn. Their behaviour is excellent. Pupils progress sufficiently well to gain qualifications and to be able to stay on beyond compulsory school age in education or training, or to enter employment. By the time they leave the school pupils' standards are broadly average.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. The school has high expectations of what pupils can do and successfully builds their confidence and personal qualities.

The curriculum is excellent, geared well to the different needs and interests of pupils. Effective links with other schools and with two local colleges extend what the school itself can offer. The school's specialism for sensory impairment has had a significant impact, notably through its community strand, on the provision and outcomes for pupils and on their achievement.

The school has made a good start to tackling the points for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. For example, it has forged more formal links between the boarding and educational aspects of school life and has improved the data that are being collected about how different groups of pupils are progressing.

However, further time is needed to show the impact of these recent improvements.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding. Inspectors were able to see further evidence at this inspection than at the time of the previous inspection to be able to judge that the personal development of the older students is outstanding. The twilight sessions held in school are organised flexibly to respond to students' needs and offer very good opportunities for students to develop independent ways of working. Students have personalised programmes in the sixth form that include attendance at one of two local colleges in conjunction with work in school. Appropriate adult support is provided for them to be able to do this, but with a good balance between promoting independence and keeping students safe. Students build on the excellent progress they have made in previous years and gain external qualifications that enable them to progress further into education, employment or training.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision for the EYFS was judged to be good at the time of the previous inspection. Children in the EYFS work alongside pupils in Key Stage 1. This assists the development of their social skills. Inspectors noted that children in the EYFS benefit from access to the full range of support services, including speech and language therapy, to help their severe language delay on entry to the school. Some outdoor learning takes place, but more regular and frequent opportunities have yet to be built in to the curriculum.

The provision for the EYFS was not re-inspected on this inspection.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of the boarding provision is good with outstanding features. The school meets the majority of standards well, with some minor shortfalls.

There has been a strong commitment from the governing body and senior managers to address the safeguarding concerns raised at the last inspection. Improved internal monitoring of child protection issues, behaviour management, placement planning and the involvement of external expertise in safeguarding and education have considerably strengthened scrutiny in these areas and in the school's capacity to improve from within. However, this practice is not yet embedded. The implementation of safe recruitment procedures based on the latest guidance for best practice has reduced the risk of pupils being exposed to potential abusers. The development of policies and a shared understanding of roles between teaching and care staff have improved support for pupils' learning.

The protection of pupils is given high priority and there are positive networks developing with safeguarding agencies. Staff are clear about safeguarding responsibilities and report concerns appropriately. Pupils feel safe and staff actions ensure that welfare is promoted. However, the system for recording actions taken by staff in response to child protection concerns is still not well developed. This makes it difficult to see the level of support that staff provide. Complaints and unauthorised absences are well managed.

Good lines of communication between teaching and care staff aid consistent working and ensure that learning is promoted beyond the school day. These are being further enhanced by classroom observation sessions to raise awareness. Twilight sessions for post-16 students incorporate knowledge required for transition to adulthood and academic learning. Care staff have very good insight into the individual needs of pupils in residence, which helps these staff to provide effective support or contribute to subject matter taught in twilight sessions. Pupils benefit from the extra-curricular activities that the local community can offer because of well established networks with local schools and clubs, which promote integration with non-hearing impaired pupils.

Individual and specialist support for pupils are identified promptly and staff meet a range of diverse and complex needs well, especially in the promotion of health. Staff are well trained, administer medication appropriately and receive up-to-date medical information based on current best practice because of well established links with nurses' networks, the local doctor's surgery and specialist support from York Deaf Child and Family service. The holistic approach to meeting pupils' healthcare needs is complemented by a team of specialist health advisers

within the school. This aids understanding and communication. Consequently, support services such as counselling and family therapy are accessed promptly.

Staff are positive role models for pupils and promote healthy lifestyles through personal, social and health education and activity-based programmes. Staff make the link between diet, exercise and good health. Meals are nutritionally balanced, tasty, meet dietary requirements and equip pupils to make healthy choices throughout their life in school and beyond.

The promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive; staff value and respect differences. For example, staff and pupils are looking at ways to raise awareness of bullying and further reduce any occurrence of this. This work fosters respect and consideration for others and is indicative of the manner in which staff promote pupils' involvement. Pupils are confident, motivated and challenge adults appropriately as a result of the many meetings through which they can make a positive contribution. Pupils behave well, are charming, sociable and welcoming. Staff promote good behaviour by positive reinforcement and encouragement. Careful monitoring reduces the impact and duration of any negative behaviour.

Senior leaders, staff, pupils and their families share a common understanding of the ethos of the school and the services provided. These are defined well in the statement of purpose, handbooks and policies, although a policy relating to caring for children of the opposite sex has not been developed. Staff focus on the individual needs of pupils, are committed, communicate well and are consistent in their approach. The boarding provision is flexibly staffed to meet the needs of pupils and manage their complex needs. Induction for new staff is good. All staff are supported, trained and their performance is appraised. However, the formal supervision of staff is not frequent enough and the recommended level of staff achieving NVQ Level 3 in caring for children and young people has not yet been reached.

Pupils stay in a safe, comfortable, warm and well maintained environment. Facilities are of a good standard, with a rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment. However, the replacement of the beds is not taking place quickly enough for pupils. The environment is adapted to meet the physical needs of pupils well. The school seeks to improve existing facilities for pupils. Established processes ensure that health and safety is everyone's responsibility and a good balance is achieved between managing risk and promoting independence. The effective monitoring of visitors helps to safeguard pupils.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Further develop systems that can show clearly how well particular groups of pupils are progressing over time and consider how to use the analysis of these when making decisions about what is provided for pupils.
- Look at how best the two aspects of care and education can support one another in promoting further pupils' achievement and personal development.
- Ensure that the school meets the National Minimum Standards (NMS) currently not met, as detailed below.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care.

- Ensure that the actions taken in response to child protection concerns are fully recorded (NMS 5.4).
- Provide staff with written guidance on procedure and policy as outlined in appendix 3, in particular care practices towards children of the opposite sex (NMS 30.7).

- Ensure that all staff receive at least one and half hours' supervision each half term (NMS 30.2).
- Ensure that a minimum of 80% of care staff have completed their Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People NVQ (NMS 31.4).

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils arrive in the school with standards that are usually well below national average because their hearing impairment has proved a major barrier to learning thus far. The school assesses their attainment on entry, which is often at Year 7, using a number of tests, including reading ability. Pupils' standards at this point are well below the average standards seen nationally.

Pupils make rapid progress once they join the school. They make good progress in speaking and listening because these receive a high focus in all lessons and are specifically taught and reinforced in the primary section. The school rightly sees these as key to unlocking progress. By the end of Year 6, though standards remain low, pupils have made considerable progress.

The school's data also show clearly that pupils' reading skills improve at around the same rate as pupils who do not have their difficulties in hearing, and this represents particularly good progress for them. This upward progress is maintained throughout the years pupils are in the school.

The school's data and the data it has obtained from the Department for Children, Schools and Families show that progress made by pupils in the secondary section, from ages 11 to 16, is outstanding. Although the number of pupils is small and the range of their needs varies from year to year, this external data consistently places the school among the best nationally for the progress that pupils make from their starting points.

All pupils leave school at age 16 or later with qualifications or accreditation for their learning. In a few cases this includes several good passes at GCSEs. The vast majority of pupils progress sufficiently well to stay on in further education or training in the school's sixth form, or at one of the two linked colleges. Some individuals make exceptional progress.

Because teachers are highly skilled and enthusiastic, lessons are interesting, challenging and stimulating. Consequently, pupils are very keen to learn and make excellent progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development is a strength of this school. Pupils really enjoy school and their attendance is high. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. There is a strong sense of community in the school, with each pupil valuing the next. School records show that often pupils who have struggled with their disability and behaviour at a mainstream school settle down when they join the school and begin to achieve well. The school's ethos is one of 'can do', which encourages confidence and so pupils are keen to learn.

Spirituality is fostered well through regular assemblies, some of which are held in school chapel, but others in form groups, allowing for personal response and a quiet, contemplative start to the day. Every opportunity is taken to encourage and reward effort, reinforcing the school's values.

The school is geared up to helping pupils succeed and be able to make their way in the wider world, despite their disabilities and difficulties. To this end the focus on developing speaking and listening skills makes a significant impact on pupils' future economic well-being and employability. Pupils are enabled to gain qualifications, but also develop wider skills in working together and in developing determination and perseverance.

Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves safe, and their emotional well-being is fostered well through the personal, social and health education and other related programmes.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The quality of teaching overall has improved still further since the previous inspection. Teachers show a high level of skill in preparing and delivering interesting and stimulating lessons. As a result, pupils really enjoy learning. They are engaged by the subject matter and take part enthusiastically in lessons, offering answers and listening carefully to one another's contributions. Because the lessons are enjoyable, and move along at good pace to suit their needs, pupils concentrate for long periods.

The use of group listening aids helps this concentration as pupils are able to listen more easily. This is less tiring and so pupils' responses are more fluent and the lessons flow well.

A good balance is struck in that there are many occasions, for example in practical subjects, where pupils cannot use the group aids and this helps to develop their listening skills. Indeed, a noticeable feature of lessons is the constant reinforcement and development of speaking and listening skills across all subjects and across the whole age range. Teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' basic vocabulary and to encourage accurate speech. In this way teachers really help to prepare pupils for the wider world where good communication skills are key to further study and employment. The development of language and listening skills is given the utmost priority and pupils rise to the challenge.

Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and can achieve. Lessons are often challenging as, for example, in an outstanding mixed-age Key Stage 2 English lesson where pupils identified the use of figurative language in a text and rapidly identified and explained a series of homonyms. One might not have expected this to provoke the outbreak of smiles and laughter that it did.

Lessons are taught by specialist subject teachers ably supported by teaching assistants, where needed, to help guide individual pupils. Well qualified staff include those able to deliver speech and language therapy and to support pupils with additional needs, such as dyslexia. Very small group sizes mean that pupils have the chance to get involved and make excellent progress.

Some sharing of best practice has begun through a programme of in-service training set up in school and beyond, with partner schools, through specialist school links. Teachers are increasingly able to differentiate work to meet individual needs, for example through their skills in questioning.

Teachers make excellent use of information and communication technology to promote learning. This brings lessons to life and responds well to pupils' individual learning styles, such as in a Year 11 GCSE science lesson where a film clip simulating a chemical reaction made the teaching

point clear. In mathematics and science lessons teachers take great care to ensure that pupils understand the underlying concepts rather than just mechanically do exercises. In an outstanding lesson in the primary section, 'hands-on' work with counters when doing multiplication of fractions allowed the teacher to check that each pupil understood the rule.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is excellent, geared well to the different needs and interests of pupils. It is kept under review, so that adaptations can be made, such as the introduction of a greater range of vocational subjects. Effective links with other schools and with two local colleges extend what the school itself can offer.

Personal learning and thinking skills, and the SEAL programme to develop emotional intelligence, complement the taught curriculum subjects and help to build pupils' confidence.

In the primary section the curriculum is planned to meet individuals' needs. In the secondary section pupils follow different pathways to qualifications, according to the different rates of progress they are making. The school reaches out to the local community through a number of exciting projects involving other schools. These links extend pupils' social skills through involvement with non-hearing impaired young people.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are good and have improved since the previous inspection. The school has now satisfactorily completed all the checks on staff that are required to safeguard children, and has put the correct procedures in place for recruiting any new staff. For example, the school now holds a central register for staff, as required.

Excellent relationships amongst pupils and with staff are a particularly strong feature of this school, underpinning the progress that pupils make. Pupils benefit from the individual attention they get from being in very small classes. The school draws extensively also on other professionals, such as those working in speech and language therapy and audiology.

Since the previous inspection more formal links have begun between the care staff and the teaching staff, aimed at integrating the two aspects of school life to enhance pupils' learning and development still further. To this end, a programme of integrated staff training has begun, with care staff attending some lessons and education staff visiting the boarding houses to see how pupils are cared for.

The school's tracking systems show the good and often outstanding progress that individual pupils make. Since the previous inspection, the school has begun to extend these systems, so that they will ultimately be better able to show patterns over time and how particular groups of pupils are doing in school. Once fully in place, this is intended to help the school's leaders to analyse how effectively the curriculum and the teaching meet the range of pupils' needs and to plan accordingly for further improvement.

Pupils' work is helpfully marked, with comments as to how they could improve. Pupils have a better awareness of the levels they are working at and their target grades than at the time of the previous inspection. The school is increasingly encouraging pupils themselves to become more reflective and specific when they discuss with them how they might improve their work.

Pupils say that they feel safe and that the staff care for and support them well. Pupils find the staff to be very approachable, should they have a problem. Parents are strongly supportive of the school: 'The school recognises potential and works hard to match a curriculum to individual needs. Our son has made personal progress beyond our expectations,' was typical of the comments inspectors received. One helpful suggestion received was that the parents of boarders would like more frequent updates on academic progress. The concerns expressed by one parent were discussed and clarified with the headteacher.

Pupils receive good advice to help them make choices about the next stage in their education and nearly all continue their learning in the sixth form, at one of two local further education colleges, or follow a course of study mixing school and college.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The governors and the headteacher have addressed the inadequacies that were identified at the time of the previous inspection. The school now complies with current requirements on safeguarding. Governors support the school well but could strengthen their monitoring role to provide more challenge to the headteacher and senior leaders.

The school's role in promoting community cohesion is excellent. A review of the first year of being a specialist school shows that there has been a strong impact on the school's work in the community, with parents, in partner schools and further afield in the deaf community. Links with other schools, for sports and creative work have extended the school's curriculum and provide further, good opportunities for the development of pupils' social skills.

The school's expertise in working with pupils who have special educational needs has been shared, for example through the publication of a booklet for schools on teaching hearing impaired children and through an innovative programme used with a local primary school on using assessment in music.

The review shows that the school has met or exceeded its targets set for academic progress, as measured through pupils' progress in reading ages and in the statutory attainment tests at the end of Key Stage 3.

The school works closely with parents so that together school and home can support the child to achieve. The school provides opportunities for parents to visit, information days and helpful information, such as a booklet on how parents can help their child develop skills in managing their money.

The school knows itself well, but inspectors did not agree with its self-evaluation grade of outstanding overall, and for leadership and management. There is indeed much to be singled out for praise but recent initiatives following the previous inspection need to be sustained over time to be able to show greater impact.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------	--------------

**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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/or disabilities make progress	1	

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1	IE <sup>2</sup>
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	IE <sup>2</sup>

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	1
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

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

I am writing to thank you for your help when I came recently with Mrs Urding to inspect your school. It was good to talk to you and to hear your views about the school. Both you and your parents told us how much you like being at St John's and how well you feel the teachers, the boarding staff and all the other staff support and care for you. We agree! We think that your school is good and a lot of what the school does is super. We use the words 'excellent' and 'outstanding' to describe these.

We were pleased to see that the school has done all the checks on the staff that it should be doing, to help protect you. This issue has been sorted out and so we are no longer concerned about it.

Here is what we found.

- You make excellent progress. We can see how determined you are to improve your speech and your listening skills and to do well at school.
- Your behaviour and your attendance are excellent.
- Your teachers are outstanding: they are highly skilled; they make your lessons interesting and often fun, so you really want to take an active part.
- You have an excellent range of subjects and activities to do.
- Your personal development is outstanding. This includes your confidence and your skills in working with each other and with adults. The school prepares you very well for going on to college or for applying to get a job.
- The staff provide good care, support and guidance for you.

The boarding section is good. It is well organised and homely. You told us you feel safe and happy there. Mrs Urding thinks the boarders are 'welcoming, charming and sociable'. We spoke to Mrs Bradbury about the beds and she says they are getting on with replacing them all. We like the way the teachers and the boarding staff are getting to know about each other's section of the school. We would like to see them continue this and to ensure that all the boarding provision is as good as it can be. It will help them get to know you even better.

- The school is well led and managed.
- The section for the very youngest children is good.
- The section for the sixth form is excellent and has good links with two colleges.

There is very little that we have asked the school to improve. It is mainly about how well Mrs Bradbury and her staff know how you are all doing, so that they make the right decisions.