

St Anthony's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126155
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293475
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Shippam
Headteacher	Robert Griffin
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Woodlands Lane Chichester PO19 5PA
Telephone number	01243 785965
Fax number	01243 530206

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties who have increasingly complex needs and so they have a very wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils has increased by a quarter since the last inspection and an increasing number have more complex and challenging behaviour. All have a statement of special educational needs. A very small number of pupils are in public care. There are very few children of Reception age and so they are taught alongside other younger pupils.

St Anthony's has recently formed a federation in partnership with another special school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

There has been good improvement since the last inspection because a new leadership team has responded well to the challenges with which it was presented. St Anthony's is a good and improving school. The provision for pupils with autism and exceptional learning needs is excellent. Children in the Foundation Stage receive a good education. The school has forged outstanding links with its partners, both through the federation and otherwise, and it enjoys the overwhelming support of parents. 'I am impressed by the amount of thought given to the way my son is taught academically and socially', is typical of the comments that they make. The pupils are equally enthusiastic about the school. They love being there and make outstanding progress in their personal development. This is because they feel safe and receive a high level of care, guidance and support and the school's leaders have established an ethos of high expectation from all staff.

The pupils' standard of work is exceptionally low in national terms because of their learning difficulties. They achieve well and make good progress during their time in school as they are taught well and are provided with a good curriculum. The pupils' achievements are assessed regularly. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils' achievements in planning lessons, and leaders and managers track pupils' progress to make sure that no individuals or groups of pupils are underperforming. However, assessment information is not used in the most effective way in helping pupils to really push ahead and improve the standard of their work by involving them more in their own learning. The exceptionally high quality of education provided for pupils with autism and additional learning needs enables them to make outstanding progress. These pupils are required to accept increasing responsibility for their own learning through their decision making and increasing acceptance of change.

The school is well led and managed. The school knows itself well as self-evaluation is used to good effect. Procedures for self-review are embedded in the school's day-to-day work and leaders evaluate and then use the information that they collect. As a result, they have a keen perception of what is going on in the school and what they want to do next to bring about change. However, they try to do this on too many fronts because they do not prioritise what they need to do next and then reflect this through the school development plan and subsequent practice. The governing body supports the work of the school well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Prioritise management initiatives and then focus on the few that will have the most impact on improving the school's work.
- Involve the pupils more in their own learning by sharing targets with them and showing them more precisely what they need to do in order to make even more progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The extent of the pupils' learning difficulties means that their standard of work is exceptionally low. However, they make good progress during their time in the school. The pupils' ability to do this is underpinned by the excellent progress that they make in their personal development. This provides them with a very stable platform for learning. Children get a good start in Reception as staff have a very good understanding of each child's personal and learning needs. The children make good progress in their learning and in developing their social awareness and

communication skills because teachers plan individual tasks and carefully structured group activities. As pupils move through the school they make good progress in acquiring the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and in understanding the content of the different subjects that they study. Therefore, they are fully prepared for the accredited courses that they follow in Years 10 and 11. They achieve well in these examinations.

The leaders' decision to teach pupils with autism in discrete classes and to establish an exceptional needs department for other pupils with additional learning needs has been fully justified. These pupils make outstanding progress in areas such as making choices, following routines and accepting change, and this enhances greatly the quality of their learning and accelerates the general progress that they make. As an example, pupils with autism quickly progress from the stage of moving symbols on their personal schedules as activities begin and end, to working alongside others and following a sequence of events, such as the instructions for making play dough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school. Their attendance is good and their behaviour and attitudes are excellent. They respond outstandingly well to adults' very high expectations. School leaders have established amongst all staff a consistent approach to behaviour management and so the pupils know what is expected of them. Therefore, they make very good progress in developing their self-esteem, confidence and their ability to make the right decisions. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They engage in respectful relationships with adults and are very supportive of each other, valuing the efforts of classmates as well as taking a pride in their own work.

Pupils have an excellent awareness of remaining safe, such as following health and safety routines in specialist teaching areas and knowing exactly what to do if they feel threatened or bullied. The pupils have a good understanding of staying healthy. They enjoy physical activities and several have recently achieved sports leadership awards. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community. Some do this as representatives on the school council and others contribute to the learning of younger pupils, such as the boy who visited a class of younger pupils to explain how to grow tomatoes. The pupils make a good contribution to the wider community too, such as visiting the residents of a local home for the elderly, and a few represent the school on the local Youth Council. Secondary-aged pupils are prepared well for leaving school and almost all go on to take courses in further education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A striking feature of lessons is the way in which no time is lost in managing the pupils' behaviour because of excellent relationships and adults' very high and consistently applied expectations. The pupils respond very well in the way that they follow very well-established routines like entering classrooms quickly and quietly, putting up their hand to answer questions and listening to others. This has a significant impact on their rate of learning, as do teachers' subject knowledge and the high level of challenge presented by the activities that they provide. These are well matched to the pupils' needs and enable them to build on their prior learning. However,

teachers do not routinely involve their pupils, especially the older ones, by explaining the link between what they are doing and the criteria that they need to meet in order to progress from one National Curriculum level to the next. Pupils with autism and additional needs learn exceptionally well as they receive very high levels of support, follow a carefully constructed curriculum and benefit from highly structured teaching. All pupils' learning is supported and extended very well by their and teachers' use of ICT and through the very high quality and informative wall displays.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers have monitored the development of the curriculum well as planning has been restructured to meet the needs of the changing population. They have thoughtfully developed resources, such as the big investment in ICT to enhance the quality of the curriculum. As a result, the school is becoming increasingly effective in providing each pupil with a curriculum that meets their needs so that learning is enjoyable. It achieves a good balance in developing the pupils' acquisition of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT while giving them a breadth of interesting subjects and promoting their personal development and well-being. Consequently, the pupils receive a good variety of learning opportunities that is very well supported by enrichment activities such as lunchtime and after-school clubs, visits and visitors into school.

Planning shows an excellent emphasis on developing Reception children's personal and social skills and encouraging their independence. The oldest pupils follow a good range of accredited courses and receive a very good work-related learning programme. Pupils with autism follow a curriculum that is extremely well matched to their individual needs and capabilities, with activities that promote their learning and encourage their personal development extremely well. Those pupils who have been identified as having additional or exceptional needs are equally very well served through very carefully targeted and managed individual learning programmes that combine support in lessons with classmates with one-to-one or small-group work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There is a very strong sense of community in the school. Staff have established a very caring school within which every pupil is valued. The pupils reflect this attitude in the ways that they support and care for each other. There are very robust procedures in place to ensure that pupils are safeguarded at all times. The partnerships with parents, a range of therapists and other outside agencies combine to provide a coordinated approach to guiding and supporting pupils. The pupils also join in this partnership as they are increasingly encouraged to self-evaluate features of their personality and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. These outstanding aspects of the school's work contribute a great deal to the pupils' excellent personal development.

There are satisfactory procedures for guiding and supporting pupils academically. Their work is marked frequently and their achievements are assessed regularly but the school does not make the most of this information to raise standards. It sets targets for pupils, based on National Curriculum levels, but does not share these with them. Consequently, pupils do not know exactly what they need to do to meet their targets and they are not involved enough in reviewing their progress jointly with teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders work well as a team and they are supported by effective key stage managers. Although it is a relatively new team, leaders have been very successful in two important areas of work because they have set a clear direction for how they want the school to develop. Firstly, they have engendered a climate within which all adults share a common approach to managing the pupils and promoting their personal and academic development. This reflects leaders' strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Secondly, leaders have promoted the idea amongst staff that St Anthony's is a school that constantly reviews its practice and that this involves routine monitoring of their work. Leaders carry out this monitoring well and amass and evaluate a great deal of information. Therefore, they know what needs doing. However, they do not then sift this data sufficiently critically in order to identify the few most important things that will have the most impact on improving the school's work.

With the help of governors' input, leaders' efficient deployment of the school's resources makes a good contribution to the pupils' good progress. However, the time that governors have devoted to the mechanics of establishing their role as governors of a federation of schools has reduced their input into strategic planning. This situation has now been resolved and governors are well placed to support leaders' work. Together, leaders, managers and governors have shown that they have a good capacity to bring about further school improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Anthony's School, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 5PH

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We had a really good time watching you in lessons and around school and enjoyed talking with you. You told us that you liked being at school and now we know why. St Anthony's is a good school and it does some things really well. It does an excellent job in helping you to develop as young people. As a result, you have a very good idea about staying safe and know how to remain healthy. There are lots of opportunities for you to help people in school and many of you also help people in the local community. You are prepared well for leaving school and it is pleasing to see that very many of you go to college and carry on with your education.

Lessons are good and teachers give you lots of interesting and fun things to do and so you make a lot of progress in your work. Some of you make really good progress. We were very impressed to see that you do lots of things to help yourselves as well. You go to school regularly and listen very carefully to what your teachers say to you. The way that you behave and get on with your work is excellent. All the adults in the school look after you well. They care about you and make sure that you are always safe.

The senior teachers in your school are doing a good job and they want to carry on improving the school. I have given them some ideas that will help.

- Choose just a few things to focus on rather than trying to make too many changes at the same time.
- Make sure that all of you know your targets and show each one of you exactly what you need to do to make your work even better.

You can help too by doing your very best to achieve your targets.

Thank you once again for being so friendly and polite and we wish all of you lots of luck in the future.

Mike Kell Lead inspector