

# St Catherine's School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118226
<b>Local Authority</b>	Isle of Wight
<b>Inspection number</b>	312852
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacque Cook

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	57
6th form	28
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Hilsum
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Grenville Shipley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 April 2003
<b>School address</b>	Grove Road Ventnor PO38 1TT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01983 852722
<b>Fax number</b>	01983 857219

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Catherine's is a day and residential school for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. At present there is only one pupil aged 7, others are 11 or older. Younger pupils are expected to join the school shortly. Over the last four years, the number of students aged 16-plus has more than doubled. Since last year, there has been a significant drop in the number of pupils on roll. There are almost three times as many boys as girls and very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Forty pupils are in residence.

The school provides speech and language therapy (SALT) to three local primary schools and one high school and teaching staff to two local resource bases in mainstream schools. The school is recognised for work in basic skills and has the Investors in People award. A vocational unit was opened in 2005 at a nearby industrial estate. The school motto is 'Together a voice, a future'.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The strong leadership and good management by the principal, senior staff and governing body has ensured that St Catherine's has successfully adjusted to the changes in the school population, and offers a good standard of education. Actions that have been taken following the robust monitoring of many aspects of school and residential life have led to a significant improvement in pupils' achievement. This illustrates the school's good capacity to improve further. New arrangements for teaching reading, for example, have ensured that a high proportion of pupils are now making good progress and for several, their progress has been exceptional. The views of pupils and parents are taken very seriously. A desire to eat more healthily raised by the school council has led to significant changes. The food is now much improved and one pupil remarked 'it's excellent and good for you!'

Pupils usually join the school with levels of attainment that are below that expected for their age. From this low base, they achieve well and often attain standards that are broadly in line with national figures. Girls make similar rates of progress to boys. Outstanding joint working with speech and language therapists and teaching staff is a major factor in the excellent progress pupils make, in improving their speaking and listening skills. An appropriate strong emphasis on teaching pupils social skills contributes to their excellent preparation for the world of work. The good curriculum is further enriched through many visits and a broad range of activities in school and in the residential provision. Pupils in Key Stage 4 study successfully for awards and examinations but not all of the more able have opportunities to study General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses.

Pupils' increasing self-confidence and self-esteem contributes to their outstanding personal development. Their spiritual, moral and social development are outstanding and behaviour is nearly always exemplary. Strong friendships and a growing ability to understand the feelings and actions of peers ensures that incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils clearly enjoy school and contribute extremely well to their own and the wider community. Outstanding arrangements for pupils' care, guidance and support successfully develop independence and responsibility. Pupils feel safe in school and develop safeguarding strategies to help them when they are in the wider community. Pupils' progress is tracked well. They are successful in meeting a range of challenging targets. However, there is a great deal of data collected about pupils' attainment and progress but it is not yet analysed sufficiently to identify any broader areas of strength or weakness.

Governors have excellent procedures for checking on the work of the school and are very effective. Formal and informal monitoring by senior staff ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff build strong relationships with the pupils who are keen to learn and lessons are made interesting. Work is usually well matched to the needs of pupils, although there are instances where class work and homework, for a few more able pupils, particularly in Year 9, is too easy. The quality of the therapy and teaching provided by St Catherine's for other mainstream schools is checked regularly. The teaching staff attend training at St Catherine's to ensure they maintain high standards.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The good management of the Post-16 provision, the FE Centre, has successfully developed the expanding provision. Clear leadership has ensured that the curriculum continues to develop well and students' achievement is good. A higher level award, for example, is being trialled in mathematics this year to extend those students that have already gained a grade in the GCSE examination. Further work is planned as part of the development of the 14 to 19 curriculum. Work-related aspects are particularly strong. Good use is made of courses at a local college and where appropriate in local schools. A separate vocational facility has very successfully enabled many more vocational courses to be studied.

Students' independence is fostered extremely well. They are prepared outstandingly well for the next stage in their lives when they leave the centre. One parent commented 'the school has transformed my son's life... he has many friends in the wider community... and skills that allow him to be included by others.'

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 8**

The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools and in some cases they are exceeded. The recommended action set out in the latest Ofsted key inspection of residential provision of June 2007 has been addressed fully. There is now a comprehensive system that contains the profile of every pupil. Pupils receive a very high level of care at all times and the school's procedures for safeguarding children are comprehensive and effective. There is very good liaison between care staff and teaching staff, which helps to increase pupils' enjoyment and achievement in both the school and the residential setting.

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

- Ensure that more able pupils in Year 9 always have school and homework that is suitably challenging.
- Develop more opportunities for GCSE courses in Key Stage 4.
- Analyse data about pupils' progress in greater depth.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

All pupils make good progress towards meeting the challenging targets on their individual education plans, liaison plans and those set at annual reviews. This is because targets are very appropriate as they are set in consultation with teachers, therapists, care staff, parents and pupils. Additional reading lessons taught by well-trained staff have improved pupils' reading skills considerably. Several pupils whose progress had previously been very slow are beginning to read with understanding and intonation. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are dramatically improved through the combined efforts of the speech and language therapists, teaching and care staff. As one pupil said about his language and communication skills 'I have definitely improved - we all have.' These improvements and the associated increase in pupils' confidence have contributed to pupils' good achievement in other areas of the curriculum.

In Year 11, pupils gain awards and pass examinations. Several of the more able, consistently gain distinctions in Entry Level courses, notably in mathematics and design and technology. However, too few study for GCSE examinations. By the time students leave the FE Centre, they have gained a good balance of academic and vocational qualifications.

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

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is excellent. They take care of each other and make good use of the school's 'buddy' system. They are extremely courteous as they move around the school and speak with confidence to visitors. The two school councils, one for the main school and one for the FE Centre understand their roles and responsibilities clearly. They take the views and concerns of their peers seriously. Pupils also work for the wider community effectively. One aspect of this is their fund raising and support for a school in Ghana. This contributes strongly to their cultural development. Pupils develop a strong moral sense. They will argue for what they think is right. Opportunities for reflection are valued and pupils attend services in the school chapel and local church. They speak very positively about their relationships with each other, and comment on how much they appreciate the friends that they have made. It is clear that pupils have an outstanding enjoyment of school as exemplified by their very good attendance. Pupils are very aware of healthy lifestyles. They take regular exercise and enjoy their healthy and balanced diet.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The teamwork and expertise of staff and therapists in classrooms ensures that pupils' speaking and listening skills are developed extremely well. Group and paired work is successful in encouraging discussion and consideration of the views of others. Opportunities are provided to explore strategies to deal with different situations. In one lesson, pupils worked in small groups and developed a range of ideas about how they would deal with a stranger in the playground. Staff use praise and encouragement effectively so that pupils' self-esteem develops well. As a result, pupils quickly become involved in lessons. Their interest is sustained using stimulating topics including developing advertising strategies for healthy fruit crisps. Work is marked well and pupils know what they have to do to improve.

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils enable potentially difficult work to be tackled successfully. There are many good examples of the learning of the more able pupils being extended in this way. However, there are also instances, notably in Year 9, where work is not always hard enough for these few pupils. This is also evident in their homework, which is rightly a concern expressed by their parents.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is well planned to ensure that each pupil has an appropriate emphasis on improving their speaking and listening skills. Good opportunities are provided for the pupils in Year 3 to participate in age-appropriate lessons as well as to join older boys and girls when lessons are suitable. Several pupils commented that they really enjoyed the activities the school arranges. Older pupils talked enthusiastically about a recent visit to Wales where they learnt about alternative sources of energy. Several pupils mentioned how much they appreciated learning to play musical instruments including the flute, drums and guitar.

The school is working on developing the curriculum across the 14 to 19 age range to broaden the provision further. Good use is made of 'taster' courses in a local further education college for pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 12. They experience a range of vocational courses, which helps them to decide what they would like to study. Further courses are available for FE Centre students at the school's provision in a local industrial unit. Courses including bricklaying, plumbing, music technology and GCSE construction and the built environment are highly successful.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

There are very strong and effective links with parents and professionals outside of school as well as with the therapists in school. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are robust. They know to whom they can turn if they are upset or worried about anything and staff are well trained to deal with these situations. Pupils also benefit from the support of an adult key worker from within the school staff. Links between the care and the school staff are excellent. Outstanding levels of advice and support are provided for pupils to help them in their work-related learning. Scenarios involving work place incidents are role-played and discussed. Work experience placements are selected carefully with appropriate levels of support if needed. Throughout the school, staff help pupils become more independent. This is fostered very successfully in the residential provision and in the FE Centre. Sessions on independent living provide practical experiences, and two residential houses further away from the school are used effectively for older students. Students are very proud when they are able to travel independently and visit places such as the cafe and leisure centre with their friends.

Staff make certain pupils know what their targets are, as they both talk them through and ensure they are written so they can be easily understood. Each pupil's progress is tracked thoroughly and regularly against their targets. Arrangements that sub-divide levels of attainment and set targets in all academic subjects are beginning to be used well to demonstrate further pupils' good achievement.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The leadership of the school is very effective because the involvement of all representatives including residential and therapists ensures that well-informed decisions are made. The school motto is central to the school's work and all those involved contribute to its success. The expansion of the FE Centre has worked very well and plans to re-build the school to make access easier are well under way. The governing body is very effective and provides the right level of challenge and support. Governors rigorously check the implementation of all the school's policies and ensure that the school offers good value for money. Resources and staff are used very well to support the good achievement of the pupils many of whom were achieving poorly in their previous schools.

The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate and well informed by a range of strategies including gaining the views of parents and pupils. Lessons are monitored regularly using a common format that provides clear information for staff on their strengths and weaknesses. Good use is made of the wealth of data to monitor individual pupils' progress and to check whether girls do as well as boys. However, analysis does not go far enough, for example to explore the achievement of groups of pupils such as the more able or specific year groups. Pupils' work is not scrutinised enough to ensure that the more able are being stretched sufficiently.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2	2
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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
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	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well 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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
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	1	
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	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's School, Ventnor, PO38 1TT

Thank you very much for making my colleague and I feel so welcome when we visited recently. We very much appreciated the opportunity to talk with both the school and FE Centre council members as well as other pupils. You are right, St Catherine's is a good school.

We particularly liked these things about your school:

- you are doing well in your work, and outstandingly well in speaking and listening
- those that are having extra reading lessons are really improving
- you enjoy the many interesting activities in school and in residence
- your preparation for the world of work is outstanding
- you make good friendships in school and learn to listen to different opinions
- staff work hard and are very successful in helping you improve your confidence and gain independence
- therapists, teaching and care staff work extremely well together and focus on helping you to learn
- your behaviour is excellent
- teaching is good and lessons are interesting so you make good progress and reach average standards
- the principal, senior staff and governors lead and manage the school well.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- make sure that pupils in Year 9 always have class work and homework that is hard enough
- increase the opportunities for taking GCSE examinations in Year 11
- analyse data collected about your progress more effectively.

With best wishes for your future,

Jacque Cook

Lead inspector