

Autism Accreditation Assessment

St John Vianney School

Reference No.	286
Assessment dates	28 th , 29 th , 30 th January 2020
Lead Assessor	Rachel Gittens
External Moderator	Liz Loftus
Status prior to the assessment	Accredited
Advanced status applied for	No

Section 1: Context

About the Provision

Brief description of the provision made for autistic people:

St John Vianney RC Special School is a Salford Diocese managed Special Needs School organised around three main buildings, accommodating KS1 & 2, KS 3 & 4, and Post 16. It is the only special school in the Diocese.

'The school caters for children and young people ages 5-19 with additional learning needs, communication difficulties and, those on the Autistic Spectrum'.

The curriculum is based on the on the National Curriculum.

At KS4 the core subjects of RE, Maths, English and Science are studied and complementary vocational activities and qualifications provided.

The Post 16, (KS5) opportunities include Functional Skills qualifications and enrichment experiences.

Number of autistic people supported by the provision: 76

Range of autistic people supported by the provision:

Of the 113 pupils at the school, '76 (67%) are on the autistic spectrum, most have learning difficulties and 5 have severe learning difficulties'.

"We have a wide range of abilities and needs amongst our autistic cohort, from pupils with severe learning difficulties and pre-verbal pupils, up to pupils with good academic ability who communicate well and are able to cope well in the community".

There are currently two Pupils are following ABA programmes.

Outcome of last statutory assessment (Body; date, outcome):

The school was judged to be 'Good' when last inspected by Ofsted in September 2017.

The full report can be found here; <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2728309>

In June 2019 an inspection was carried out under Canon 806 and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act, (to inspect the Religious Education and the Catholic

nature of the school) with a judgement of Outstanding being given. The report cites the following:

'A truly inclusive school community'

'Highly effective partnerships with parents and carers'

'An exceptionally strong pastoral team'

The full report can be found here;

https://stjohnvianneyschool.co.uk/sites/default/files/Files_Web/Section%2048%20Inspection%20Report%20July%202019.pdf

About the Assessment

The Autism Accreditation Assessment took place over three days. The school's Accreditation Adviser took the role of lead assessor with support from a moderator on one day.

A presentation on how provision is made for autistic pupils was given by the head teacher with support from the teacher leading on autism accreditation in school.

The assessment team observed lessons in all 14 classes, with opportunity to observe most pupils at some point during the day. Observations included: PSHE, Literacy, Maths, R.E., breakfast club, lunch, break times and transition/ micro-transitions throughout the day. Further to this incidental observations were noted at unscheduled times throughout the period of assessment when the opportunity arose. Observations were carried out over a period of approximately 7 hours.

Staff interviews were carried out with the following staff and with the following focus:

- Induction, staff training and the Curriculum – head teacher and SENCO
- Safeguarding and work with parents – assistant head and family liaison staff
- Behaviour and Wellbeing – Assistant head and behaviour support staff
- Enrichment and activities within the school and wider community – teacher

The adviser also had opportunity to speak to; educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, 4 parents, and a group of 3 pupils (planned meeting).

The adviser and moderator also had opportunity for incidental conversations during breaks and micro-transitions with other young people.

Key policies were reviewed and working documentation relevant to pupils sampled. Supplementary documentation was shared to evidence staff training and development, and to evidence both pupil and parent views.

The following working documents were sampled across all key stages; person centred plans, pupil's profiles, class Triad sheets and progress and intervention sheets. Pre-assessment questionnaires were reviewed and are included in the appendix to this report.

Section 2: Key Findings

What the provision does particularly well

What stood out as particular strengths:

The school works collaboratively with pupils, their parents and carers and other agencies. In most cases planned person-centred approaches lead to practice which is informed by a good understanding of each autistic young person.

Teachers know their class well and provide timely support to assist with self-regulation and discreet behaviour management.

Learning environments have been designed to make them more conducive to learning for autistic pupils, resources are in place to support staff with environmental audits and to consider individual learning in relation to pupil's autism.

There were many examples of practice that demonstrated how autistic pupils are being enabled to access learning, and take part in activities, both at school and in the local and wider community.

There was a sense of purpose across the school day, pupils presented as self-assured and confident, those that were able to express their views spoke with confidence and could clearly articulate how they felt about school, identifying how staff helped them and talking about future aspirations.

What else the provision does well:

Senior leadership are committed to providing high quality provision, centred on each young person and their family, they have active involvement in overseeing daily practice and in the established quality monitoring processes.

Staff are enthusiastic and passionate about providing the right support for pupils and staff have high expectations of them. During the assessment staff shared many success stories with the assessment team.

Staff have received regular training in autism and specific best practice, methods and approaches. Staff are knowledgeable, experienced and committed to providing high quality education for autistic pupils.

Staff employ a range of effective approaches to engage with parents and carers.

What the provision could develop further

Priorities for the provision:

Staff should reflect on the purpose of the visual supports in place in their individual classrooms. They should ensure they are representative of planned support strategies and are consistently used to good effect. Opportunities to continue to upskill staff in the principles, and application, of using visual support systems and learning tools should be planned for.

Staff should ensure that learning challenges, as were observed in the majority of lessons, lead to pupils experiencing a more productive struggle, for example by presenting them with more appropriately challenging work, will help pupils build resilience and problem solving skills. Further to this staff should continue to support pupils to develop individualised strategies that promote personal independence.

In order to establish, and fully embed, sound practices staff should continue to develop their understanding and working knowledge of the Zones of Regulation.

The school should review its induction process and incorporate autism specific information for staff relevant to their role. The head teacher recognised the importance of this and the lead assessor is confident that will be addressed.

The assessment team would endorse the schools vision to further develop the role of staff autism champions, for example clarifying the remit of their role and agreeing associated CPD opportunities. External visits and networking with other schools could further support this.

Other areas to consider:

The review of policies relevant to autistic pupils should continue, and updates be made as required, to ensure they are easy to read and are reflective of current school process and practice.

Introduction of a staff skills audit (annual) may help SLT consider a skill based approach when prioritising for CPD.

Section 3: Professional Development

Main approaches or methods employed by the provision in supporting autistic people

- Visual approaches (schedules, task lists, symbols etc.)
- Social stories
- Workstations – low arousal
- Rebound Therapy

- Jabadao
- Social stories
- Modelling
- Voice scales
- Task lists
- Visual aids
- Visual timers
- Communication boards
- Emotion charts/zones of regulation

The school are in the process of reviewing its autism policy, and other relevant policies in order to ensure they underpin and are reflective of consistent and clear approaches, rooted in an understanding of best practice, in supporting autistic pupils.

Training staff receive in these approaches and in understanding autism as part of their induction

The process of recruitment and selection identifies essential and desirable skills and once employed by the school staff are supported through appraisal processes.

During induction staff have opportunity to read key policies and discuss teaching methods and approaches.

Although the initial school induction programme is generic, it does include reference to provision for autistic pupils in school. Support for new staff is complemented by additional CPD opportunities built into the meeting cycle for working with the autistic young people.

On-going support and professional development available to staff in working with autistic individuals

There is a robust programme of continuous professional development which is completed during INSET days and twice weekly twilight sessions. This ensures that staff have training in autism specific best practice methods and approaches such as sensory training, communication, learning with visuals, behaviour, autism friendly environments, person centred planning.

Throughout the year teaching staff have opportunity to join SLT to undertake a weekly learning walk of the school. Areas to observe are agreed ahead of time and follow up discussions take place to consider outcomes.

Teaching and Learning Classroom Protocols have been developed and are displayed in all classrooms. They set out the schools expectations, for example for visitors in lessons, the responsibility of teaching assistants and the 'learning climate'. These guidelines are in place to support staff to have a consistent approach in how teaching and learning environments are managed.

The Protocols were further developed this year to include autism specific considerations.

The school has developed Autism Champions and teaching assistants from across all key stages are represented within this group of staff. Examples of work undertaken by the group include the development of: pupil and parent questionnaires to be used to inform the accreditation SEF, annual autism staff training, autism presence/focussed learning walks.

Section 4: Person Centred Support

Brief description of how individual support is planned, implemented and evaluated:

The school uses the SOLAR management system to track progress for all pupils, allowing staff to record pupil's progress and celebrate their learning.

Processes of review ensure individual needs continue to be met:

- Person Centred Plans are created directly from the EHCP. They are worked on daily and reviewed half termly
- Annual reviews are held with parents. Targets and next steps are discussed and parents are encouraged to give their views
- Behaviour support plans are created by class teams where appropriate
- Class profiles are written and contain all the key information about each pupil in the class

Planning used to include a wealth of different documents, these have now been streamlined and key information such as how to meet communication and sensory needs is included in the Person Centred Plan.

PCPs describe identified needs and strategies of support as well as SMART targets which link directly to communication, social/emotional and problem solving and flexibility of thought.

Further profile information outlines sensory needs, behaviour support and skills of independence and cognition and learning.

A one page profile is compiled known as 'My Plan' which summaries the key information contained with the PCP.

The school's therapy offer is as follows:

- SaLT, 2 therapists – 5 days in total
- OT – 3 days
- Physio – 2 days
- EP – 1.5 days
- Drama Therapy – 2 days
- Play therapy – 1 day

The school has in place a programme for reviewing the quality of teaching and learning it offers. This includes:

- Classroom observations by a member of the senior leadership team or through peer to peer supportive guidance
- Ongoing assessment of progress made by all pupils
- Planning monitoring and workbook sampling to ensure effective matching of work to meet pupil need

Differences in Social Communication

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The speech and language therapists provides direct support to pupils. The focus of their work has been to provide 1-1 therapy and group work. One therapist spoke to the adviser and reported that, in her view, there are many good examples of speech, language and communication strategies and approaches which are firmly embedded in working practice.

An Ed Psychologist also shared his view on the learning environment at St John Vianney School, stating that he has found augmented communication, where required, to be used consistently throughout all Key Stages and that '*the use of visuals is rigorous*'.

Staff were observed to have a sound understanding of the individual pupil's preferred communication and of a wide range of communication and interaction strategies and approaches.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

In the majority of observations visual communication approaches were used to good effect to support autistic pupils.

Staff use visual supports such as visual schedules, now/next boards, task lists and symbol fobs to good effect. The strategies appeared to promote positive outcomes such as reduced anxiety about what is next and increased independence.

Throughout observations pupils were provided with opportunities to interact with their peers and members of staff. Best practice was observed at the breakfast club and during breaks where staff joined pupils. Staff modelled appropriate social use of language, facilitated interactions between pupils and provided opportunities for young people to practise and develop social skills.

Where practice could be further improved staff in three of the fourteen classes could have made better use of visual aids. For example use of the visual timetable, symbols on lanyards and communication boards could have been better utilised. In one class staff should ensure that each child has ready access to their preferred communication

system, as was consistently observed in other classrooms across all Key Stages of the school.

Self-Reliance and Problem Solving

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The school prospectus cites numerous aims of the school, including the following which the assessment team felt were reflected in the majority of observed practices:

- *'Respond positively to different learning styles and offer a range of experiences for our learners.'*
- *'Help all to communicate appropriately, developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.'*
- *'Foster an environment which leads to enjoyment and respect of learning where all will achieve their best.'*

Pupil profiles are in place and clearly describe recognised support strategies for individual young people. Profiles are accessible to all staff.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Overall staff were effective in supporting pupils to do things for themselves rather than being reliant on staff. By enlarge pupils could understand what they needed to do 'now' and 'next' and in most observations pupils used visual aids, with differing levels of support, to good effect.

In the majority of lessons staff made good use of the visual aids available to them and of the fourteen lessons that were observed eleven were found to be very well structured and practice delivered consistently in line with identified strategies of support.

Where best practice was observed, staff broke down each task using checklists/task sheets, and timers were used to good effect in order to help pupils to understand the lesson and access it independently. Staff also created conditions for pupils to take ownership of their learning, such as:

- choose how they will learn
- space and time to explore and problem-solve for themselves
- independent access to resources
- structured support was generalised beyond the classroom

Further best practice examples include; staff asked questions at different points in lessons to check understanding and used reframing techniques to help pupils accept different ways of looking at a situation.

Where practice could have been improved there were two lessons observed where had staff made reference to the presented class timetable, or referenced additional visual

aids, students may have been better able to know what was 'next' and to have been able to work at a greater level of independence.

In one class, planning identified that most pupils have 'very little understanding regarding questioning and communication', however observed practice had a strong focus on verbal prompting, often not reinforced with any additional visual cues. For example staff provided verbal cues, such as '2 minutes' and explained what was happening 'now' using simple language, such as 'work', however they did not use a visual or auditory timer nor did they use symbols or sign alongside the spoken word.

Sensory Experiences

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The school benefits from the support of both an occupational and physiotherapist, these specialist staff work collaboratively with the wider therapy team and teaching staff to put in place planned support and interventions.

There are two dedicated sensory spaces and a number of therapy rooms that provide for planned interventions and therapy sessions.

Planning incorporates strategies and interventions identified for individual pupils.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

During all observations pupils had access to sensory supports; the sensory needs of young people are taken in to consideration when staff plan lessons and organise classrooms, and within the wider learning environments, for example:

- pupils are placed in classes according to need
- classrooms are individually planned and resourced to ensure each individual's needs are met
- pupils access sensory breaks
- pupils are able to take identified resources with them as they move between learning environments

Further examples of good practice observed to meet individual sensory needs included the use of ear defenders, sensory and fidget toys and the use of wobble cushions and foot rests/massager.

Classroom organisation includes consideration of; the resources provided at work stations and the positioning of these desks, staff monitor light and heat levels, classrooms include areas with low distraction or spaces to relax.

Where practice could be further improved; in one class there was quite a large difference in the height of the pupils and as a result the chairs appeared too small for one and the height difference between tables and chairs too great for others.

Emotional Well-being

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Pupils are encouraged to be independent in class by organising themselves to be ready for work. Autistic pupils have active roles in their classes (having responsibility for completing class jobs) and in the wider school community, such as with the chaplaincy team, school council and prefects.

Zones of Regulation are being used, although this is a relatively new initiative in school and is yet to be fully embedded. Where Zones of Regulation are in use staff have differentiated their approach to ensure it is presented at a level accessible to pupils. Throughout the period of assessment staff were observed to support pupils to work towards recognising their own feelings and emotions and to access appropriate self-regulation.

5 Case studies were shared which demonstrated how each young person had been supported by the school through individualised support plans. Examples included:

- how support to foster independence through visual aids had led to one young person being *'better able to cope with new routines'*
- how using clear boundaries and visuals such as now/next had supported a young person to *'sit at her workstation when doing lessons'*
- how providing a visual system to represent work/reward which provided for addressing identified sensory needs and led to a pupil being able to *'cope with demands' and 'access lessons'*

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Staff had consistently high expectations for pupil's behaviour. Good behaviour was observed throughout the period of assessment, and was underpinned by positive relationships between students and between staff and students. The assessment team agreed that these relationships were pivotal to achieving productive, yet relaxed, learning experiences.

Staff were both caring and nurturing and the assessment team agreed that pastoral care was considered to be a strength of the school.

Staff were seen to provide proactive emotional support at the first signs of dysregulation and all staff set clear boundaries in their expectations of behaviour, which was, by enlarge, reinforced through visual means.

During the period of assessment the team noted how staff promoted good relationships and a sense of belonging across all key stages, for example they:

- use positive language when talking to parents and when discussing working relationships with families
- recognise the valuable contribution of parents in their child's learning and wellbeing
- recognise, acknowledge and reward achievements

Where best practice was observed staff used the school reward systems to good effect and used positive praise well, attributing praise with positive behaviours and responses, such as 'good looking' and 'good listening'. Further examples of best practice include:

- Reframing
- Thinking strategies
- Realistic expectations
- Reflection
- Listening and accepting others opinions
- Ask questions at different points in the lesson to check understanding

In two of the fourteen lessons observed pupils were presented with activities that offered limited challenge and pupils in these classes appeared passive in their learning. The assessment team felt that the teaching and learning approaches in these classes could have been adapted, or further differentiated, to give opportunity for the pupils to experience a more 'productive struggle', for example by presenting them with more appropriately challenging work.

Section 5: Consultation With Autistic People

The adviser had opportunity to meet with three autistic students, they spoke very positively about the school and were able to express their views about what they liked about the school and where they thought it could improve. Comments included:

- "The staff are really good here, they are good at dealing with issues and they take education seriously".
- "I like the opportunities at this school. In my old school they didn't give everyone a chance to play football but they do here and I have played on the team".
- "Everyone accepts you for who you are. They do not discriminate".
- "This school saved my life".

The school shared a Student Questionnaire undertaken in November 2019, the school had collated both whole school and autism specific data. Below are some examples of the autism specific feedback and data:

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------------|-------|
| - I have access to a visual timetable | 95% - yes | 5% don't know | |
| - I have access to visuals to help me | 85% yes | 9% don't know | 6% no |
| - I can follow instructions given by my teacher | 82% yes | 13% don't know | 5% no |

Staff have used information from the consultation to set in place actions, such as the pupil planners have been adapted to accommodate a visual timetable, staff have received training on using visuals cues to represent change and twilight training

sessions with a focus on the use of communication strategies, such as using communication boards has been implemented.

With families of Autistic People

6 family members provided feedback to the assessment team by returning completed questionnaires. 3 parents report that the support their relative receives is always good and 2 said it was mostly good. 5 said the understanding staff have of their relative is always good and 1 family member disagreed with this by stating things were okay but could be better.

The full details of the pre-assessment questionnaire can be found in the appendix to this report.

Parent and pupil consultation has been undertaken by the school.

Parents Spring 2019:

When asked if they would recommend the school to other families 100% of those that returned the questionnaire strongly agreed or agreed that they would. The following is an excerpt of additional data that was also shared:

- My child is taught well 71% strongly agreed and 23% agreed
- My child is making good progress 65% strongly agreed and 26% agreed
- The school communicates with me effectively about my child's progress 55% strongly agreed and 29% agreed
- The school seek my views and listens to my concerns 55% strongly agreed and 29% agreed

The adviser spoke to four parents on the telephone. One parent said she felt like she had got her son back; after 9 months of being out of school her son had not had a day off in the last three years since he started attending St John Vianney. Two parents said that the school were 'amazing'.

Further parental views shared with the adviser included:

- The school use social stories and other pictorial supports are used
- My son has had a range of experiences whilst at school that he wouldn't usually get involved in at home such as going cycling and to a farm
- The school have helped my son with his phobias
- My son had a brilliant transition in to Post 16
- Staff encourage my son to actively participate in school

Of the parents that the adviser spoke to nobody had any concerns in respect of the progress their child was making nor of the school.

Communication from School includes weekly newsletters, phone calls home, parental visits to the school and provision of 'open door' opportunities to visit school, formally and informally, to discuss progress. A couple of parents noted that communication between school and home had been much improved in the last couple of years and they are now happy with the level of information they receive.

A Family Liaison Officer coordinates 'Riding the Rapids' parental programme. Two courses are delivered annually with each lasting 10 weeks. The school shared parental evaluations from the Riding Rapids training which included the following, parents said they found the following 'most useful':




- reinforcement and discussion
- learning the difference between positive and negative factors that contribute to behaviour
- seeing all the visual aids that can be used, talking to others in the same situation

The adviser had opportunity to observe part of a Riding the Rapids session. The session was the first of a 10 week course and staff were working to put parents at ease and to build rapport, the parents in the group were all observed to be engaged. The following key skills were noted, staff encouraged parents and carers to share their experiences, staff facilitated discussion using positive language, parental views were acknowledged and listened to.



Parents left the session with some ideas and suggestions to support with their own self-care and emotional resilience.




APPENDIX 1: SURVEYS

St John Vianney School FAP 13/01/2020

The support my relative is given is...			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		16.67%	1
3	mostly good		33.33%	2
4	always good		50.00%	3
			answered	6
			skipped	0

The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		16.67%	1
3	mostly good		0.00%	0
4	always good		83.33%	5
			answered	6
			skipped	0

The way I am kept informed and asked my views about how my relative is supported is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		0.00%	0
3	mostly good		33.33%	2
4	always good		66.67%	4
			answered	6
			skipped	0

The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		16.67%	1
2	ok, but could be better		0.00%	0
3	mostly good		33.33%	2
4	always good		50.00%	3
			answered	6
			skipped	0
<p>Comments: Please note you are not required to comment below, if you do so they may be quoted in the final report. Our questionnaires are anonymous and Autism Accreditation cannot be held responsible for comments which identify any individual. (4)</p>				
1	09/12/2019 09:14 AM ID: 132250485	For a Special School they could do so much better but sadly it seems if the child doesn't fit then they just attempt to get rid of the issue rather than work with it.		
2	12/12/2019 17:43 PM ID: 132587707	The understanding of staff from St John Vianney School for my son is exceptional. My son enjoys coming to the school since starting in September. The communication has been fantastic and the home to school diary is greatly appreciated especially due to my child's communication difficulties. Members of staff are approachable and always open to my opinion in regards to my child's development is progressing whilst ensuring my son's well being is paramount. They make calls regularly on updating both my husband and I of our son's progress.		
3	12/12/2019 21:21 PM ID: 132603519	The school is very aware that every child is unique and so when they offer support they are aware that what works for one will probably not work for others. They are really positive about the support. Regarding our son's adoption and work to include the therapy he gets out of school within their work.		
4	17/12/2019 22:22 PM ID: 133034947	My son has gained a lot of confidence since starting at SJV. His needs are met and he feels understood and accepted. SJV has helped him to become more independent as well.		

APPENDIX 2: COMMENTS FROM THE PROVISION

Thank you for the report

On page 10 the report identifies that the behaviour displayed across school was 'good'. We feel that that during the accreditation visit that behaviour observed was better than good and this could be reflected further in the report.