

INSPECTION REPORT

THE ST FRANCIS SPECIAL SCHOOL

Lincoln

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120755

Headteacher: Mrs Ann Hoffmann

Lead inspector: Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th October 2003

Inspection number: 261567

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary 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.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	92
School address:	Wickenby Crescent Ermine Estate Lincoln
Postcode:	LN1 3TJ
Telephone number:	01522 526498
Fax number:	01522 569128
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian Smith
Date of previous inspection:	19 th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Francis is a school for boys and girls aged 2 to 19 with physical and/or medical disabilities. Currently, 92 attend, including 30 post-16 students. Although the school is designated to have children in the nursery and reception years it has not had pupils of this age range for two years. When they join the school, the attainment of most pupils is well below average. All the pupils have statements of special educational need. Most have physical disabilities, but small numbers have various other barriers to learning, such as hearing impairment or medical conditions. Five pupils are visually impaired and four of the post-16 students have autistic spectrum disorders. During term time, the school provides residential facilities for 24 secondary-aged pupils. In each case, the pupil's statement specifies the need for a boarding placement. They stay in school for two to four nights each week. Day pupils are invited to share the organised evening activities. Pupils travel to school from all over Lincolnshire, with one pupil from North Lincolnshire and one from North East Lincolnshire. All of the pupils are white and none has English as an additional language. Their socio-economic circumstances are broadly average. The school provides support regarding information and communication technology for pupils with physical disabilities in mainstream schools. A newer service, funded by St Francis, is currently offering advice about wider issues of physical disability provision and increasing the opportunities for pupils from St Francis to spend time in mainstream schools. In 2003, the school gained the Investor in People award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15173	Rosemary Eaton	Lead inspector	Art and design Design and technology
13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	English Religious education Personal, social, and health education and citizenship Special educational needs
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science Modern foreign language Physical education
20921	Gordon Wilkinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Post-16 provision

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education
102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
GL52 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	19
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4 and Post-16	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Francis is a **good** school with many very good and excellent features. Pupils and students achieve well, in line with the quality of teaching and learning. The programmes for helping pupils communicate, take part in lessons and activities, and improve their mobility, support their achievement very effectively. Pupils with particularly complex needs achieve very well. The care provided is excellent and the school is well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership and is highly committed to moving the school forward and raising achievement.
- All staff work very hard to enable every pupil to play as full a part as possible in school life.
- In their plans for lessons, teachers do not always set out what they expect pupils to learn.
- The school takes enormous care to make sure pupils are safe, secure and happy.
- The skills of teaching assistants are not always used to the best advantage.
- The very high quality residential opportunities have a significant impact on pupils' achievement and personal development.
- Pupils have very many opportunities that enrich and extend their learning.
- They thoroughly enjoy being at school and they make the best possible efforts to do well.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to helping pupils in other schools to overcome their barriers to learning.

The school has improved well since the previous inspection. There have been many improvements but particularly good progress has been made in the way the school plans the curriculum and for future developments and in pupils' achievement in information and communication technology. Previously, these were key issues. The way in which teachers keep track of pupils' progress on a daily basis has not improved enough.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 14	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Those in Years 1 and 2 achieve well, as do the pupils in Years 3 to 6. Achievement is also good in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The post-16 students achieve well. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 achieve very well in history, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education. In other subjects, achievement is nearly always good. An exception is science in Years 7 to 9 and for lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. The achievement of these pupils is simply satisfactory because they do not benefit from specialist science teaching. Pupils with the most complex communication difficulties and significant physical disabilities achieve very well, owing to the special support they are given. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students gain a wide range of certificates to recognise their achievement. These comprise GCSE, Entry Level, National Skills Profile, Accreditation for Life and Living, Towards Independence and Team Enterprise.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are excellent. They try their utmost to do well during lessons and activities. Attendance is very good – a lot better than in similar schools.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and results in pupils learning well. History and information and communication technology are taught especially well. All teachers make sure that every pupil is able to play a full part in the lesson – for example, by using communication aids – and be as independent as possible. They choose activities and resources that motivate pupils to work hard, but don't always make the best use of teaching assistants to help pupils to learn.

The curriculum offers very good opportunities for enriching pupils' learning and providing for their personal and social development, both during the day and after school. The residential provision also makes a very powerful contribution to each of these elements. Because the quality of care is extremely good, pupils are comfortable and confident and able to take full advantage of all the opportunities provided. Links with parents, other schools and the community are very strong and enhance pupils' learning and achievement. The information and communication technology support service provides excellent advice and help for pupils in mainstream schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The school is well led. The headteacher provides very determined and thoughtful leadership. Management is also good, with regular checks on all aspects of the school's performance. At the start of the afternoon, teachers and pupils do not always have support from teaching assistants, because of the way their time is organised. This slows down learning in a number of lessons. Governance is good. Governors are committed to the school and provide active support. The outreach service is led and managed very well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views about the school. They are very satisfied with the leadership and management of the school and the arrangements for settling in children when they join the school. They feel strongly that there is no bullying or harassment.

Pupils' views are extremely positive. They consider that the school meets their needs very well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Help teachers to keep track of pupils' progress on a daily basis, by ensuring that their lesson plans show clearly what they expect different groups or individual pupils to achieve.
- Deploy teaching assistants flexibly to ensure that throughout the day pupils receive the support they need.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' and students' achievement is **good**. The pupils with complex communication difficulties or severe physical disabilities achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in information and communication technology, history and personal, social and health education.
- The pupils with the most complex needs achieve very well.
- Much of the work done by Year 11 pupils and post-16 students is externally accredited.
- Most secondary-aged pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory, rather than good or better.

Commentary

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 14	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

1. When they join the school, pupils' attainment is often well below average. This is owing to their special educational needs but is frequently compounded by their education having been disrupted by changes of school and periods of absence – again, as a result of their physical and medical conditions. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 and the post-16 students all achieve well. This is in line with the overall good quality of teaching throughout the school. During Years 1 to 11, achievement is particularly good in information and communication technology, history and personal, social and health education. In information and communication technology and history, this is linked directly to the very good quality teaching in all year groups. For a similar reason, secondary-aged pupils achieve very well in the communication and recording aspects of English. The very high levels of achievement in personal, social and health education are the result of the very good opportunities provided for pupils' personal development, both throughout the school day and in the residential setting.
2. In nearly all other subjects inspected, including English overall and mathematics, achievement is good. The exception is science. Here, the primary-aged pupils and the higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well. The remaining secondary-aged pupils' achievement is satisfactory, because science is one of the few subjects where these older pupils do not receive specialist teaching. This has been identified as an issue by the school and is a high priority within the development plan.
3. At post-16, students achieve well in their courses. Since the previous inspection, the range of accredited courses offered has increased significantly. This is also the case for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining pupils and students are successful in GCSE examinations in a number of subjects. Last year, one pupil achieved seven passes, six of them at grades B and C. Another pupil gained five passes within the range C to F. Over half of the Year 11

pupils achieved one or more pass grade, exceeding the school's target. The average points score of 21.4 was also significantly better than the target of 16.8. These results are significantly better than the national average for similar schools. This year, for the first time, a few of the highest attainers in Year 12 are studying for GCE AS level examinations in biology and psychology. St Francis' very strong links with mainstream schools are enabling this to happen. Lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students are also successful in externally accredited courses: Entry Level, National Skills Profile, Accreditation for Life and Living, Towards Independence and Team Enterprise

4. Throughout the school, the pupils with the most complex communication difficulties and significant physical disabilities, including those with sensory impairment, achieve very well. This is because of the very great attention paid to enabling them to make the most of their abilities, particularly through the Communication, Access and Mobility programmes. They learn to use equipment such as electronic aids to communication and wheelchairs, in order to take part in lessons and activities. As a result, they achieve much better than might be anticipated, given the nature of their disabilities. The achievement of post-16 students with autistic spectrum disorders is good, because they are known well to staff, who do their best to ensure that their needs are met. In all year groups, girls and boys achieve equally well. Staff are very careful to plan activities that appeal to both genders and to vary the teaching and learning approaches they employ, so the needs of different types of learners are met just as well. Additionally, boys and girls have very positive role models to emulate, both the staff and amongst older pupils and students.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **excellent**, both in school, when out of school and when in the residence. Pupils' personal and spiritual, moral and social development is **very good** as is their attendance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and have excellent attitudes to learning.
- They are very ready to use their initiative.
- Although pupils are seldom absent, there are no clear procedures to check their punctuality.
- The school provides very good opportunities for all aspects of pupils' personal development.
- The residential provision is very popular with pupils.

Commentary

5. Pupils have joyous and exemplary attitudes to learning and their school. When asked what they would like to change they replied, almost overwhelmingly, 'Nothing'. During lessons, pupils try their utmost to do well, often in the face of physical difficulties and discomfort. For example, in a gymnastics lesson, Year 10 and 11 pupils visibly gritted their teeth and persuaded their limbs to make just that extra effort to complete the sequence of activities they had devised. Post-16 students are extremely well motivated and are frequently in place, or working on the computers and organising their work, before the start of the lesson. These excellent attitudes have a significant impact on pupils' achievement, because they make the most of all opportunities for learning.
6. Pupils display exceptional initiative. A group of pupils and students in the after school information and communication technology club are currently putting together a PowerPoint presentation about the residential facilities, to inform parents and new pupils. Pupils and students support each other as well as outside charitable causes. Most recently, funds were raised by participating in the Lincoln ten kilometre run, to help a student sail on a 'tall ship' with the Jubilee Sailing Trust. This is also an example of how pupils are willing to take up any opportunity challenge themselves and to broaden their horizons.

7. Behaviour is excellent and there have been no exclusions. Pupils are exceptionally thoughtful and, as one pupil said, 'We look out for each other'. Generally, pupils do not consider that bullying or harassment are issues in the school. As they mature, pupils grow to accept each other's ups and downs. One parent commented that the general attitude is, 'Oh, he's having a problem today', if there is a behavioural or emotional incident. This is especially relevant in a school where pupils do suffer bereavements, pain and discomfort, and the frustrations of not being able to do physically, everything that they want to do.
8. Attendance is very good. It is difficult to gauge levels of punctuality, as no records are kept in the registers, or in a late book, of pupils or transport arriving after registration.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	8.1
National data:	11.0

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	0
National data:	0.5

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background

No of pupils on roll
91
1

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	0
0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

9. Pupils' personal development is very good, in response to the very wide range of planned opportunities and the constant focus on pupils doing as much for themselves as possible. As they move up through the school, they develop a very mature outlook and response to events. Pupils and students enjoy being boarders and are unanimous in their praise for the level of support and opportunities that they receive through the residential provision.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are all **good**. Partnership with parents, other schools and the community are **very good**, as are the support and guidance pupils receive. The standard of care is **excellent**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **good**, as is pupils' learning. The pupils with additional or particularly complex needs learn very well. The quality of assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are extremely careful to ensure that all pupils play a full part in lessons and activities.
- The plans for lessons do not always show what particular groups or individuals are expected to learn.

- Teaching assistants mostly make very good contributions to pupils' learning. However, in a significant minority of lessons, their expertise is not used to the full.
- Activities and resources are chosen very well and encourage pupils to work hard.
- Teachers have high expectations for pupils to achieve.
- An effective and well organised system for assessing pupils' achievement is partly in place. However, these procedures are not up and running in all subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 65 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1.5%)	13 (20%)	39 (60%)	11(17%)	1 (1.5%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

10. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of teaching that is good or better has increased significantly. This is especially important because, at the time of the current inspection, two of the teachers were newly qualified and a third teacher had until very recently taught in a mainstream school. Parents are emphatic that teaching is good. One of the most striking features of lessons is the teachers' determination to include all pupils, whatever their particular needs. In order to achieve this, they augment their knowledge of the curriculum and of pupils' particular strengths and difficulties with advice from other professionals, such as therapists. Additionally, teachers often apply their own ingenuity, finding ways to overcome pupils' learning or physical difficulties and helping all pupils to benefit equally from the lesson. For example, in the previous report, reference was made to communication aids not being used sufficiently. The picture is very different today. The school's leaders have ensured that teachers are much more knowledgeable and confident, and electronic equipment is used routinely, as a tool for learning. As a result, for example, pupils who are not able to express themselves through speech are required consistently to communicate through a wide range of alternative means, such as a head switch linked to a visual display. Teachers are scrupulous in ensuring that pupils have enough time to respond to questions or contribute to discussions. This means that they are not deterred from persevering and hence getting more proficient in their use of the technology, helping them to contribute as well as pupils who speak. Teachers follow expert advice and make very effective use of specialist resources to support pupils with other forms of disability. For example, in an art lesson, pupils in Years 7 and 8 were trying to use swirling brush strokes, like those used in Van Gogh's 'Starry Night'. One pupil had difficulty seeing the reproductions provided and so a close circuit television monitor was brought in, so she was no longer disadvantaged. As a result of these measures, pupils with additional or especially complex needs mostly learn very much better than might be expected. However, teachers' knowledge and understanding of autistic spectrum disorder is less well established and the school is aware of the need to develop expertise in this area. At present, the post-16 students with autistic spectrum disorders learn well, because staff have devised ways of meeting their particular needs.
11. Lessons are planned and organised carefully and teachers are quite clear about their purpose – for example, to enable pupils to learn and practise a particular skill. However, they do not always write down what they expect different groups of pupils – such as the highest and lowest attainers – to achieve. This means that they are not able to measure accurately whether pupils have achieved as well as was intended or record this information quickly and easily. The same weakness was mentioned in the previous report. Although the school has improved several aspects of planning and assessment, this particular element remains an area for development.
12. Teaching assistants make very strong contributions to the majority of lessons. For instance, they work with groups or individuals to help pupils develop knowledge, skills and

understanding, and they attend to their physical and personal needs efficiently, discreetly and sensitively. However, teachers do not always give the support staff sufficiently clear direction so that, at times, they appear to be observers of the lesson, rather than participants. For instance, they may sit with the pupils during a discussion and have no obvious part to play. Again, teachers occasionally give instructions during the lesson, rather than having everyone's role organised beforehand. This wastes learning time and interrupts the flow of the lesson.

13. As a rule, teachers choose activities and resources very effectively, and this is one reason why pupils are motivated to work so hard. A particular strength is the way in which approaches are varied according to the age of the pupils. For instance, a history lesson with higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 took the form of a discussion about the history of medicine, followed by timed responses to past GCSE questions. The pupils rose to the challenge of this academic style of learning, making thoughtful contributions and very good efforts. As in this instance, lessons often reflect teachers' high expectations for pupils to achieve. These are evident not just in what is taught but the way pupils' behaviour is managed. This means that lessons are very rarely interrupted by incidents of challenging behaviour or lack of co-operation. Pupils are kept busy and interested and enjoy receiving praise for their efforts and achievements. Overall, English and mathematics are both taught well, but the specialist English teaching in the secondary years is very good and leads to very high levels of achievement.
14. Since the previous inspection, when procedures were judged to be unsatisfactory, there has been very good improvement in developing effective systems for assessment. This is because of the leadership of the knowledgeable and enthusiastic assessment co-ordinator. Whole school strategies for assessment now have very good features, even though the commercially produced recording system chosen by the school has still to be introduced in several subjects. Each pupil and student is assessed formally at least annually with a particular focus on English and mathematics. A range of assessment materials are used in these subjects, which are well matched to the learning levels of individual pupils and students. The results, which are carefully analysed, are used very effectively to plan teaching groups and to decide the most suitable form of accreditation for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and at post-16. Information gathered is also used to identify suitable targets for pupils' individual education plans. Where pupils do less well than expected, teachers meet in order to agree a plan of action for raising their achievement. Again, this makes very effective use of the information from assessments. However, there is variation in the way in which pupils' and students' work is marked. In some cases, marking is not sufficient to enable pupils and students to know how well they have done or to show whether they have made progress. This, and the weakness in tracking pupils' progress on a daily basis, means that assessment is satisfactory overall, rather than good or very good.

The curriculum

A **good** breadth of learning opportunities, and **high** quality accommodation and resources, help all pupils to achieve well. Learning opportunities have improved and are very good for pupils with additional special needs. Activities to enrich learning, and programmes for personal, social, health and citizenship education are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very wide range of interesting and motivating activities enrich pupils' learning during the school day, after school, and through links with other schools, colleges and the community.
- The school plans very well to match programmes of work to the needs of individual pupils and students.
- A very effective 'Communication, Access and Mobility' programme helps all pupils to achieve well.

- A very comprehensive programme supports development of pupils' personal, social and life skills and independence, and understanding of how they can play their part in the community.
- All pupils have access to externally accredited courses by the time they leave school.
- The improved accommodation is accessible, safe, and well resourced, and is helping pupils to achieve well.
- In Year 10 and Year 11, opportunities for pupils to make subject choices, and for all to participate in work-related learning, are not fully developed.
- The contribution of the lunchtime programmes to the time allocated to teaching and learning is not planned and assessed rigorously enough during Years 1 to 6.

Commentary

15. The school provides a very rich and varied programme of visits, events, visitors into school, links with schools and colleges, and activities after school. The very high quality of this provision motivates pupils and engages their interest very well. Events include a 'Bonjour' day in French, enactment of 'medieval Lincoln' with costumes, Cathedral and church visits, drama and music clubs, wheelchair hockey club, and sponsored challenges. During the termly 'activities week', pupils are involved in a variety of events – for example, 'The Great Kite Challenge', sports day and cricket matches. They take part in the 'Keilder Challenge' involving team-building events with pupils from mainstream schools. Pupils in the residential setting are supported during homework sessions and those who do not stay overnight are able to take part in activities, provided that their parents can arrange transport home and appropriate care where necessary.
16. Very good planning ensures that pupils and students with additional or especially complex needs have full access to a wide range of learning opportunities. For example, time is set aside for pupils to be trained to use their equipment for communication and mobility effectively. This means that they can participate very well in lessons. For example, during one session, pupils played a game, working their way round an 'assault course' which had been created in the school hall by the occupational therapists. They practised negotiating obstacles, while another pupil was learning how to control his chair using more advanced switches. At the same time, the speech therapists were working with other pupils using various communication devices to practise responding to questions and developing conversational skills. As a result of this work, pupils have a high degree of confidence in mobility and communications and make very good progress in these essential life skills. Programmes of work are very well adapted to support pupils with hearing or visual impairment, resulting in very good achievement.
17. Pupils have access to a very successful programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education during the day and in the residence. Life skills are an important part of this programme for all pupils and very many activities are planned to promote these skills. As a result, pupils make very good progress developing their independence, mobility, personal care, communication and social skills – and vocational skills at post-16. These students study externally accredited courses, at Entry Level, in life skills and job seeking skills. The school is very successful at weaving opportunities for pupils and students to develop their personal and social skills into all aspects of school life, although a few parents would like to see even more time given to life skills development. Initiatives such as the school council help pupils to take responsibility and understand their duties as citizens. Pupils' personal and social development continues throughout the long lunch period. Staff know the pupils' needs very well and provide a high level of care at this time. The specific contribution of this period in the day, however, in helping pupils to meet their individual targets, is not sufficiently planned and assessed as part of teaching time.
18. The post-16 vocational programme is very good. A residential week at a local college, with students from other special schools, is very effective in providing all the post-16 students with experience of work, and the opportunity to develop further their personal, social and

independence skills. Vocational education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is less well developed. Few at this age have a work placement or gain experience of work in the community. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 broadly study the same range of subjects as those in Years 7 to 9. They have little opportunity to make choices about the subjects they study. The programme in Years 10 and 11, as in post-16, does give all pupils good access to externally accredited courses. It does not, however, have the flexibility to provide a smooth transition from the closely defined range of learning in Years 7 to 9 to the more flexible programme offered post-16, which prepares students so well for leaving school and greater independence.

19. The accommodation is generally good. It provides an environment in which the pupils can learn and contributes effectively to their good achievement. The newly built post-16 unit is very good and provides spacious and modern accommodation for teaching and learning. The hydrotherapy pool provides very good opportunities for all pupils to have regular swimming sessions, promoting well their physical development. Residential facilities are very good. They are roomy and well equipped and provide the degree of cosy comfort which the pupils and students deserve.

Care, guidance and support

The care provided is **excellent** and pupils receive **very good** support, advice and guidance. **Very good** systems are in place to consult pupils on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school takes extremely good care of pupils, during the day and in the residential setting.
- Staff work very closely with health professionals.
- Pupils are provided with very good quality support to help them settle into school, learn, and prepare for leaving.
- Their physical needs are met very effectively.
- Child protection procedures are given very high priority.
- The school council is a good example of the way the school considers and respects pupils' opinions.

Commentary

20. There are extremely well organised arrangements for taking care of pupils. As a result, pupils and staff work in a healthy and safe environment. For example, routines in the hydrotherapy pool are very well established and appropriate precautions are taken to ensure pupils' safety when using the Internet. Nursing cover is extremely comprehensive and makes a vital contribution to the well being of pupils and also to implementing child protection procedures. The level of care provided by the residential care staff is very good. As a consequence, pupils' personal and social development is very effectively promoted. The residential provision is well staffed and care staff have undertaken relevant courses and attended whole school staff training days. There are effective communication systems in place, within and between the education and care teams, to ensure that the needs of the pupils are being met and help them to achieve well. Parents rightly consider that the quality of care provided is a particular strength of the school. The school has made a swift and thorough response to the issues raised by the recent very positive National Care Standards Commission inspection.
21. The school liaises very well with a wide range of health professionals, including therapists. When pupils join the school, close co-operation between health professionals, the pupil's family and the school, creates an individual care plan for each pupil. This ensures that, for example, on their first day in school, the right equipment and procedures for day-to-day life are already in place. Throughout their school life, pupils receive very good individual support, often over and above that which is required on their statements. When they come to leave

school, they are equally well supported and advised about their choices for the next stage of their education. Therapy provision for pupils is embedded into school routines and timetables to ensure pupils' welfare. Moving and handling procedures are managed very well and at all times pupils are treated sensitively and carefully to ensure their dignity and promote their independence. For example, during an art lesson for pupils in Years 2 to 6, staff asked each pupil, 'Is it alright if I put this apron on for you?', and waited for a response. Again, pupils are never whisked away in wheelchairs, but always told exactly where they are going, and why.

22. Child protection issues are attended to very well. The headteacher and the principal care officer are fully trained in accordance with the locally agreed guidelines. All staff are aware of the procedures to be followed and an ongoing training programme is in place.
23. Pupils are very well known to staff, who take full advantage of opportunities to talk to them and seek out their views. For example, staff eat lunch with pupils and use this time to establish if anything is worrying them and to cement relationships. Pupils have welcomed the newly established school council and the school has twice arranged for an external survey of pupils' views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Very good links are established with parents. There are **very strong** links with other schools and colleges. Links between the school and the community are also **very good**. The school's outreach service is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An excellent information and communication technology outreach service provides support to pupils in mainstream schools.
- The partnership between school and pupils' homes is very strong.
- Several parents provide practical help in school.
- The school has a very high profile in the local community.
- Very strong relationships are established with other schools and colleges to promote academic, personal and social development opportunities for pupils and students.
- There is no formal group for parents to join.

Commentary

24. The school has an excellent information and communications technology outreach service which is highly valued by mainstream schools and is funded by the local education authority. Pupils who have particular communication difficulties or who experience problems in accessing the curriculum may be referred to the highly skilled outreach teacher and service manager, who will make assessments, provide the appropriate equipment and then train both the pupil concerned, and the teacher or teaching assistant working with them, in the use of the technology. For example, in one school visited, the teacher was training a pupil in the use of a new device to aid writing, while in another, a young pupil was working at improving communications skills using a computer which he accessed through a variety of switches. All of the schools visited felt that the work of the outreach service was having significant impact on the learning of the pupils. In a more recent development, the school has created a further service to provide more general support and advice to mainstream schools. Although this is still in its infancy, the teachers responsible for each service share information and consider the most effective solutions to pupils' particular problems, making the provision even more efficient.
25. Parents have very great confidence in the school. Attendance at annual review meetings is good. Parents also contribute to their child's individual education plan and care plan, for example by suggesting that targets might be more – or less – challenging. Home/school

diaries and homework planners are considered by parents to be especially useful for maintaining a day-to-day dialogue with school. Because of the constraints of time and distance, many parents do not come into school regularly, but this does not stop them working closely with the school to back up what is taught. Importantly, for example, they work on behaviour management plans or physiotherapy programmes. When pupils are away from school for long periods because of illness, the school, if appropriate, provides work for them to do at home. The school consults parents regularly, including commissioning regular surveys of their views. Parent governors make an important contribution to the school – for example, by running the website. The school values the support that a number of parents give during public examinations. Several are now skilled invigilators and also perform invaluable as an amanuensis for those pupils who may need support with writing or simply need a ruler held when drawing a line.

26. Links with the extended community are very good and provide a wide range of resources in the form of visits, visitors and other opportunities. For example, Year 12 students, making a study of the local community, benefited from an introductory activity organised by a local vicar. They then made a visit to the church to compare its modern design to that of Lincoln Cathedral. Pupils and students have very good opportunities to develop personal and social skills through community visits – for example going shopping or meeting past students and senior citizens at a local bowling alley. The very strong links to schools and colleges in the area prepare pupils very well for when they leave the school and continue their education elsewhere. Increasingly, they also extend the range of the curriculum – for instance, enabling the school to offer AS level accreditation in a few subjects.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. Leadership is **good**. The management of the school is **good**. Governance is also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership displayed by the headteacher is very good.
- The headteacher has created an effective senior management team.
- There are good systems to check on the quality of the school's performance.
- The governors make a good contribution to the direction of the school.
- The very effective school development plan is linked clearly to financial planning.
- Teaching assistants are not always effectively deployed so as to make full use of their skills in the classroom.

Commentary

27. The headteacher's leadership is very good. She is totally committed to moving the school forward to achieve higher standards. She has established a senior management team which shares her determination that all pupils will make as much progress as they can, both academically and in broader areas of personal achievement. Together with the governors, senior staff have a clear vision of how the school should develop and improve. Although there is no deputy headteacher, the headteacher delegates responsibilities very well to the two assistant headteachers and members of the extended senior management team. However, these members of staff have significant classroom responsibilities and have only limited opportunities to relieve her of leadership responsibilities. The school is ambitious and keen to learn from best practice elsewhere. It is also outward-looking and works very hard to improve the provision for pupils with physical disabilities in mainstream schools. Additionally, the school is far-sighted. For example, funds used to support pupils in mainstream schools are also benefiting St Francis' pupils, because the links established are beginning to open up more opportunities for them to work and play alongside able-bodied pupils. This provision, and the dedicated information and communication technology outreach service, is very well led and managed by the headteacher and the teachers responsible. Parents are strongly

supportive of the way the school is led and managed. An independent survey has shown that staff are very highly satisfied with the school's leadership and management.

28. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are carried out by the extended senior management team, who observe teaching on a regular basis. Formal feedback is given that identifies the strong elements in lessons and those that require further development. These arrangements are helping to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The quality of subject co-ordination is generally good and is very good in information and communication technology. Subject leaders are mostly effective in promoting learning and higher standards in their subjects through formal and informal meetings and, increasingly, through scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' progress. A very recent development has been the decision to provide time to enable them to visit lessons throughout the school, allowing them to increase their awareness of whole-school issues within their subjects.
29. The governors make an effective contribution to the direction of the school and have a good understanding of its work. There is a full complement of governors who are actively involved in the life of the school. They are committed and have considerable empathy with the pupils and their special educational needs. The school is fortunate in that the chairperson spends good amounts of time in the school and displays very good understanding of the pupils' and students' individual needs. Governors speak with knowledge of the school and its pupils and are well-informed of its aims and developments. For example, they have supported the deployment of one of the teachers to develop the new outreach support service and mainstream links. They are well-organised as a body and use their committees effectively to monitor and help manage the school. The school's planning for future developments was criticised in the previous inspection report and was a key area for the school to address. Very good improvements have been made, resulting in a tightly focused and structured plan, setting out intentions very clearly indeed.
30. Staff performance management is securely in place and individual targets have been identified which effectively support improvements in teaching. Teaching and support staff have opportunities to take part in a wide range of appropriate training opportunities. The responsibilities of all staff are well known to them. However, teaching assistants are not always effectively deployed during the first part of the afternoon. Because many of them are taking their break at this time, teachers are often over-stretched and learning slows down.
31. There are good procedures in place for keeping track of progress in all areas of the school's work. The resulting information is used well to inform school development planning and staff development. There are clear links between the school's priorities and its financial planning. The headteacher and governing body appropriately give careful consideration to the cost-effectiveness of their spending decisions. The school follows good practice in the purchase of resources and in its appointment of contractors for work on the school premises as well as in its careful consideration of the outcomes of its spending decisions. School administration staff keep all accounts well and provide good quality support and information for the headteacher and governors. The latest auditor's report confirms the high quality of practice and made only minor recommendations for improvements, which have been fully implemented.
32. The most significant aid to raising achievement is the school's programme for helping pupils to communicate, take part in lessons and be mobile. This ensures that their use of technology supports their achievement very effectively.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1596120
Total expenditure	1653574
Expenditure per day pupil	11852

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	149190
Balance carried forward to the next year	91735

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Seven lessons in English were seen across the school. French is the modern foreign language taught to pupils in Years 7 to 11. Two French lessons were observed, for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils. Judgements about the subject have not been made.

English

The provision is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are taught by a highly skilled specialist teacher. Pupils achieve very well in communicating and recording their ideas.
- Pupils who need to use specialist equipment to communicate or record, frequently achieve very well. This is because they have very good support to enable them to use suitable equipment that is very well matched to their individual needs.
- Pupils have good opportunities to practise and apply their literacy skills in lessons in other subjects.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal and social development.
- Systematic procedures are in place to assess pupils' progress in literacy. However, lesson plans do not always state clearly what teachers want pupils to learn and teachers do not record whether pupils achieved as well as expected.
- Throughout the school, achievement in reading has improved and is now good.

Commentary

33. The subject leader, who is a very experienced specialist teacher, teaches all pupils in Years 7 to 11. She has only been in post for two years but has successfully raised the standards of achievement for these older pupils since the previous inspection. They now make very good progress. They achieve very well in developing recording skills and produce written work of a high standard for their examination course work. Carefully planned lessons are very effective in teaching pupils to extend their vocabulary and express their views clearly. An example of this was in a very good lesson for lower achieving pupils in Years 7 and 9, where the teacher gave pupils opportunities to handle autumn fruit and leaves that were at different stages of decomposition. This stimulated them to use a wide range of descriptive words. At the end of Year 11, pupils are now successful in GCSE or Entry Level examinations. Teaching is good in Years 1 to 6 and pupils achieve well as a result. For example, the higher attainers make good progress in learning to spell simple words and use capital letters and punctuation when writing sentences. This is because teachers use their knowledge of the National Literacy Strategy to provide interesting opportunities that are well matched to pupils' particular needs. The arrangements for grouping together pupils from different classes, according to their abilities in English are very helpful. As a result of these, there is a narrower range of needs in each teaching group and so teachers can focus their efforts and resources more effectively.
34. Pupils with complex communication difficulties or severe physical disabilities use a range of suitable equipment, such as specialist speech output devices and computers, to communicate and record their work. Because the equipment is very well matched to the pupils' individual needs and they are very well trained and supported to use it, they are fully included in lessons and achieve very well. This was evident when a Year 9 pupil

spontaneously used her speech output device to express her feelings about a story and answer questions. Lessons are very well adapted so that pupils with visual or hearing impairment make very good progress. An example of this was in a primary class where a pupil with visual impairment was taught for part of the literacy lesson in the computer access room. This enabled her to use a large white screen with high contrast pictures, supporting very well the development of reading skills.

35. Because of the skilfully guided class discussions about pupils' feelings and responses to literature, English lessons make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal and social development. For example, during one lesson, Year 10 and 11 pupils considered what it is like to grow old and how young people perceive the elderly.
36. All pupils have access to a good curriculum which stimulates creative writing and use of language whilst placing a very appropriate emphasis on the development of skills in literacy. The subject leader is establishing good systems to assess accurately pupils' achievement and keep track of their progress. Assessments are well matched to individual learning levels and the information obtained is used to set targets for each pupil and plan support for any who are judged to be underachieving. All pupils now have an appropriate target for English in their individual education plans and pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to a suitable range of accreditation. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. However, in lesson plans, teachers do not always specify accurately what they want pupils to learn and record how successful they have been.
37. There has been good improvement in pupils' reading since the previous inspection when reading was judged to be satisfactory. It is now good. This is because of initiatives to raise standards introduced by the subject leader. All pupils who require regular reading practise have a reading book and daily reading record which they take home or to the residence after school. These records contribute to teachers' knowledge of how well pupils are learning. Higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 11 are now assessed every six months using recognised reading tests in order to get an objective measure of their progress. Teachers have worked hard to develop resources to support reading. For example they have made bags of objects to help pupils to learn the letters of the alphabet. Specially made books – for example, a version of 'The Little Red Hen' – help to ensure that all pupils play a full part in the lesson. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, with very complex difficulties, indicated that they preferred the books containing textures and objects – such as grains of wheat – that they can touch, showing how well their needs are being met.
38. Leadership and management of the subject have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Good informal links have been developed between the primary and secondary departments. For instance, teachers are collaborating to produce a whole school sample of written work to ensure that marking is consistent. However, these links are not formalised and the subject leader does not regularly make checks on the quality of planning and teaching of English throughout the school – for example, to enable good practice to be shared.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

39. Provision to develop pupils' language and literacy skills in other subjects is good and pupils make good progress in applying these skills to their work. This is because the school has placed an emphasis on training all staff to support pupils' development in literacy. Common approaches are evident throughout the school. For example, in subject planning, teachers identify the key words for pupils to learn. New vocabulary is re-inforced consistently throughout lessons. Pupils are helped to express their views and join in class discussions. This was very evident in a mathematics lesson where Year 11 pupils discussed Pythagoras' theorem. The school makes sure that pupils have suitable equipment to help them record what they have learned. In science lessons, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to develop skills in recording their work.

MATHEMATICS

Six mathematics lessons were seen, three in the primary and three in the secondary years.

Provision for mathematics is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned and prepared so learning is continuous and pupils of all abilities achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are very positive
- The marking of pupils' work is not consistent throughout the school
- The use of homework to consolidate and extend pupils' learning is good.
- Year 11 pupils are successful in externally accredited courses.
- Numeracy is used in other subjects but these opportunities are not always planned.

Commentary

40. Teachers plan lessons effectively. They make good use of the approaches suggested in the National Numeracy Strategy and Key Stage 3 Strategy, especially at the start of lessons when pupils practise mental arithmetic skills. The majority of pupils enjoy these fast-moving introductions, which help to settle them for the main activity. Pupils are taught mathematics within groups according to their attainment levels, and this arrangement is effective in promoting progress in the subject. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and effectively use this knowledge in lesson planning and assessing and recording the progress pupils make. They work well together and their partnership leads to effective teaching and learning. This is particularly successful when teachers share their planning with teaching assistants, and identify where their support will be most useful. The marking of pupils' work is not consistent throughout the school and opportunities are missed to show pupils how to improve. Relationships in lessons are very good and pupils learn in a very happy atmosphere. As a result, they work very hard and are keen to succeed, helping them to achieve well.
41. The good quality planning in mathematics means that pupils learn systematically as they move up through the school. In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn, consolidate and apply early number skills because their work is pitched at a suitable level. In Years 3 to 6, they maintain good progress. For example, during one lesson, higher attaining pupils in Years 4 to 6 developed their ability to subtract, because the teacher made sure they moved forward in carefully planned steps, matched to their particular needs. During Years 7 to 9, pupils continue to receive an effective grounding in mathematics, developing a good understanding of a wide range of concepts. Pupils who are not able to speak successfully communicate their contributions to lessons by using a variety of speech output devices. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow coursework leading to appropriate accreditation. By the end of Year 11, most are successful in GCSE or Entry Level examinations. Higher attaining pupils use and understand a wide range of mathematical ideas – for example, they apply Pythagoras' theorem to calculate the length of a side of a right-angled triangle.
42. Leadership and management of mathematics are good and have led to good improvement since the previous inspection. The enthusiastic subject leader is aware of her responsibilities and ensures that mathematics is taught well throughout the school by keeping track of the work done in all year groups. The use of homework to consolidate and extend pupils' learning is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

43. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, they sequence dates in history lessons and record temperature changes in

geography. Higher attaining pupils in a science lesson deduce formulae that have been used in spreadsheets and read ammeter scales. However, although teachers often take advantage of chances – for example, for counting and measuring – they do not always plan specifically to include numeracy in lessons. The school has already identified this as an area for development.

SCIENCE

Lessons were seen in each year group.

Provision in science is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and Year 11 achieve well in GCSE single science because they receive good specialist science teaching.
- A significant number of pupils in Years 7 to 11 are only achieving satisfactorily, because they do not have access to specialist science teaching.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 learn well because they are motivated by the teachers' very good use of interesting resources.
- Most of the teaching plans do not specify the learning that teachers expect of different pupils.
- Pupils enjoy practical activities and work safely with equipment because their attitudes and behaviour are very good.

Commentary

44. Last year, higher attaining pupils in Year 11 had specialist teaching in a mainstream school and achieved mainly up to grade C in GCSE single science. Currently, higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE single science course on the St Francis site and benefit from good quality, specialist science teaching and this lessens their achievement. Most pupils in Years 7 to 11 do not have access to specialist science teaching. They work towards Entry Level certificates in science, but the teacher is not always able to offer good quality scientific explanations. Pupils are given too many worksheets. These are frequently disorganised, often not marked, and require too little recorded response. The pupils' work folders do not provide a good enough basis for pupils to revise for examinations.
45. Since the previous inspection, the provision for science has developed satisfactorily, with the introduction of accreditation, improved facilities and increased teaching time. In recognising the need for further improvement in science, the headteacher has taken a very good lead in implementing a development plan for the next five years. This includes the appointment of a specialist teacher by the end of the current school year.
46. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn well about the materials that are used to make bread dough and what happens when they are mixed together, because the teacher arranges for them to use the food technology room, where they can bake bread. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make very good progress comparing the movement of a hamster with their own movements. To their delight they observed the hamster at close range, and learned to treat it with care. Pupils demonstrated to their classmates how they move in their wheelchairs, or with walking aids. They practised moving out of their wheelchairs onto soft play equipment and the more mobile pupils tried to mimic the movement of the hamster. In Year 6, pupils learn very well about their teeth. This is because the teacher makes very good use of the computer microscope in the science laboratory, to project pictures of their teeth onto a screen, and also uses very large scale models of teeth. The primary age pupils are very well motivated by these exciting activities and this helps them to achieve well.
47. Although all pupils have access to an accredited science course by Year 11, teachers are not assessing well enough whether each pupil is making good enough progress in the years

leading up to these examinations. This is because planning, especially in the secondary phase, mainly details what 'most' pupils in a class are expected to learn. In each class there is a range of learning needs, but not enough planning of what the teacher expects of each pupil. Annual reports tell parents about pupils' very good attitudes to science. The reports do not always give enough information about what they have actually achieved over the year.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Four sessions were seen and inspectors also noted where they observed information and communication technology used during lessons in other subjects.

Provision for information and communication technology is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school gives very high priority to ensuring that all pupils use technology to the full, to help them to learn.
- Very good teaching is supported by good quality planning and assessment, with clear objectives for pupils to achieve. As a result, achievement is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good with clear vision and aspirations for the subject.
- There is commitment by all teachers to promote information and communication technology in all subjects and to support communication and mobility.
- High quality computers in the information and communication technology suite and all classrooms are enhanced by a wide range of technological access devices.
- There is a commitment to professional development in information and communication technology by all teachers and teaching assistants.

Commentary

48. Pupils are very keen to learn and make very good progress in lessons that are dedicated to the subject. They become very competent in the use of the very high quality equipment which is found in all areas of the school. For example, by the time they reach Years 10 and 11, higher attaining pupils take for granted locating their own data drive by logging onto the school's intranet and using their own username and password. At the end of Year 11, pupils are successful in Entry Level courses, with the highest attainers gaining GCSE passes.
49. All work is carefully planned to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils and lessons are stimulating and challenging. Each lesson builds on the previous one, ensuring that pupils' learning is systematic. This is evident in the growing complexity of software applications and technical language which the pupils freely use and understand. For example, in Year 3, the pupils are able to criticise the use of fonts, style and colour in a PowerPoint presentation, commenting on the letters of different sizes and colours they could see. By Year 11, they refer to the quality of the colour and style of text and discuss in depth the changes which might be made to give the presentation the desired impact. The specialist teacher is very enthusiastic about the subject and is very competent in the use of the technology, bringing to the subject a style of teaching which allows both the younger and older pupils to learn and achieve very well.
50. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leader, who teaches the subject across the school, has a clear vision for the development of information and communication technology and has plans to ensure that the quality of the teaching and learning, and the availability of up to date hardware and software will be further developed in the future. He plays a significant role in the provision of professional development for all the staff in the school. As a result, there is a high level of commitment to computer use and many of the teachers and teaching assistants have taken qualifications in computer competency and computer application in the classroom. This means that they are well able to support pupils' very good achievement.

51. The school has sufficient up-to-date computers in most teaching areas and also a well equipped computer suite. In almost all situations, pupils are able to have sole use of a computer. Projectors linked to computers can be found in many teaching areas, enabling teachers to give clear demonstrations. All of the computer technology is maintained by a well qualified technician whose services are invaluable to the school. The subject has made very good improvement since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

52. In every area of the school, computers and a wide range of technology are used as essential aids to learning, access to the curriculum and communications. In their planning the teachers identify how the pupils can enhance their knowledge of the various subjects and of information and communication technology. In most lessons, computers exclusively are used by pupils to record their work. For example, in a history lesson, Years 10 and 11 pupils wrote up their answers using word processors. In a Year 11 geography lesson, pupils skilfully used the Internet to enquire into various environmental concerns. For those pupils who have difficulties accessing the keyboard, a range of technological aids are available – for example, switches, buttons, joysticks and various types of keyboard overlays are extensively used. Some pupils, who find using the computer keyboard particularly difficult, dictate their work to a teaching assistant, who will access the computer on their behalf, so as to fully include all pupils in lessons and ensure they make the same very good progress as other pupils.

HUMANITIES

Two lessons were seen in geography. Judgements were not made about this subject. Four history lessons and three religious education lessons were observed.

Religious education

The provision is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well and are fully included in lessons, because teaching is good.
- A very good collection of resources is used well to enliven lessons and support pupils' learning.
- A good quality programme of work is in place.
- Teaching promotes pupils' personal and social development well.
- Lesson plans do not include clear individual objectives so that teachers can tell accurately what pupils have learned.

Commentary

53. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, when pupils' progress was only satisfactory. At the time of that inspection, there was no subject leader or detailed plan for the development of the subject across the school. The range of resources was reported to be increasing slowly. The subject has been developed well by the previous subject leader and her temporary successor. Additional funding from outside the school has been secured to develop a very good collection of resources. This means that lessons can be delivered in a lively manner with good sensory experiences. Consequently, pupils are interested and learn well. For example, in a lesson about articles that are used in the Christian religion, primary aged pupils tried on a child-sized copy of a priest's robes and built a 'church' in the classroom. All the pupils really enjoyed these activities and made good progress in understanding how the different articles were used during a church service. A comprehensive programme of work has been introduced, based on the Lincolnshire Agreed

Syllabus. This ensures that pupils' learning builds systematically as they move up through the school.

54. Teachers are skilled at including all pupils fully in lessons. This is because they ensure that support for communication enables all pupils to answer questions and participate in discussions. For example, during a lesson about baptism, the teacher involved a Year 10 pupil very well through accurate observation of his eye pointing in response to cards representing key ideas, such as 'water' and 'Jesus'. Teaching promotes pupils' personal and social development well. Younger pupils learn to share resources and wait their turn patiently, whilst older pupils listen respectfully to different points of view. They learn to value themselves and others.
55. Although the acting co-ordinator has introduced an accredited course for pupils in Years 10 and 11, a consistent system for assessment is not established for pupils in other year groups. Teachers do not clearly specify intended outcomes for pupils in lesson plans or record if they achieve those outcomes.

History

Provision is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject leader is enthusiastic and has a very good understanding of history.
- The quality of teaching is very good and as a result, pupils achieve very well.
- The imaginative use of historical sources and artefacts contributes significantly to pupils' motivation and achievement.
- Curricular planning is good and assessment procedures are now in place.
- Information and communication technology is used extensively to help pupils to learn.

Commentary

56. Pupils' learning in history is very good as result of the enthusiastic teaching of the subject leader, who has a very good understanding of the subject and teaches most of the history across the school. As a result, higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve success in GCSE or Entry Level courses. The subject has improved well since the previous inspection. History topics are well thought out so that they are meaningful to the pupils and capture their imagination. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 7 and 9, the pupils were learning about the First World War and considering the conditions in the trenches at the Battle of the Somme. They had built a model of the trenches and were using books as source material for their investigation. During another lesson, a Years 3 and 4 class was making a toy museum, using a range of toys to study the concepts of old and new. In both cases the pupils showed great interest in the topic and were making very good gains in knowledge and developing the ability to discover information for themselves.
57. Teaching and learning are enhanced by the imaginative use of a wide range of historical artefacts and other resources. The pupils examine objects from museum loan collections about the Tudors, Edward VI and Queen Mary, dress up like the Pilgrim Fathers, see displays about Imperial China and make visits to the Southwell Workhouse. Resources such as these make history live for the pupils and contribute to their very good achievement.
58. Planning in history is good. It is designed so that all pupils, despite their learning or physical needs, can understand the work. Topics are thoughtfully put together and build systematically on what pupils have already learned. A suitable system to measure how successfully pupils have learned and to track their progress over time has been recently introduced.

59. Information and communication technology is extensively used to allow all pupils to have access to the subject. In most lessons, computers are used to record work and communication aids are employed skilfully to enable all pupils to take part in class discussions. For example, in the Years 7 and 9 lesson, one pupil used a switch operated talking aid to enable him to contribute. Once the teacher had finished introducing the activity, all the pupils moved to the computers to do their research and written work about the First World War.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Only two lessons were seen in design and technology and so no judgements are being made about this subject.

The two teachers of pupils in Years 7 to 11 have not yet discussed common approaches – for instance, to teaching designing skills. In food technology, there are not enough resources adapted for use by pupils with physical disabilities.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Two lessons were observed in music and one in drama. Judgements were not made about these subjects. Five art lessons were seen, across the school.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good as is the quality of teaching.
- Staff work with imagination to find ways to enable all pupils to be creative.
- Teaching assistants make very strong contributions to teaching and learning.
- Pupils in Year 11 achieve success in GCSE or Entry Level courses.
- Teachers have high expectations for pupils to achieve.
- Plans for what will be taught and learned are not always full enough.
- Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to express their views about their work.

Commentary

60. Teachers choose and modify activities very carefully so all pupils are fully included in lessons. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 made a collage to illustrate the story of 'The Little Red Hen'. Most of them had very limited mobility and strength in their hands and arms, but the teacher held tissue paper and encouraged one pupil to choose colours and then pull at the paper, to produce small pieces that suggested feathers. One of the teaching assistants stimulated a very good response from a pupil with visual impairment, by rustling the paper and moving the child's hands nearer to it, so he scrunched it independently. All the teachers know pupils and their needs very well, but there is no agreed method of recording how well each one has achieved in art lessons or whether that was as well as expected. Teaching assistants nearly always provide very effective support in art lessons, by insisting that pupils do as much for themselves as possible. In a lesson for higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11, a boy who is only able to move his hands slightly created a slab pot by instructing the assistant – for example, to turn the pot round, so he could see the back of it. In turn, she expected him to play a full part in the activity, holding a knife and making small marks in the clay, when joining two pieces, for instance. Whilst she predicted what he might want her to do, it was very clear that the pupil was directing the operation and that the completed pot represented his ideas and intentions. Teachers regularly praise pupils' efforts and offer good quality advice and encouragement. However, time is not always allowed for

pupils to comment on their work and that of others, in order to help them develop their ability to express their responses and criticise constructively.

61. The Years 10 and 11 pupils are working towards external accreditation. Each year, small numbers are successful in GCSE examinations, whilst many others gain Entry Level certificates. This is the result of good, specialist teaching combined with the pupils' determination and application. They often work very slowly, because of their physical disabilities, but they concentrate and persevere, setting themselves high standards. These high expectations are established initially by the teachers, who demand that pupils do their best, whilst acknowledging that the work they produce will vary, according to the difficulties each pupil has to overcome. For example, pupils in Years 2 to 6 collected natural materials – such as dry leaves, beech mast and twigs – before mixing them with paint and spreading it onto card. The staff worked with the lower attaining pupils, offering them choices and opportunities to handle and explore the resources, while two others were required to work much more independently.
62. Art is well led and managed, with a clear sense of direction provided through the subject's development plan. The subject is organised so that, as they move up through the school, pupils learn a suitable range of skills, working in a wide variety of media – paint, photography, textiles and clay, for example. However, curricular plans do not always show which artists pupils are to study or where information and communication technology is to support their learning. Since the previous inspection, the strengths of the subject have been maintained and pupils in Years 1 and 2 now achieve higher standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Four lessons were seen.

Provision in physical education is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good.
- Pupils learn to compose gymnastic sequences well because activities are matched successfully to their individual needs, teaching and support are good, and pupils have sheer determination to succeed.
- Pupils achieve well in swimming because they have specialist swimming teaching and regular access to the school's very good swimming facilities during the day and after school.
- It is not easy for teachers to judge if progress over time in physical education is good enough, because assessment procedures are not fully in place and there are gaps in the co-ordination of the subject.
- Pupils have many opportunities to participate in sport because activities are well planned and include after school clubs and links with other schools and leisure facilities.

Commentary

63. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress devising and performing complex gymnastic sequences which generate spontaneous applause from their peers. They discuss their own performances and how they have improved. Pupils in powered wheelchairs compose intricate dances, emphasising speed and control. Lower attaining ambulant pupils persevere to recall sequences they have devised previously. They learn to bounce on a trampoline and, during one lesson, to balance, for the first time, on a beam. Relationships are very good and pupils are managed exceptionally well. They benefit, in turn, from the teacher's individual attention and guidance, thus securing a very high level of participation in gymnastic lessons.

64. In swimming lessons, primary aged pupils very much enjoy the liberation that comes from being out of their wheelchairs and floating in water with their swimming aids. Each pupil has a specific swimming target. These targets are promoted well by the teacher and assistant and achievements are recorded. Pupils receive 'Endeavour' and 'Duckling' swimming awards, which encourage them to work hard. They gain in confidence in the water, and improve their communication and social skills through interaction with staff, with whom they have very good relationships. The swimming pool on site, whilst small, is a very good resource, providing privacy for changing. There is a high level of care and respect for pupils.
65. Lesson plans indicate well what is expected of different pupils and the use of video is developing, helping to record their achievement. It is not possible, however, to track pupils' progress over time in physical education because assessment in the subject is not fully developed. Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, there is no whole school co-ordination of all the different aspects of physical education to enable work done in the primary and secondary years to be tracked through. Swimming is co-ordinated as a subject separate from the rest of the physical education programme, adding to the difficulty of reporting a pupil's progress in the subject as a whole.
66. Improvement in physical education has been satisfactory, because the hall is no longer a thoroughfare during physical education lessons, the quality of physical education equipment has improved, and the subject leader has established good links with other special schools for athletics, tug-of-war and running, for example. Pupils work with mainstream pupils on outdoor team-building challenges. In wheelchair hockey after school, pupils make very good progress. They work very energetically and with great enthusiasm, accepting the referee's decisions. The game is adapted very well to meet the different needs of users of powered and manual wheelchairs.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Two lessons were seen. A variety of other activities were also observed and contributed to the judgements made.

The provision is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good opportunities for learning, during the school day and in the residence. All staff are skilled in creating opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their personal skills.
- A range of initiatives such as the school council and the Healthy School award scheme support pupils' development very well.
- A good quality programme of work has been introduced throughout the school.
- There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Procedures for assessment are still being developed.

Commentary

67. All staff are very aware of the importance of promoting pupils' personal development. Because they understand pupils very well, they are very good at doing this, in lessons and in other activities. Each pupil has a target for personal development on their individual education plan and a strong emphasis is placed on helping them to achieve it. Very good teaching and support promote the development of social and self-help skills very well. For example, in the primary assembly, pupils are taught the importance of sharing, and in snack time, younger pupils begin to make choices. Consequently, pupils achieve very well in learning how to get on with each other and look after themselves. Pupils learn to be aware of the feelings of others. An example of this was in an English lesson, where Year 10 pupils discussed the plight of families living in concentration camps. Because staff are very skilled

at tackling sensitive issues such as bereavement and death, older pupils show considerable maturity and develop strong self-awareness.

68. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. At that time, it was noted that there was a lack of clear leadership and that the curriculum was unsatisfactory, with no proper programme of work. The subject is now well led and managed by two teachers who represent the primary and secondary departments. They have introduced an appropriate and comprehensive programme of work, which provides a good framework for teaching throughout the school. There is now a good emphasis on activities to promote pupils' capacity to be good citizens. The recently established school council is already making a strong contribution to helping pupils to learn to be effective members of their community. All pupils, except the very youngest, took part in a properly organised election to vote for their representatives. The school is also well on its way to gaining the 'Healthy School' award.
69. Strategies for assessing what primary aged pupils have achieved have improved since the previous inspection. An accredited course has been recently introduced for pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, there is currently no suitable system in place to assess the progress of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

PROVISION FOR POST-16 STUDENTS

Sessions of most courses were observed – fifteen in all.

The post-16 provision is good.

- Students are taught well and their achievement is good.
- The newly opened accommodation is very good.
- The department is well led and managed with a clear plan for developing the provision.
- The curriculum is relevant and flexible and the work-related elements are very good.
- Students are offered a good range of accredited courses.
- The deployment of teaching assistants lessens the effectiveness of the support they provide.
- There is good communication between the department and students' homes.

Commentary

70. The department is based in very good accommodation that has been extended and refurbished since the previous inspection. It is distinct from the main school and meets the needs of the students and their curriculum very effectively. All students achieve well, including those with additional special needs, such as autism. The head of the department has a clear insight into the aims of post-16 education and specifically for the future needs of the students currently in the school. Consequently the curriculum provided for students meets their needs well, and is modified very well at an individual level. All of this means that, by the time students leave the school, they are well prepared for adult life. Last year, all the students who left moved on to courses in further education, demonstrating their commitment to achieving as much as possible. In discussions, students state that they are very happy with the provision that the school makes for them.
71. A good range of learning opportunities is offered, such as information and communication technology, religious education, home skills, problem solving, leisure activities, creative arts and vocational studies. In literacy, students achieve well and make especially good progress in listening and communication skills. In numeracy, achievement is also good and students show a good understanding of money, time, measurement and temperature. They use these skills in a practical way in their vocational skills and problem-solving lessons. There are very good opportunities for all students to take part in work experience.

72. Personal, social and health education, including citizenship, is well supported through the curriculum and residential experiences and hence students achieve very well. Students have taken part in residential educational trips and they are well represented on the school council. The skills students need for everyday living are promoted very effectively, both through timetabled sessions – such as shopping trips or learning to prepare food – and throughout the day. For example, students are expected to be as independent as possible, to be co-operative, and to use technology as a tool for learning and communicating. They are treated as young adults, and they respond in a similar fashion. They are offered a good range of accredited courses. Recent developments in the curriculum mean that almost all aspects of students' work are accredited through nationally recognised bodies – for example, courses in catering and travel and tourism. A small number of higher attaining students have the opportunity to study AS level biology and psychology with mainstream students.
73. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Where possible, students are taught by subject leaders, who have a good command of what they teach. Lessons are well organised, with all adults appreciating what is to be taught, so students receive effective individual support. Most activities are carefully planned to match students' learning needs, and there are high expectations of behaviour and social interaction between students. This degree of sensitivity to the needs of students ensures that they are stimulated by their work and they enjoy learning. As a result of this effective teaching, relationships in class are very good, students respond very positively and their attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They are very willing to work in groups and the most mature students support each other. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to promote students' involvement in lessons. However, there are occasions when students are left waiting for support, due to the current arrangements for deploying teaching assistants – for example, after lunch.
74. There is good communication between the post-16 department and students' homes. Parents and carers are fully involved in students' annual reviews, as is the Connexions service. By the time students are ready to leave school, they and their parents or carers have the opportunity to attend well planned open evenings, at which they can question representatives from further education providers. Teachers and teaching assistants have access to a wide range of relevant training.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	2
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).

* In a special school such as this "standards achieved" are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.