

INSPECTION REPORT

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf

Boston Spa, Wetherby

LEA area: Leeds

Unique reference number: 108120

Head teacher: Mr T M Wrynne

Reporting inspector: Mrs Noreen Buckingham
16722

Dates of inspection: 4th - 5th June 2001

Inspection number: 196231

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils:	3 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church Street Boston Spa Wetherby West Yorkshire
Postcode:	LS23 6DF
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Fr N Gallanagh
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Johns Catholic School for Deaf pupils is situated in Boston Spa in West Yorkshire and admits boys and girls from many areas of the country. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs indicating that the overriding difficulty is a degree of hearing impairment which can be profound, severe or moderate. Currently 30 per cent of pupils now have a cochlear implant. The school promotes an oralist approach to the education of these pupils. There are 85 pupils on the school roll with ages ranging from 3 to 19 years. The school provides residential places for 50 pupils who are housed in family units. Attainment on entry is broad but pupils who enter the school at the secondary stage achieve levels below those expected for their age. An increasing number of pupils present additional learning difficulties. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Johns is an excellent school for pupils and students who have a hearing impairment and gives them an excellent quality of education supported by a high level of commitment and care from all staff. The leadership and management of the school is excellent and has a very positive impact on the total ethos of the school and the very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils. The experience and expertise of the head teacher is supported and complemented by an enthusiastic and energetic deputy head. Curriculum co-ordination is very good and is monitored and developed by an experienced senior teacher. The quality of teaching is very good with some excellent features. Pupils and students achievements are very good when compared with the level of their attainment when they enter school. Governors take a very active interest in all that goes on in the school and are well informed by the head teacher and also by regular visits. However they do not formally evaluate the effectiveness of major spending decisions on raising standards of pupils' achievements. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management by the head teacher, deputy head teacher and senior teacher are excellent and is supported by an efficient administrator and head of care. Other middle managers and the curriculum management group undertake their responsibilities effectively.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good and this is supported by the very positive ethos which permeates the school. The personal development and relationships are excellent both in the school and residential settings.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and results in a very good level of achievement for all pupils. Teachers and special needs assistants work extremely well as a team.
- The Maternal Reflective Method (MRM) philosophy has a very positive impact on the development of pupils' speaking skills, especially at Key Stages 1 and 2, and this leads to good standards of written work and improvement in reading skills throughout the school.
- Science is a very strong subject in the school with a well developed curriculum, a consistently high level of teaching which promote pupils' confidence to carry out their own investigations which impacts positively on their progress and achievements.
- The recently developed SEN curriculum at Key Stage 3 is very good and is promoting pupils' language, academic and social development very effectively.
- The school places a high priority in supporting parents from their first approach to the school and gives them very good quality information.

What could be improved

- Governor evaluation of the effectiveness of major spending decisions on raising standards of pupils' achievement.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection in 1997. The key issues have been very successfully addressed and have improved the quality of education provided for the pupils and students attending the school. Assessment systems, alongside excellent procedures for setting individual and whole school targets and improved individual education plans (IEP), ensure that the progress pupils make is rigorously monitored and the information used effectively. Considerable improvements have been made with regard to facilities for physical education and outdoor areas now provide a good range of opportunities. The school has recently been awarded 'Investors In People' for the second time demonstrating the strong commitment to staff development. Additional speech and language therapists have been employed improving this vital service for pupils. The school has invested in a new audiology suite to back up new initiatives in supporting hearing impaired pupils. Because of the increase in number of pupils with additional learning difficulties the school has devised a suitably modified curriculum to meet the individual needs of these pupils at Key Stage 3 and this is proving very successful. In addition, the school has set up a new information and communication technology suite which has just been opened and which will give pupils extended opportunities to use new technologies. All these new initiatives are essential in enabling pupils to be well prepared for life after school.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	<p><i>Key</i></p> <p>very good A</p> <p>Good B</p> <p>Satisfactory C</p> <p>Unsatisfactory D</p> <p>Poor E</p>
speaking and listening	B	A	A	A	
Reading	B	A	A	A	
Writing	B	A	A	A	
Mathematics	C	B	B	B	
personal, social and health education	B	A	A	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	A	

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

All pupils make very good progress in relation to the challenges caused by their specific hearing difficulties and those with additional difficulties also make very good progress. The development of communication skills is a high priority in the school and this target is very successfully met. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught and can be seen across the curriculum. All staff are very aware of the need to emphasise the development of communication skills and do so very effectively. As a result improvement in pupils' skills in this area is very evident. The school is very successful in developing pupils' personal and social skills and pupils are very confident and mature young people by the time they leave school. All pupils concentrate very hard on developing their speaking abilities. Students attending York College achieve very well in a wide range of courses. Targets on individual education plans (IEP) are very clear, they are monitored regularly and new targets are set. Pupils are involved in the target setting process and this develops their own understanding of areas of work they can improve. GCSE results for 2000 demonstrate the school's commitment to high standards and the school uses Key Stage 3 test and task results and predicted grades for GCSE very effectively to group pupils in English, mathematics, science and information

and communication technology.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	All pupils have very positive attitudes to work and to school. Even the youngest pupils show a determination to work hard and persevere to complete tasks. Pupils enjoy the activities on offer and make the most of their time in school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of pupils is very good. In classrooms and during evening activities pupils behave well. They are polite and courteous to others and to visitors. The school is a very orderly community and pupils respond accordingly.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The personal development of pupils is actively promoted throughout the school day and also in the residential setting where pupils and students are given responsibilities which develop their independence.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. They are punctual to lessons and settle down to work very quickly. The marking of registers throughout the school is inconsistent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5	Aged 5-11	aged 11-16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching overall is very good with some excellent features. Of the 39 lessons seen, 18 percent was excellent, 49 percent was very good and 33 percent was good. The result of this very good teaching is that pupils learn very well and make very good progress over time in all subjects of the curriculum. The school has adapted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to meet the needs of the pupils very successfully and the Maternal Reflective Method (MRM) approach used throughout the school is very successful in developing pupils' communication skills. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is very good overall and often excellent. Team work is very good and this includes not only special needs assistants but speech therapists and the audiologist all of whom play an important role in the way pupils learn and make progress. Detailed knowledge of the pupils, very secure subject knowledge and a commitment to developing pupils' oral skills are the most important factors in the very good teaching. Relationships between staff and pupils result in a very positive classroom atmosphere in which every pupil is valued.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and very relevant to the needs of the pupils. For the younger pupils it has an appropriately strong emphasis on the development of communication skills and the commitment to an oralist philosophy via the MRM is well justified. The school has implemented an adapted version of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies which meets the needs of the pupils well. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and modified if necessary. Staff know the abilities of pupils well and one result of this is the modified SEN curriculum which is very successful in meeting the needs of those pupils with additional difficulties. The Post 16 students are placed at York College which gives them access to a range of courses. The school has links with some mainstream schools in which integration is sometimes possible.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The school provides many opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils through daily assemblies, prayers in classrooms and the way all members of the school community are valued as individuals. The Christian faith which underpins the mission statement of the school supports the spiritual development of pupils. There are high expectations of behaviour and fairness and pupils quickly understand the difference between right and wrong. Social skills are very much promoted in the residential unit and lunchtimes in school are very social occasions when pupils eat in their family groups. In many subjects the cultural aspects of other countries and religions are studied giving pupils very relevant insights into cultures other than their own.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's commitment to the care and support it offers to pupils is very high. Procedures for child protection are in place and all staff know the named person who has received up to date training. Pupils are very well supported by a range of personnel other than teachers, such as, the audiologist, speech therapists and a school nurse. The school's health and safety procedures are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The excellent leadership and management of the school provide the foundations on which the ethos of the school succeeds. All staff have a strong commitment to the school, the pupils and parents and to the provision of a high standard of education.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. One of the ways in which the governing body gives good support to the work of the school is in the regular visits undertaken by individual members. However, they do not evaluate the effects of major financial investments on raising pupils' achievements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluating staff and pupil performance is a very strong feature of the management of the school. The school constantly analyses, evaluates and reviews what is going on in the school.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school uses the resources it has available to it very well. Administration and financial management is of a very high standard. The

	school applies the principles of best value when it seeks tenders when making large purchasing.
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PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are making good progress • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school • The school expects pupils to work hard and do their best • Relationships within the school are very good • Parents think that teaching is good • They feel that the school takes good care of the pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More work to do at home • More access to after school activities for all pupils

The inspection team endorses the parents’ very positive views of the school. The question of access to after school activities is something the school is very much aware of and plans to review and the inspection team would support this. An appropriate amount of homework is set.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Leadership and management by the head teacher, deputy head teacher and senior teacher is excellent and is supported by an efficient administrator and head of care. Other middle managers and the curriculum management group undertake their responsibilities effectively.

1 The strong Christian ethos coupled with a strong commitment to giving pupils every opportunity to succeed, forms the bedrock of the work in the school. Staff and pupils work hard together and jointly with parents and governors form a strong partnership. The overall leadership and management of the school is excellent and all staff with responsibilities demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles. The experience and expertise of the head teacher is complemented by an enthusiastic and energetic deputy head teacher. The clear lead and direction given by the head teacher is supported by the deputy head and senior teacher and they guide the academic direction of the school. The administrator and head of care, who are also members of the senior management team carry out their roles very efficiently. The day to day financial management is very effective and the budget, set by the administrator in collaboration with the senior management team, is monitored by the finance sub-committee of the governors. The residential unit gives the pupils a safe, secure and family environment and care arrangements are clear and well founded in good practice.

2 Monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is well established, and practice is analysed and reviewed often to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. A systematic structure is in place to observe classroom practice and this has a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching. Regular meetings of specific groups of staff, such as departmental staff, middle management staff and the curriculum management group, are well managed and documented. Staff are consulted and comments are recorded and in this way understanding and teamwork are strengthened. Individual education plans and care plans are monitored by the appropriate personnel and, again, comments fed back to staff. The process of analysing and reviewing systems and structures is well established, and reliably informs teaching and the curriculum. Similarly care staff meet daily and also have weekly meetings with pupils to involve them in the organisation of activities and to follow up any concerns or suggestions. Evaluating its own procedures and results has become part of the school's system for continuing improvement. However, marking and monitoring registers is not consistent and should be reviewed to enable the school to follow up any absences.

3 The school development plan covers a three year period and clearly demonstrates the areas for improvement. The school is clear about what needs to be done. Some targets have already been achieved showing that it is a working document, which is taking the school forward. There is a regular review of progress and timescales for each target are realistic. Costings are clear and principles of best value are followed when quotes are received for large items of expenditure.

4 The recent successful assessment of the Investors In People award demonstrates very clearly the commitment the management of the school gives to staff development, so that all staff have every opportunity to broaden and improve their knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils in the school, and to develop their personal expertise. Inservice is well planned, monitored and evaluated and is a variety of "in-house" training and training given by external providers. Induction of new staff is done well. They are well supported and encouraged to engage in appropriate further training.

5 The school aims are fully met and support the very positive ethos, which permeates every part of the school. Communication in the school is good and is instrumental in building a strong team ethos in which all staff are kept well informed and so feel part of the decision making process. This could be further improved by formalising a central register in the residential unit to include the names of day pupils when that transfer to the residential unit. As they move through the school pupils grow in confidence and maturity and this is as a result of the recognition and practice to respect each individual and to enable them to achieve as

well as they can. The school's oralist philosophy underpins the work of the school and "the belief that every deaf child is entitled to the freedom to choose to live and work in a hearing world".

The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils is very good and this is supported by the very positive ethos which permeates the school. Relationships are excellent both in the school and residential settings.

6 All pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and their lessons. They show remarkable concentration and perseverance in lessons which rarely diminishes. The very nature of some lessons, for example English, science and music, requires an obligation on pupils to work collaboratively with the result that they are fully involved in lessons, develop very good interpersonal skills and sustain their enthusiasm for learning. The determination they show to communicate orally is a credit to them and underlines their high motivation and hard working attitudes. Pupils are very conscientious and concentrate well throughout lessons. They tackle work confidently and are keen and eager to contribute but are very patient when waiting for other pupils to reply showing a high level of understanding and support.

7 Behaviour is very good and pupils are polite and well mannered. Socially acceptable behaviour is positively promoted and pupils respond appropriately. Pupils behave very well as they move around the school, greeting visitors and other adults in a friendly and courteous manner, holding doors open and offering to show visitors to required rooms. Both parents and pupils know and understand the behaviour code and displayed around classrooms and corridors are the school rules which promote respect for others. High expectations of good behaviour and fairness are discussed in such lessons as history when the topic is the 1st World War or when reading the Diary of Anne Frank. Pupils' writing demonstrates an understanding of these moral dilemmas.

8 Relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent and lead to many opportunities for pupils to work independently in lessons and undertake initiatives both in and out of school. At all ages pupils appear confident in using oral communication even when this is difficult for them. Many instances are seen of them animatedly chatting together in social groups. When two girls collided in the corridor, one apologised and received the response "no it's my fault, I should look where I'm going" demonstrating a very friendly, mature exchange. All of this benefits their personal development. Homework is set regularly and this fosters a sense of taking responsibility for improving their own learning. An awareness of right and wrong is encouraged from very early on in school and pupils and staff show an equal level of respect for each other and everyone's contribution is valued.

9 The personal development of pupils is not only promoted during the school day but also in the residential setting where staff have very appropriate expectations of pupils and students. Parents strongly believe that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible people and the inspection team agrees with this view. A "Rainbows" programme for young pupils is a means by which they are helped to express their feelings or to receive support if they have or are experiencing any difficulties in their lives. This is a twelve week programme and has been especially devised for this purpose and the school is careful to obtain parental permission prior to starting the programme. This is another way in which pupils' personal development is nurtured. Pupils who board are set tasks which are relevant to their age, maturity and ability. Examples of these are making toast at breakfast, making their own bed and keeping their space tidy. They help to wash up and clear away taking turns with tasks and this supports their social development. As their independence develops and they become more mature so more is expected of them and they are given additional responsibilities. At the weekend Post 16 students are trusted to look after themselves, although support is always at hand. Making decisions about meals, learning to negotiate and compromise, learning to socialise and to share are all part of the personal development process. They learn how to manage their pocket money and to travel independently. There is a gradual, planned increase in developing pupils' independence and confidence and it is very successful. The very caring and positive ethos in which every individual is valued and respected as part of the school community supports pupils' personal development.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good and results in a very good level of achievement for all pupils. Teachers and special needs assistants work extremely well as a team.

10 The quality of teaching is very good. All teaching was at least good and it was often excellent. Of the 39 lessons seen, thirty three percent was good, forty nine percent very good and eighteen percent was excellent. This high quality teaching is one of the main reasons why pupils achieve so well. Also as a result of the very good teaching pupils learning is very good in all areas of the curriculum but particularly so in the acquisition of language. Subsequently their confidence improves as they move through the school. The strong teamwork and understanding between all staff, including the audiologist and speech therapists, are an important aspect of the successful teaching strategies used. In addition, staff have very good knowledge and understanding of the particular needs of pupils with a hearing impairment and of the way in which these pupils learn and acquire language. Couple this with very good subject knowledge and lessons are made interesting and exciting. Pupils are highly motivated and want to learn. Their very positive attitudes, very good behaviour and high levels of concentration contribute substantially to the very good progress they make.

11 A particular strength of the teaching is the expectation that high standards will be achieved and this is equally valid for the youngest pupils as it is for those undertaking examination courses. In a science lesson the teacher has very high expectations and encourages pupils to think for themselves and come up with solutions to problems. Support is provided for both language needs and for the context and content of the lesson. The pace of lessons is usually brisk keeping pupils alert and working hard. In a music lesson, an enthusiastic and lively teaching approach ensures that all pupils are involved resulting in great enjoyment and activity while acquiring new understanding about notation.

12 Teachers have a secure command of the subjects they teach and do so with enthusiasm and confidence. For example, in art and design pupils are given ideas about how to improve their work and the teacher demonstrates techniques which gives pupils confidence to try themselves. The very good range and quality of art work presented for Year 11 GCSE examination is confirmation of very good subject knowledge of the teacher and how this was transferred to pupils. That teachers have such good subject knowledge enables them to teach confidently, answer questions effectively and ask additional questions to ensure pupils have understood. They make their lessons interesting and build effectively on what pupils already know. There is often a good balance between direct teaching and independent tasks and this was observed in a Year 10 science lesson when instruction was followed by a practical task. Most teachers use questions skilfully and can elicit very good responses from pupils and also extend their thinking by asking probing questions. When pupils are working on tasks teachers monitor progress and often intervene either with questions that check understanding or, as in the case of art and design, offer suggestions to improve technique.

13 Lessons are very well planned with clear learning objectives which in some lessons relate to targets on IEPs. This ensures that each pupil is appropriately challenged and that differentiation is by task as well as support. Homework tasks are well prepared with the expectation that they will be done. Planned plenary sessions, for example in a mathematics lesson, are well managed and gives all pupils and the teacher an opportunity to review what new knowledge and understanding has been learned.

14 Another feature of the very good teaching is the way in which pupils are helped to understand what they need to do to improve or gain a good grade as they can in examinations. An example of this was in a science lesson when the teacher gives a careful explanation of the criteria used in marking examination papers so developing pupils' awareness of the need for accuracy, clear diagrams, recording sufficient observations and actions taken and analysing results and drawing conclusions. This is all given using carefully constructed language so that pupils understand. Pupils' work is always marked and in some subjects, for example art and design, there are clear criteria for marks and grades given to projects and to homework, which are understood by pupils.

The MRM philosophy has a very positive impact on the development of pupils' speaking skills throughout the school, but especially at Key Stages 1 and 2, and this leads to good standards of written work and improvement in reading skills.

15 Standards in English are very good in relation to pupils' prior attainment and their specific difficulties in acquiring language. The school uses the Maternal Reflective Method (MRM) to raise standards of literacy very effectively. This method relies on pupils' own language. MRM is so successful due mainly to the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff and as a result pupils make very good progress in their speaking and listening skills. The belief that this method works and the success that they see drives staffs' commitment to this method. The awareness and ability of staff to pick up any errors in pupils' speech immediately and use it in context is impressive especially in Key Stages 1 and 2 where the foundations of language acquisition are established. This leads to a consolidation and progression in language acquisition with the effect of enhancing their reading and writing skills. Pupils' reading ages improve consistently over time and they have access to a good range of literature. Most classrooms have a rich language environment in which every opportunity is taken to exploit speaking, listening and language acquisition. Of equal importance is a "listening" environment in which the acoustics are right and in which each pupils' personal audiological requirements are met as few pupils have the identical hearing losses. In addition to the importance of the input of the audiologist, the speech therapists work very closely with pupils and staff. The understanding and very good working relationships of this team is crucial to the improvements pupils make.

16 In all English lessons there is particular attention on social development through language acquisition and this leads to a very strong emphasis on listening to what others say, taking turns in discussions and tolerance when language is not clear. The level of verbal interaction between pupils is often high and young pupils especially collaborate well and translate for each other when language is difficult. Their support for each other is very commendable. Teachers use blackboards and overhead projectors very effectively to reinforce grammar, technical words, spelling and as a reminder of the topics of conversation which are being discussed.

17 In Key Stage 1 pupils handwriting develops and evidence that vocabulary is extending with improved use of punctuation is clear in the work pupils produce. Very good use is made of pupils' language to develop reading texts and very good cross curricular links are well used to promote reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. At this stage they are beginning to use full stops and capital letters in their writing to denote the start and end of sentences. Pupils are constantly encouraged to speak and are asked to repeat words and sentences to develop better clarity and understanding. In a Year 2 class the teacher's enthusiasm and very high expectations results in a lively lesson in which pupils are very motivated and want to please and do well. The school has adapted the National Literacy Strategy very well to meet the needs of their pupils using their own conversations as the basis for texts.

18 The skills developed in the early stages are reinforced and consolidated so that by the time pupils have reached Key Stage 4 they are studying Shakespeare, W. Owen and J. Pope and writing very sensitively in different styles for different audiences. Evidence of autobiographical writing about their own deafness is expressed eloquently, voicing strong opinions and describing personal feelings with passion. Work on Macbeth demonstrates a good understanding of text and an ability to analyse characters and justify their reasons. When discussing "Jane Eyre" pupils in Year 10 can place adjectives in a context to explain the meaning of, for example, compassionate, passionate and level-headed, and engage in lively debate.

19 By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils can write their own play, they can detect the difference between literal and figurative language, for instance, "rolling in it" and "pulling our legs" or "the wrong end of the stick". Younger pupils can think of additional words for "big" and the teacher expertly uses their words to extend their understanding and develop their thinking. In a Year 6 class the teacher has very good skills in explaining language and in encouraging pupils to share their ideas. They have the confidence to speak out because they know their contributions will be valued. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have read a R. Dahl novel and undertake a critical analysis of the characters, the key problem, the solution and what they consider to be the

story's message.

20 In between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4 much hard work has been done. Pupils learn to draft and redraft their work showing considerable improvements mainly due to the high quality of the marking and the positive response by pupils to teachers' advice. Throughout their time in school pupils' work is analysed and reviewed, targets are set and monitored always with the expectation that pupils' communication skills can and will improve. Very good teaching, a very clear understanding and use of the MRM of developing communication, excellent relationships and a strong commitment to the oralist approach ensures that pupils are successful.

Science is a very strong subject in the school with a well developed curriculum, a consistently high level of teaching and this promotes pupils' confidence to carry out their own investigations which impacts positively on their progress and achievements.

21 Eight pupils gained a dual award GCSE pass in science in 2000 which is testimony to the hard work of pupils and to the commitment of staff since many pupils start the course with little scientific awareness. Science is made both enjoyable and exciting for pupils because teachers have very good subject knowledge and, coupled with their understanding of pupils' abilities, the scientific content in lessons is made accessible to them.

22 Curriculum planning is well co-ordinated through both the primary and secondary departments and although no lessons were observed at Key Stages 1 and 2 analysis of work across the school demonstrates that pupils are given a secure grounding in basic scientific information with particular emphasis on the development and understanding of scientific language. Long term planning for Key Stages 1 and 2 covers all areas of the National Curriculum and it is organised on a two year rolling programme of topics. Target setting and assessment form an integral part of planning. Specific targets are in the medium term planning and they are assessed against the groups' learning objectives at the end of each topic. Beginning a new topic the teacher will record pupils' responses to the initial discussion and lesson plans can be sufficiently flexible to incorporate areas that are weak or fill in any gaps in knowledge. Before transferring to the secondary department pupils have an induction week in which they visit the laboratories and are introduced to the secondary department co-ordinator. The continuation of the MRM approach consolidates pupils' confidence and supports an easy transfer. Curriculum organisation in the secondary department focuses on the expectation that all pupils will achieve some form of external accreditation. Teachers are all science specialists who know their subject very well and who react immediately to spontaneous questions or misunderstandings with confidence.

23 Underpinning all the work is the necessity to acquire appropriate technical language so that pupils can begin to develop an understanding of the processes of scientific enquiry. Learning is related to pupils' own experiences as far as possible. Analysis of pupils' work shows that the curriculum is organised so that the level of difficulty and content increases as pupils move through the school. It continues to cover the National Curriculum programmes of study.

24 Science teaching was only observed in Key Stages 3 and 4 during the inspection and it was overall very good and a good proportion was excellent. Because of their very secure subject knowledge, clear planning procedures identifying learning objectives, high expectations and confident teaching style pupils learn well and are highly motivated. Teachers are skilled at questioning which probes pupils' understanding, challenges their thinking and so raises achievement. This was particularly evident in a lesson with Year 8 pupils when they were learning about solubility which began with a demonstration and pupils were expected to find their own solutions following good questioning by the teacher. When pupils are working on tasks teachers monitor progress, and sometimes intervene with questions that check understanding. As in other subjects the spoken word is supported by the use of an overhead projector to reinforce the language and check for understanding. The very supportive atmosphere in lessons improves pupils' confidence and they are not afraid to answer or ask for help as they know every contribution is valued even if incorrect, and

further explanations support their understanding and they continue to acquire new knowledge and skills. To support pupils' preparation for examinations teachers discuss possible questions, asks questions and gives advice about "reading the questions carefully" and effectively boosts pupils' confidence about how to approach the examination and reaffirms their own knowledge and understanding.

The recently developed SEN curriculum at Key Stage 3 is very good and is promoting pupils language, academic and social development very effectively.

25 The school offers a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum but the school now admits pupils who have additional learning difficulties as well as a hearing impairment. These pupils have receptive/expressive language deficits and large gaps in knowledge and understanding of subject material across the curriculum. Realising that they would have some difficulty in accessing their current curriculum the school worked out a parallel curriculum especially for pupils within Key Stage 3. The curriculum co-ordinator provides excellent leadership, vision and practical guidance for this initiative. All staff contribute and receive regular up-dates on developments and detailed information on pupil's targets and progress. This very effectively promotes cross-curricular reinforcement of target vocabulary and grammatical points. The system includes planning for success and pupils' confidence and self-esteem is extremely well promoted.

26 Once the need for a fundamental rethink of the curriculum for this group of pupils had been identified the staff involved recognised that they should have access to externally accredited courses. The decision to organise the modified curriculum on a topic approach written in modules was welcomed because the integration of science and the humanities could also reinforce a common language thus supporting further language development. Fewer teachers are involved in the teaching of this curriculum but specialist English staff teach all the English and reading lessons which are a unique feature of this curriculum. These lessons have a heavy emphasis on the development and reinforcement of language.

27 Much thought has gone into devising individual schemes of work and include differentiated ideas and activities which are revisited frequently to progressively reinforce target language and any new vocabulary. Well chosen worksheets enable pupils to use their developing literacy skills and are carefully marked, assessed and analysed at the end of each module. The resulting information informs future targets on pupils IEPs and so both subject learning and literacy skills are better developed. The close involvement of the speech and language therapists, who work with groups of pupils both in and out of lessons and who are involved on both planning and assessment, is essential to the success of this approach. Where other specialist teachers are involved copies of class modules are available so that they can reinforce targeted vocabulary whenever possible. Teachers keep detailed records and the information is shared at regular team meetings. Annual reading and speech tests add to the bank of information collected and this also supports the target setting process. Portfolios of pupils' free individual writing are maintained as evidence of progress and also as an aid to identifying where future work should be focused.

28 The school plans to take this strategy further forward with a dedicated team of staff and a governor. They will consider writing extended and modified modules of work, look at timetable implications, deployment and training of special needs assistants, think about the role of the speech and language therapists and also target setting. Monitoring the initiative would be an integral part of the strategy. So far staff expectations have risen and they have given a very positive reaction to the initiative. Parents have been very happy and highly supportive, having seen the improvements in vocabulary, speech production and expressive language, and pupils' social development is improved due to their increasing confidence and feelings of self worth.

The school places a high priority in supporting parents from their first approach to the school and gives them very good quality information.

29 Parents have extremely positive views about the school and speak highly about all staff, and the improvements their children have made since attending St Johns School. They are justifiably right to be very

proud of the school and of the high quality education their children receive. There are a wide range of ways in which the school involves parents, from initial information packs, regular newsletters, home/school books to a Parental Support Officer who herself is a parent of a pupil at the school. The schools' commitment to each individual pupil is appreciated by parents and they, in turn, become committed to the school.

30 The Parent Support Officer is involved from the very first approach by a prospective parent and is at hand for both support and specific information. Having first hand knowledge of the questions and worries parents initially have, she is ideally placed to put minds at rest. The Parent Support Pack is very clear and gives invaluable information to parents to help them through the assessment and statementing process. Parents value her input and support which is ongoing after children have been admitted. She keeps the website newsletter up to date and encourages comments from pupils.

31 Pupil involvement in the Home/School agreement ensures that they are aware of what is expected of them. Parents also understand the school's expectations of them and additional information about the accepted Code of Conduct, the amount and frequency of homework, and a welcome pack for pupils all go towards building a trusting relationship between parents, pupils and the school.

32 The school has a wealth of essential information available for parents and parents are welcome to visit the school whenever they wish. Since many of the pupils live a great distance away the school has established a flat so that parents can come and stay. This is especially important when Annual Reviews and other meetings are being held. Parents have a number of opportunities to come into school to discuss their child's progress and talk with teachers. Some parents are involved in the "Friends of St Johns" and organise social and fundraising events which are very successful. Informal "Chatterbox" mornings are arranged in the Primary department when parents can get together and talk about things that concern them. Contact between the residential staff and parents is regular, and parents know they can telephone staff at any time and receive help and information. Pupils also are encouraged to keep in regular contact with home and many now have mobile phones with a text facility so that communication is easy. Telephones with minicomms are also available to pupils. Half termly newsletters keep parents up to date with the most recent events and forthcoming activities.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Governor evaluation of the effectiveness of major spending decisions on raising standards of pupils' achievement.

33 The governing body is very supportive of the school and all that it does. An appropriate range of sub-committees is in place and they meet regularly. Governors bring with them different knowledge and understanding which are used effectively to question decisions and to offer advice when needed. Reports from the head teacher keep them well informed of current activities and members are always welcomed into school. They visit classrooms, look at documents and have very good and trusting relationships with staff at all levels. Many governors have a long relationship with the school and have seen it develop and extend over the years.

34 The school development plan is presented to the governing body for approval and is discussed regularly at meetings. The recent developments, for instance, of a new information and communication technology suite, the refurbishment of the Post 16 residential provision, additional speech and language therapists and an improved group hearing aid system have represented a large financial investment, and although the school development plan has included criteria for success, evaluation procedures are not yet formalised in order that governors can evaluate how these improvements will raise standards and improve pupils' achievements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

35 In order to build on the current success of the school the governors, head teacher and staff should now:

- Evaluate the effects of spending decisions on pupils' learning by setting targets to raise their achievements in the areas where significant expenditure has occurred. (Paragraphs 33 and 34)

In addition to the above key issue the following more minor issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

The governors, head teacher and staff should:

- Ensure a consistency in the marking and monitoring of registers. (Paragraph 2)
- Organise a central register for pupils in the residential unit and to formally register day pupils on transfer to the residential unit. (Paragraph 5)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	39
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
18%	49%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	85
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.8

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Certificates of Achievement

English:

1 boy distinction
2 boys, 3 girls merit
3 boys pass

Mathematics:

2 girls pass

Science:

1 boy distinction
3 boys, 3 girls merit
1 boy pass

History:

1 boy, 3 girls merit
1 boy pass

D&T Food:

3 boys, 5 girls Grade3

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Qualification	No. of Students	Results
BTEC National Construction	1	Merit / Distinction
GNVQ Advanced Art and Design	1	Pass
GCSE English	1	C
CACHE Certificate in Child Care	1	Merit / Distinction
City and Guilds Furniture Restoration	1	Pass
GNVQ Foundation Art and Design	1	Pass
Pre-Vocational Education Level 1 (part time)	4	Passed 4 Vocational Units
Key Independence Course	1	Pass
DAYS Upholstery Course	1	Pass

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	84
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YN– Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4.4
Average class size	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YN – Y14

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	572

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
	£
Total income	1,764,601
Total expenditure	1,699,382
Expenditure per pupil	20,231
Balance brought forward from previous year	61,760
Balance carried forward to next year	126,976

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	83
Number of questionnaires returned	63

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	24	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	28	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	33	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	40	5	2	2
The teaching is good.	84	16	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	25	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	17	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	16	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	75	21	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	76	21	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	77	23	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	32	11	5	5