

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN'S RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Brighton

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114677

Headteacher: Mr D Kent

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Last
17171

Dates of inspection: 6th – 8th November 2000

Inspection number: 223618

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Residential special

School category: Non-maintained

Age range of pupils: 5 to 19 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Walpole Road
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East Sussex
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Appropriate authority: St John's School

Name of chair of governors: Mr L Morton

Date of previous inspection: 9th September 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John's School and College is a well established independent charity providing education and residential provision for a very wide range of pupils aged seven to nineteen. Pupils are admitted from over 25 local authorities and also a few from Europe and the Middle East. Most pupils are defined as having moderate or severe learning difficulties and upon entry, most are attaining below national expectations and underachieving in terms of their own abilities. Many also have additional learning difficulties such as speech and language problems, autistic spectrum disorders, Asperger's Syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, chromosomal or medical disorders. A large majority of pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour, sometimes of an extreme nature. Many of the pupils have experienced a marked lack of success in previous school placements and some have been rejected by previous establishments. St John's School is proud of the fact that it will admit any pupil following an assessment who, it genuinely believes, will benefit. The school operates on two sites, 12 miles apart at Brighton and Seaford, with both residential and day pupils enrolled at each site. The school organises pupils according to their ages and the nature of their learning difficulties, thus there are groups of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), with severe learning difficulties and with challenging behaviour at each site. Pupils at Seaford progress to the Brighton site when appropriate during Key Stage 3. The school places a developing emphasis on pupils recognising and taking responsibility for their own actions and concentrating on developing their social skills and maturity so that they can take a responsible place in society.

At the time of inspection 106 pupils were on roll, 93 boys and 13 girls. Although the number of girls is small, the school makes every effort to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in any way by being the minority. Ninety-eight of these pupils are statemented with their needs being defined as moderate or severe learning difficulties and eight are awaiting assessment. Nine are from ethnic minority communities. At the time of inspection there were three pupils with English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St John's is a very good school with many excellent features. When account is taken of their backgrounds, their previous problems with education, their learning difficulties and their prior attainment, pupils achieve very well. The extended curriculum provides very good opportunities for all pupils to succeed. Consistently good teaching from staff who are accepting of the pupils' emotional and learning difficulties and who share a determination that pupils will do well, results in pupils who make excellent progress in understanding themselves, their difficulties and in taking responsibility for their own actions as they get older. The school provides many opportunities for students to prepare themselves for life after school. These include flexible attendance at the local college of education and very good preparation for independent living for the 66 boys and ten girls in the residential units. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides consistently good quality teaching that is well matched to the pupils' needs and leads to good progress by all pupils.
- The school meets the diverse needs of the pupils and students very well through a very good, extended curriculum.
- St John's maximises opportunities for students to prepare for the next stages of their lives by enabling them to develop into mature young people who are prepared to take a full and active role in society when they leave the college.
- Provides excellent facilities for younger pupils on the recently acquired Seaford site through very high quality facilities and very good organisation of pupils into tightly defined learning groups.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is good with an emphasis on pupils developing an understanding of their difficulties and developing strategies to take responsibility for themselves.
- Provides excellent leadership and management with efficient arrangements for conducting school and college business very effectively across the split site.

What could be improved

- Information to, and communication with, parents.
- Opportunities for all pupils to use information and communication technology as a tool for learning in all subjects.

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 was last inspected in 1996 and has maintained and built upon the high standards found then. The school has effectively addressed all the key issues identified in the last inspection report. It now has improved procedures for meeting the range of pupils' special educational needs by the development of the comprehensive facilities at the Seaford site. Pupils are now more effectively clustered into groups with clearly defined learning needs such as autism or severe learning difficulties. This redefinition of classes is helping teachers to focus their work more effectively upon the pupils' needs as they are now taught in classes where in general terms all the pupils have, for example, autism or severe learning difficulties. Following a good range of training opportunities, teachers now use a wider range of methods, for example adapting specialist strategies for teaching pupils with autism. There are now co-ordinators for all subjects who follow consistent procedures for monitoring the work in their subjects. These new strategies are helping the school to identify more clearly how well pupils are meeting the learning targets set for them in their individual education plans and to take immediate action where pupils make slow progress. The acquisition of the Seaford site is an added advantage and has enabled all staff to develop the overall provision. It now meets the pupils' needs more comprehensively by offering a wider range of day and residential activities on two sites. At the Brighton site, it is able to develop a more mature atmosphere for learning by providing a faculty approach where students are taught by subject tutors rather than one main class teacher. This helps them develop a mature approach to learning and to relate to a wider number of staff and teaching styles.

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 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key	
speaking and listening	B	B	B	very good	A
reading	B	B	B	good	B
writing	B	B	B	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	B	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A		

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

Pupils make consistently good progress throughout the school. They increasingly learn to use their skills of literacy and numeracy as they get older and improve their personal and social skills because of the very good progress they make towards targets on their individual education plans. All pupils make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Their progress in all other subjects is at least satisfactory but the school does not provide sufficient teaching of information and communication technology for younger pupils to develop good skills when using computers.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are very good. Pupils are keen to come to school. They participate in all school activities with enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons, around the school and when they attend the local college. When, because of their learning difficulties, behaviour is inappropriate, this is quickly dealt with according to procedures detailed in the school's behaviour policy.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and contribute significantly to the good progress pupils make. Pupils enjoy demonstrating their increasing responsibility and reliability by visiting local facilities and joining groups of cubs, brownies or scouts.
Attendance	Attendance is good. Day pupils attend regularly.

Given the nature of their learning difficulties and the intense problems some pupils have as a result of childhood experiences, the pupils make extremely good progress in their personal development. Pupils value the system of reward points and these have a significant impact on their approach to lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	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.

Consistently good teaching is a strength of the school and has a positive impact on the pupils' development of good learning skills. Half of the lessons observed were good and over a quarter were very good. Inspectors saw two outstanding lessons, one in history and one in art. In the very best teaching, teachers are relentless in their use of questioning to explore pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking. All teachers provide a good range of tasks in their lessons which stimulate pupils and help them to learn by practical work. There is a clear and determined focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy by all staff and they promote the pupils' use of these skills in other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils increasingly understand that they need to read and write well if they are to make good progress and they try hard to improve their skills and as a result, increase their confidence and ability in reading and writing. However, teachers do not consistently teach younger pupils the skills necessary to use computers as a tool for learning in all aspects of their work at school. Although this only applies to a minority of pupils, it is nevertheless a weakness within teaching. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and beyond take a responsible attitude to reviewing their work with a view to improving it in the future.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum meets the very wide range of needs through a good range of subjects and a very good number of extra-curricular activities. Pupils informally extend their learning through residential activities and the Youth Club. The school has very good arrangements to ensure that the extremely wide range of pupils' needs are met through very good attention to their individual education plans and good assessment and record keeping.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are three pupils with English as an additional language and their needs are very effectively met by teachers who understand them well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils to develop their personal-social skills. The school/college community works to a clear set of rules and expectations that enable pupils to understand right from wrong. Opportunities in social development are very good and for cultural development are satisfactory. The school makes good use of the community to promote pupils' social skills and develop their cultural awareness. Opportunities for spiritual development are well met through regular, reflective and celebratory assemblies.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school makes very good provision for all of the pupils – residential and day. Staff show a genuine interest in the pupils'

	needs and enjoy excellent relationships with them.
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With the exception of information and communication technology, the flexibility of the curriculum and the way in which the staff adapt it to the needs of the pupils is a strength of the school. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities also provides exciting, worthwhile opportunities for pupils and students during the evenings and weekends. The recent provision of a Youth Club on each site is a valuable opportunity for pupils to mix together and to reinforce their learning and social skills on an informal level.

Opportunities for students to study within the local college community are flexible and valuable. They provide students with part-time study on vocational courses. These, together with the broad and impressive personal, social and health curriculum, are instrumental in developing the very good attitudes that pupils develop as they grow older. This prepares them very effectively for life after school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The principal and vice-principal work very well together. They provide excellent leadership for the school and motivate staff to work together very effectively and maintain high standards of teaching and learning.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors are very enthusiastic and have been very supportive in developing facilities and resources – particularly the acquisition of the Seaford site.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is becoming increasingly effective in evaluating its performance by setting clear targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used very well to motivate pupils and promote their learning. The school has good systems for ensuring that it spends its money wisely. However, the use of computers as a tool for learning in all subjects is underdeveloped.

The school benefits from very experienced and enthusiastic leadership. The principal and senior management team are very active within the school and know the pupils well. They are highly skilled in managing the complex nature of the school – particularly ensuring that arrangements across the split sites are efficiently managed and difficulties minimised. The school pays very good attention to spending its money wisely and continues to provide very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way pupils learn and improve their behaviour. The range of activities provided for residential pupils. The opportunities for day pupils to participate in evening activities. The opportunities for pupils to extend their learning at college. The benefits of the new Seaford site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality and amount of information about their children's progress and achievements. The frequent changes of care staff.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support they receive from the staff. | |
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Of the 44 questionnaires returned, six were critical of the quality and amount of information provided by the school. Parents felt that information was inconsistently provided and that enquiries to the school did not result in a prompt reply. The inspection team found that the school has a wide range of strategies for keeping parents informed including regular newsletters, annual reports, copies of pupils' individual education plans and information about Youth Club activities. Nevertheless, pupils are admitted from all over the UK and beyond and some parents have difficulty in attending the school for meetings and naturally feel the need to be well informed. The school has recently appointed a member of staff with responsibility for improving its communication with parents and, as a result of discussion with inspectors, is to review all such arrangements. The inspection team agreed with parents that the turnover of care staff is high but acknowledges that the school does all it can to attract long-serving, well-qualified staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school provides consistently good quality teaching that is well matched to the pupils' needs and leads to good progress by all pupils.

1. The quality of teaching is consistently good for all pupils across all key stages and is well planned to meet the very wide range of pupils' needs.
2. There were no unsatisfactory lessons during the inspection. Of the 26 lessons observed, two were outstanding, one in history at Key Stage 2 and one in science at Key Stage 4. There are many reasons that contribute to the good quality teaching across the school.
3. Teachers and classroom assistants know their pupils very well and share a determination that, despite any difficulties pupils may experience with behaviour or learning, they will do well in lessons. Because they share these high expectations, they make every effort to plan lessons that interest and inspire the pupils to learn. Within their planning, they include a good range of strategies for learning and, when delivering their lessons, are quick to adapt what they are doing to the needs of the pupils at that time. For example, when a pupil tried to distract another by asking him about his previous school, the teacher skilfully incorporated this into her questions thus defusing the situation and including both pupils who therefore contributed meaningfully to the discussion.
4. Teachers are accepting of the pupils' difficulties and recognise that many bring negative experiences to the classroom. They showed tolerance of the individual and sometimes idiosyncratic ways in which pupils learn, but remain determined that they will participate in lessons and, where possible, complete the tasks set. To do so they use a great deal of humour in lessons. They treat the pupils with dignity and respect and are quick to deal with any outbreaks of unacceptable behaviour. Classroom assistants played a very valuable role in this respect. They work both individually and with groups of pupils, helping them with their work and encouraging them to stay focused and maintain their concentration. They are particularly effective when working with pupils on individual targets from their education plans. For example, one assistant successfully ensured that a pupil concentrated on his mathematical work by taking turns with him in completing the tasks. When it was her turn to be the learner, she skilfully and with great humour suggested that she did not understand what to do and, as a result, the pupil explained the task thereby demonstrating his understanding. Similarly in a speaking and listening activity with some lower attaining students, the teacher encouraged them to review and check the accuracy of their own work. When they had done this, she then checked a sample herself, calling it a 'quality review'. The students were able to take responsibility for their own learning in this lesson and then see that their self-assessment had been accurate – which in most cases it was.
5. Teachers are successful in promoting the skills of literacy and numeracy both through effective teaching of the subjects and by ensuring that these skills are used as effectively as possible in other subjects. For example, in a numeracy lesson held in the gymnasium, the pupils were required to count the number of repetitions in a circuit training exercise or to time each other's endurance using a stopwatch. This lesson provided a valuable opportunity for pupils to put into practice what they were learning as part of the numeracy strategy.
6. However, despite this clear and effective focus upon basic skills, teachers do not actively teach the pupils sufficient skills in information and communication technology

(ICT) to enable them to use computers as tools for learning in all other subjects throughout the school and this is a weakness. This is particularly so for the younger pupils on the Seaford site. Although each room has at least one computer, few pupils were seen making use of them during the inspection. The pupils are motivated by the computers and show a great deal of interest and enthusiasm when they are in use but too few opportunities are planned within teachers' lessons. Younger pupils have not acquired sufficient skills and understanding for them to be able to use the computer, for example, to draft and redraft text or manipulate data in mathematics. By the time they reach Key Stage 4 and beyond, pupils have become more adept in these skills and they produce good quality work as a result of skilled teaching. However, such skills are not currently taught consistently and competently to ensure that all pupils in the school are able to use and benefit from such technology as soon as they are able to learn how to do so.

7. Pupils are increasingly developing an understanding and knowledge of their own learning. This is due to the emphasis placed by teachers on the regular review of learning at the ends of lessons. In the best teaching, the staff expect pupils to identify what they have done, how they have done it and what they have learnt as a result. This in turn boosts pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence and is reinforced by the staff's implementation of the points system which recognises pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils are all keen to do well and many identify their own progress by saying how many sums they have completed or by accurately answering questions concerning the content of the lesson.
8. In the very best lessons the teachers' use of questioning is excellent. They use questions both to check understanding and to extend the pupils' knowledge and are persistent in exploring the pupils' thinking. For example, in an outstanding history lesson at Key Stage 2, the teacher asked each pupil many questions about the Egyptians building the pyramids. She asked 'why' the stones were difficult to move, 'how' they were placed on the site, 'what' the columns were called and 'how' the bricks were made. Faced with these high expectations and probing questions, the pupils responded with great enthusiasm and were delighted with their efforts at pronouncing words such as 'hieroglyphics' and 'obelisk'. Given the nature of these particular pupils' severe learning difficulties, their levels of involvement and achievement in the lesson were extremely high and it was clear that they learnt a great deal about the subject.
9. All teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and they use it to good effect to motivate and develop pupils' own skills and learning. For example, in a group of Key Stage 4 pupils who had chosen to study cartooning as an option, the tutor demonstrated the effect of shade in a drawing. He showed the students how to create a rounded effect and then said 'without shading it's a plank, with shading it's a tree-trunk'. This good humorous approach not only helped the pupils with the quality of their drawing but also gave them a good way of remembering what they had learnt. Similarly, in music lesson with Key Stage 2 pupils, the staff performed enthusiastically, demonstrating their own ability to sing and sign with the pupils and their willingness to take part. As a result of this enthusiasm and the expectation that the pupils would do likewise, the level of learning and participation was total. Later in the lesson, one pupil was able to lead the others in the signing activity.
10. Teachers make good use of resources ranging from the very simple to the more complex. For example, in a mathematics lesson with the younger pupils, the teacher introduced the 'number-cruncher', a cardboard box adapted as a machine which treated numbers in a specified way. When the teacher put in a plastic number two, the machine spat out, onto the floor, a number three. After laughing the pupils were able to understand that, at that point, the machine was adding one. Once the idea was established the teacher was able to increase the difficulty of the process and by the end

of the lesson, the pupils could use it for themselves. A very good example of older students using computers was seen when up they were reviewing the contents of their portfolios in preparation for the Certificate of Achievement course. Having reviewed and collated a list of what should be included, the Year 10 students were then expected to undertake the next appropriate task independently. The portfolios were of high quality and showed good mastery of word-processing and use of graphics. The students demonstrated that they were able to work independently, understanding that they could call upon the teacher at any time for help. In this case, the teacher acted as a support intervening only when absolutely necessary.

11. Teachers consistently ensure that pupils understand what is required of them. They make relevant allowances for the pupils' emotional needs and difficulties but nevertheless maintain their high expectations. The pupils and students respond to this approach very well. Younger and lower attaining pupils receive much more structure in their work and are therefore able to make progress in small steps. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders benefit from the teachers' use of adapted specialist strategies. For example, teachers have adapted the TEACCH methods by providing individual work spaces for some pupils; pupils understand that this is their space and that here, they should work at all times.
12. The good communication between teachers and care staff at the beginning and end of residential times and the start of the school day is instrumental in promoting learning. Although informal, pupils are able to build upon their skills in the residential setting, for example when shopping or reading in the evenings. In the Youth Club too, they can follow their own educational interests through art and craft activities. Home/school diaries are an effective way of passing information between home and school and parents of day pupils are able to use these to help them support pupils in the evenings.
13. The high quality teaching throughout the school is very effective in developing the pupils' and students' excellent personal development and their excellent relationships with the staff and each other. Teachers take every opportunity to promote good relationships within lessons and at other informal times during the day. Despite their best intentions, pupils and students sometimes fall out and disagree with each other. When this occurs, the staff are rigorous in encouraging them to think about their actions and reflect on their impact on others. Where, on a minority of occasions, students need physically restraining, this is undertaken with dignity and respect.

The school meets the diverse needs of the pupils and students very well through a very good, extended curriculum.

14. The school has significantly reviewed and extended the taught curriculum and in consequence, all pupils now have full access to all elements. The curriculum now offers all pupils a very good range of activities which are adapted to meet their individual needs. The curriculum offers all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education plus a range of extra-curricular, evening and weekend activities.
15. Pupils and students are now organised into more clearly defined groups and teachers are able to adapt the curriculum more easily to their learning needs. For example, the pupils and students are grouped according to the nature of their learning difficulties, some in groups of pupils with autism, some in groups of pupils with global, severe learning difficulties. As they move to the Brighton site, pupils are gradually moved into more varied groups if this should be beneficial for them.
16. A particular strength of the curriculum is the way all pupils, regardless of the nature of their learning difficulties or behaviour, can be accommodated within it. As they reach Key Stage 4 and beyond, for example, the school makes very good arrangements for

the students to attend college or other study facilities, either as part of a group or on an individual basis. The flexibility with which this is achieved is very good. For example, one mature student continues to reside at St John's School whilst studying in higher education. He is able to receive study support from St John's staff if required and benefits from the sheltered living environment provided in the residential unit.

17. The curriculum includes a very good range of extra-curricular activities that are available to pupils who board and for day pupils. The staff ensure that they maintain a flexible approach to these activities. During the inspection, for example, one teacher phoned a parent just before the end of the school day to ask if a pupil could stay on at school for an evening activity. The range of activities on offer is vast and includes very good opportunities for the pupils to mix with local youngsters by joining brownies, scouts, or cubs. Other activities on and off site include swimming, films, discos, trips to local places of interest and visits to theatres and museums.
18. A very valued and valuable introduction since the last inspection are the new Youth Clubs. Available on both sites, the clubs are led by qualified and experienced youth leaders who have a very good understanding of the pupils' needs. They offer a varied mixture of activities from which pupils may choose. These include pool, art, craft, television, board games or simply doing nothing. Not a popular choice! The atmosphere in the Youth Club is very positive. Pupils were very happy, chatting with each other, sharing equipment or watching others play. Other pupils benefited from being able to use the swimming pool and gym on the Seaford site.
19. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are effectively planned and taught at levels appropriate to the pupils' abilities. The strategies are well adapted to ensure that pupils make progress. For example, for those with severe learning difficulties there is a strong emphasis on speaking and listening. The school has just started planning jointly with the speech therapist to build carefully upon pupils' existing skills. In a listening exercise with Key Stage 3 pupils, the therapist led the activity while the teacher and the classroom assistants concentrated on addressing each pupil's individual work through well focused signing – each adapting their input to the pupil's needs and in line with targets on their individual education plans.
20. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully introduced a good range of accredited courses in order to acknowledge pupils' academic achievement through externally validated certification. Older students gain great benefit from studying part-time at a local college of further education. Here they can mix with many other students whilst receiving specific help in their studies from a member of the school's support staff based at the college. Courses offered between St John's School provision and the local college of further education include GCSEs in English, mathematics and science and vocational courses in horticulture and life skills. Students also work towards the Accreditation and Skills Development Network (ASDAN) awards and the Certificate of Achievement in English, mathematics and information and communication technology.
21. The school is rigorous in ensuring that appropriate targets are set at pupils' annual reviews and that these are assessed and reviewed at regular interviews. Staff take every opportunity to ensure that they are addressing these targets during lessons. For example, in a Key Stage 2 history lesson, one pupil's targets were to stay on focus for ten minutes, to take turns in conversation and to trace over handwriting accurately. Through careful planning and well focused support, the pupil achieved all these – in a group she watched a video for over ten minutes and subsequently contributed to a class discussion (but did not interrupt) and finally, with physical help from an assistant, completed the worksheet provided.

22. A large therapeutic team also contribute to the curriculum, either directly by providing guidance to teachers, by contributing to lessons or by supporting pupils and students on an individual basis. Since the last inspection, the team has been strengthened reflecting the continually changing needs of the pupils. For example, one therapist and one assistant have enlarged the speech and language therapy team. The pupils also benefit from the services of a mental health nurse, an occupational therapist and have access to anger management training if necessary.
23. The curriculum content is effectively adapted to pupils' needs and promotes the success which recent examination results and awards illustrate.

St John's maximises opportunities for students to prepare for the next stages of their lives by enabling them to develop into mature young people who are prepared to take a full and active role in society when they leave the college.

24. The oldest students in the college are developing into mature, responsible young people who are increasingly taking responsibility for their own behaviour. They achieve this well because they benefit from the staff's determination that they will develop mature attitudes. These are well promoted through the school's very effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. The focus on the student's personal achievement and the development of their social skills are central tenants of the school's work. The success of such work is measured by the progress of some students who, upon entry to the school with unhappy educational experiences, were unable even to sit in a group or concentrate for any measurable time at all. Many such students were presented with certificates or other rewards during the school's awards assembly – a very significant achievement for most of the pupils. These students are now able to hold an extended conversation with visitors and express their views and thoughts with conviction.
25. The basic curriculum is extended in order to prepare students for the next stage of their lives. For example, the creation of a restaurant as part of the business enterprise scheme provides very good opportunities and experience for pupils to work as part of a vocational team. As a result of this initiative, students most certainly deepen their understanding of the world of work and contribute towards their experience of taking responsibility. Both students and staff have bought shares in the restaurant and most expect to make a profit. It is therefore incumbent upon the students to ensure that there is only a minimal risk of people losing their money. The establishment of this initiative has been very positive and helps pupils to understand the pressure upon small businesses; this is particularly helpful for any students who go on work experience in the retail sector. The need to provide high quality food and to make a profit provides a certain amount of stress for the pupils as they experience the necessity of working to deadlines.
26. Pupils further develop their skills in communication and citizenship by taking part in a student council. Not only does this provide them with a valuable channel through which to voice their opinions, but it also gives them worthwhile experience of working as part of a team or a committee – a skill that may be useful later in their lives. The recent introduction of circle time – a defined time each morning when pupils sit together and share their thoughts and feelings – is proving very useful in building pupils' confidence. Some who were reluctant to speak in class now contribute to circle time with its less formal structure.
27. The school and college have the inclusion of all pupils as a main aim of their work. To this end, they ensure that each pupil attends at least part of his or her annual review. This provides the pupils with an opportunity to speak in a formal situation and to review

his or her own practice. In conjunction with their subject tutors, parents and the headteacher, they are then able to set targets for the next stages of their lives.

28. The routes that students take after leaving the school provide clear evidence of St John's success in developing their skills and independence. Last year, five of the eight students who left continued their education by attending colleges of further education in their home towns or through residential provision. One other moved to an agricultural farm setting, one to further residential care and one overseas student returned home.

Provides excellent facilities for younger pupils on the recently acquired Seaford site through very high quality facilities and very good organisation of pupils into tightly defined learning groups.

29. Since the last inspection, the school has made a significant improvement in its provision by acquiring the site at Seaford. The facilities on this site are outstanding and include specialist teaching rooms, a superb swimming pool, gymnasium, provision for the Youth Club, very good quality classrooms and offices as well as a house which is available for any parents wishing to sleep over at the school when attending annual reviews, meetings or other events.
30. The staff have enthusiastically tackled the task of adapting the accommodation to the pupils' needs, giving freely of their time to do so. They now make very good use of the facilities, particularly by clustering the pupils into age-related learning groups.
31. The work at Seaford has resulted in improved facilities for the younger pupils. They are now grouped according to need and therefore the teaching can be better focused. Classes are mostly taught by their class teacher and the pupils benefit in these younger years from this stable and consistent approach. The teachers are able to concentrate on the needs of a defined group of pupils and to plan specialist strategies to meet their needs. The Key Stage 1 nurture group is well catered for at this site. Their base is slightly separated from the main corridor and they work in an atmosphere which encourages quietness and calm.
32. The changes at the Seaford site have also resulted in reorganisation and benefits to the standards of teaching and learning at the Brighton site. Pupils there now benefit from subject-based teaching in specialist rooms and the site is increasingly developing a more college or campus feel about it. The whole range of learning needs is represented on this site and the staff and pupils are very supportive of the older pupils with severe learning difficulties and those with autism who are taught in classrooms in the original house building. All pupils, whatever the nature of their learning difficulties, are included in all activities and their achievements acknowledged in the weekly praise assembly.
33. The school has made very good progress in its target to be socially inclusive. The acquisition of the Seaford site has been instrumental in promoting pupils' involvement in local community groups in a comparatively short period of time. However, the flexibility with which the whole school and college now operates results in a community which is accepting of all and where equal opportunities and the promotion of personal development are at the heart of all its work.

The management of pupils' behaviour is good with an emphasis on pupils developing an understanding of their difficulties and developing strategies to take responsibility for themselves.

34. The school has developed a comprehensive behaviour policy which is reviewed regularly and is central to the management of pupils' behaviour. The clear guidelines ensure that adults in the school manage pupils consistently and with respect. The relationships between adults and pupils and students are excellent and these relationships are used well to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils are expected to conform to the school's rules for living in the community. This is supported by the good use of praise and making the most of opportunities to develop self-esteem.
35. Because the school puts a strong emphasis on the development of good behaviour and pupils taking responsibility for their own actions, they learn to abide by the rules of the school during lessons and at all other times of the day. They are then able to transfer the good behaviour and the effective social skills into the activities they undertake in the community. For example, when they attend college, the students know how to use the refectory, to queue patiently and to pay for their food. They sit appropriately at tables in the refectory and are indistinguishable from other students. When speaking to visitors, pupils are polite and welcoming, they answer questions well and enjoy explaining what they are doing and showing the work they have done.
36. Adults set good role models. They speak to each other with respect and use suitable language as a model for the students. All teachers and classroom assistants work well together as a team, constantly providing good examples of co-operation and teamwork. All staff have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. They make these very clear at the start of lessons and throughout the day. The reward systems are used to enable pupils to reflect on their daily successes and opportunities to develop. Teachers and support staff contribute to these discussions and pupils know that not only their success but their effort too will be celebrated. The school has a calm and friendly atmosphere which helps pupils settle down and work well; there are many quiet corners where pupils may take some 'time out' if they recognise their need to reflect on their behaviour and to restore their concentration.
37. As pupils enter the school they frequently experience difficulty in managing and controlling their responses to order and discipline. In a minority of cases, pupils can be violent and hit or bite teachers. In these instances, the staff are resilient in their acceptance of the whole child but, at the same time, in managing and improving such challenging behaviour. Staff never reject such pupils and always acknowledge the pupils' potential to improve. When they next meet the child, it is always a fresh start and the pupil is accepted for himself with the former behaviour not featured in the new day's agenda – apart from any developing strategies to prevent its reoccurrence. In these ways, the school experiences remarkable success. Pupils who have entered the school unable to sit on a chair or look the teachers in the eye are now functioning as effective learners, working in classes and identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. During the inspection, one such pupil was awarded a medal for drama, which he was delighted to show to everyone. This student's history shows that the school has enabled him to move from a non-communicating, non-co-operating pupil into a young man with a sense of responsibility and good social skills.
38. The school has a good system of behaviour management plans to support and help pupils improve and manage their behaviour. These systematic plans are linked to the pupils' care plans to ensure a consistent approach between their activities during the whole day; the team work, communication and shared approach between school and

residential staff is instrumental in pupils' understanding that consistency in their behaviour is to be striven for.

39. All incidents of inappropriate behaviour which arise as a result of pupils' learning difficulties, are dealt with sensitively and in line with the behaviour policy. The school is proud of the success it continues to have in managing pupils' behaviour. Nevertheless, it is currently seeking to strengthen its procedures still further by improving the way in which targets are written in the pupils' behaviour management plans. The assistant headteacher at the Brighton site is reviewing these and making the targets more specific, to help students to monitor their own progress even more effectively.

Provides excellent leadership and management with efficient arrangements for conducting school and college business very effectively across the split site.

40. The leadership and management are excellent. The governors and the senior management team provide a clear educational direction for the school and they have been extremely entrepreneurial in acquiring the new site at Seaford. The arrangements for managing this site have been very efficient and have quickly become well established so that the day-to-day running of the school is trouble-free and enables the pupils to benefit from the enhanced facilities. For example, the distance between sites is 12 miles and staffing arrangements have been redefined to ensure that no staff make the journey unnecessarily. All teachers now teach on one of the two sites which is an improvement since the last inspection when some were required to drive between the two former sites for lessons with different sets of pupils. Arrangements for organisation and management across the split site are very effective.
41. The leadership of the principal and vice-principal (the headteacher at Seaford) empowers and supports all staff and ensures a safe, caring and educationally challenging environment for pupils.
42. Other staff with management responsibilities are effective. The two assistant headteachers manage their respective departments very efficiently although with different management styles. Procedures and systems at the Seaford site are more developed and thus more effective. For example, lesson monitoring and staff development are well established and part of systematic practice; the results of such monitoring are valued by teachers and help them to improve the quality of their teaching by identifying areas for training such as in preparation for the Social Use of Language Programme or in the use of software for writing with symbols. Procedures for appraisal and performance management are established and meet requirements.
43. The governors are very enthusiastic and involved in the life of the school although their monitoring role is underdeveloped, but the future plans for the school acknowledge this as an area for development. For example, they regularly visit the school, meet the principal and other staff but have not yet been involved in directly observing lessons. The principal and vice-principal, along with the governors, have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their plans for the development of the school are well considered and imaginative.
44. The management of the residential provision is very good. The large team of care staff are well managed, clear about their roles and committed to their work. They are valued by the pupils and build strong relationships with them providing a regular 'listening ear' and joining in with their evening and weekend activities. Good procedures are in place to ensure a smooth daily handover between care and school. These include formal handover sessions when issues of concern or celebration are shared between the teams.

45. The young team of care staff feel well supported by their managers. Although they feel that some shifts are too long, they are committed to supporting the pupils' needs and recognise that senior managers share this commitment. The care staff often do not stay long in post but those that do benefit from promotion whenever possible. All the staff have been appropriately trained and are well informed about whole-school issues such as child protection as well as the individual needs of the pupils. The newly appointed senior care officer and the principal have responded positively to the recent social services survey and have good quality targets within the school's strategic planning which identify continued improvements to facilities and evening and weekend activities.
46. The school's administration is very efficient. All records are extremely detailed and filed efficiently. Systems for financial control are excellent being both well managed and able to respond to changing circumstances. Given the frequently changing nature of the population, this is a major strength. The school's use of computer systems to track its spending and keep a check on budget headings is very good. The arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's administration and business systems are very good.
47. The very strong leadership and management, the very good relationships at all levels, the consistently good teaching and the high quality care and accommodation mean that the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Information to, and communication with, parents.

48. The school has an appropriate range of procedures in place to provide parents with information about school activities and their children's progress. Annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs are well organised. Despite the long distances some parents have to travel, attendance at these meetings is good and parents are now able to stay overnight at the school, should they wish. Targets are discussed with parents and detailed reports provided. At an annual review observed during the inspection, both parents attended and the pupil's class teacher discussed his work, behaviour and attitudes to learning informally with them before the review formally began. She then read through the formal account of the pupil's experience, achievements and progress in each subject taught. During this reading, the teacher exemplified the report by providing further details of the pupil's activities. This very supportive reporting helped the parents to gain a comprehensive understanding of their child's educational achievements and to ask relevant questions.
49. The school sends reports home to parents at the end of each year and also provides newsletters for parents each half term. The latter are of high quality and paint a clear picture of school activities, important dates and changes in facilities. The youth leaders also write to parents regularly to tell them the details of activities and achievements.
50. To improve communication with parents, the school has recently appointed a member of staff to work closely with parents in the role of an 'outreach co-ordinator'. The purpose of this work is to ensure that all aspects of pupils' experiences in school are well communicated to parents. This work is being undertaken by an experienced care officer who has a good knowledge of all the pupils and their needs. However, the post has only been established this term and its effectiveness has yet to be identified.

51. The school meets all its statutory requirements with regard to reporting pupils' achievements to parents. It also enhances the formal information it provides by distributing newsletters to all parents each term in addition to informing them that the purpose of this work is to ensure that all aspects of pupils' experiences in school are well communicated to parents including the results of statutory tests and arrangements for reviewing pupils' statements of special educational need. Parents are always informed immediately if a child is ill or if he or she has been upset or behaved poorly. Teachers and care staff frequently ring parents to inform them of activities taking place at school. Day pupils frequently ask if they can stay at school to take part in such events. The Christmas show was unanimously considered by parents as being the highlight of the school year when all the pupils participated and provided a hugely entertaining evening.
52. Despite these strengths however, a significant number of parents expressed concern over the amount of information they received about their children's experiences and progress. Of the 44 questionnaires returned to the inspection team, six featured communication with the school and the unsatisfactory quality of information as a major concern. Parents felt that the school was insufficiently flexible to respond to their needs or enquiries. Some reported a lack of response from the staff to queries they had raised. The most significant complaint however, was that these parents considered that they received too little information about pupils' progress from the school and were unable to judge whether their children were making sufficient progress. Inspectors judged that the school had a good range of strategies to keep parents informed but also agreed with parents that if they felt uninformed, the school should review and improve its methods still further. However, a similar number of parents expressed their satisfaction with the service provided by the school and parental questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive.
53. The school has acknowledged the need to continue to strive to refine its communication strategies so that all parents receive the level of information they require.

Opportunities for all pupils to use information and communication technology as a tool for learning in all subjects.

54. The school has made significant investments in providing computers for all classrooms plus a well-equipped computer room at the Brighton site. Some pupils have developed good skills in using the computer to present their work, for example for preparing work for their Certificate of Achievement files using word processing and a graphics package. Some pupils can also use spreadsheets or databases to analyse data in preparation for their GCSE or Certificate of Achievement awards.
55. Nevertheless, during the inspection, there were few examples of teachers actually teaching the early stages of word processing or the skills needed to use a graphics package.
56. The school does not ensure that pupils receive teaching in information and communication technology to develop their skills in using the keyboard, other computer equipment and a range of software. This lack of direct skills training means that pupils do not become sufficiently skilled to use the computer efficiently as a tool for learning in all other aspects of the curriculum. Whilst the continued development of all aspects of information and communication technology is featured in the school's strategic planning, at the time of inspection, the provision for and teaching of the subject were not consistent for all pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to maintain the existing high quality provision and to raise standards even further governors, principal and headteacher should:

- **Improve its communication with parents by:**
 - reviewing current arrangements for sending and receiving information about all aspects of school life;
 - exploring with parents the problems with communication they have identified;
 - ensuring that all parents' responses and requests to the school are quickly acknowledged and efficiently handled;
 - introducing a monitoring strategy which evaluates the effectiveness of such strategies on a regular basis.
- **Improve opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology as a tool for learning in all subjects by:**
 - ensuring that all pupils are taught computer skills to a level appropriate to their own abilities;
 - providing guidance to pupils on how they can make use of such skills in all subjects of the curriculum;
 - providing training for all staff to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge to provide good support to the pupils;
 - promoting the wider use of information and communication technology through displays of pupils' work in all classrooms and social areas.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGIES

57. The school has been successful in introducing the above strategies in its work in order to promote the importance of literacy and numeracy in the curriculum and to raise pupils' skills and understanding. The introduction of the strategies is having a positive impact throughout the school as staff adapt the strategies to the individual needs of the pupils. The greatest impact is, however, at Key Stages 1 and 2 and for older pupils with more severe learning difficulties. In these classes, the teaching of literacy and numeracy is very closely allied to the recommended methods and use of sources.
58. Pupils understand the routine of these sessions and benefit particularly from group work where they are improving their skills in sitting together and taking their turns in answering questions and listening to others.
59. In literacy, the youngest pupils are taking an increased interest in books and many are eager to read to visitors. They try hard to write well and communicate their thoughts in writing although some inevitably find this very difficult. Higher attaining pupils within these groups are able to compose sentences and link their thoughts together to provide a short but logical account of their activity, for example at weekends or during the evenings.
60. In numeracy, the pupils are all making good use of the skills they are learning when shopping in the community or visiting the refectory at the local college. The good work in numeracy culminates in a very effective approach to business education for the oldest students when they organise and run a catering service called Axe. This enterprise is highly effective in challenging their mathematical skills and in ensuring that they understand the importance of mathematics in a working situation.

61. The staff are well trained in both these initiatives and use their skills well to promote pupils learning.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND RECORDING OF PUPILS' PROGRESS.

62. Since the last inspection, the school has reviewed its arrangements for identifying pupils' progress in both the school and residential settings and its procedures for reporting these to parents. These processes have been facilitated by the better organisation of pupils into more cohesive learning groups so that there is a narrower range of needs in each class.
63. In addition to statutory testing through SATs and the results pupils achieve, accredited courses such as the ASDAN Awards, Certificate of Achievement and GCSE, pupils' progress is regularly monitored in a variety of ways. The flexible approach adopted by the school enables all aspects of progress to be identified. The annual review of pupils' statements is the primary formal focus for the school and the parents to consider progress over three terms. These reviews are very efficiently managed and allow parents a very good opportunity to share their thoughts, voice their problems and identify areas they feel important for their children's future work. During one observed review, the teacher provided a very detailed report to a parent's son of every subject studied by the pupil and exemplified with her own more informal observations. The written version of these reports is sent home at the end of each academic year. Targets from individual education plans are reviewed at least termly and sooner if necessary. These, together with care plans and behaviour management plans, when necessary, form a regular focus for the teachers and the pupils. They are very effective in moving pupils forward and helping them to take responsibility for their own learning.
64. The school has also established a very effective system for assessment focus weeks which are held termly. During this time, all pupils achieving in the core subjects of mathematics and English are monitored as is their improvement in behaviour. This format is issued by teachers to plan for the future needs of the pupils and also provides the school with important data on how the pupils are progressing as a whole.
65. Where specialist strategies are used – such as elements of The Education of Adults and Children with Communication Handicaps (TEACCH) for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders – these too are regularly evaluated and the pupils' progress documented. In addition to the assessment strategies undertaken by the teaching staff, the therapeutic team also provide regular reports on pupils' progress and current work.
66. As pupils get older, they are increasingly involved in assessing their own work although not on a formal basis. Teachers regularly ask them how they feel they have done and how they could improve. This strategy is instrumental in focusing pupils' thoughts upon their own targets and emphasising the need to continue their efforts to improve.
67. Overall, these arrangements are very good and under constant review so that they will improve further.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS AGED 14 TO 19 WITH SEVERE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES.

68. Since the school has reorganised the provision, pupils with severe learning difficulties are now grouped together in ability groups. This results in a narrower range of abilities and needs in each class although clearly, the individual needs of the pupils are still

widespread. All pupils have individual education plans and the targets from these are well known to teachers and support staff and used well in classes. Teaching strategies include a range of individual and small group and whole-class work and are very effective in developing pupils' skills in interacting with others and in working independently. For example, one group of students worked as a class group with the speech therapist on a listening exercise; this required them to listen and respond to instructions which were explained or signed by support staff when this was necessary. At other times, these students work independently on tasks specifically targeted towards their individual needs. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to ensure the pupils make best use of the learning opportunities; for example they use adapted methods from TEACCH, they have recently introduced the use of software with symbols which helps pupils understand written text, and most recently, the staff have begun to use the Picture Exchange Communication system – a specialised resources for helping pupils with difficulties in communication. Because staff know their pupils well and are knowledgeable about how they learn, they plan lessons that provide well for their needs and enable pupils to make good progress.

69. The provision for these students on the Brighton site is in a separate suite of teaching rooms. However, the students have access to all the faculties of the site and are fully included in whole-school events such as the awards assembly where all students celebrate their successes and sometimes use role-play to investigate any issues which may be concerning them. They enjoy good relationships with other higher attaining pupils who frequently help them or join in congratulating them on their work. This is a great social benefit to the students.
70. The provision for these students is good and has improved since the last inspection.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	28
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	23	50	19	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	117
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.57

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.43

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

THE SCHOOL HAS PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PUPILS' AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS:

Key Stage 2/Year 6

5 Pupils

	ENGLISH	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE
LEVEL W	5	3	1
LEVEL 1	0	2	2
LEVEL 2	0	0	2
LEVEL 3	0	0	2

Key Stage 3/Year 9

22 Pupils

LEVEL W	2	3	4
LEVEL 1	9	5	4
LEVEL 2	3	3	1
LEVEL 3	1	4	9
LEVEL 4	7	5	3

Key Stage 4 and external accreditation

GCSE Mathematics

1 student entered – Grade D

Certificate of achievement

Science

6 students assessed

Pass - 2

Merit - 2

Distinction - 2

ASDAN Awards – Transition challenge

4 students assessed on 5 modules

3 students awarded 2 modules

1 student awarded 5 modules

ASDAN Awards – Towards independence

9 students assessed over 7 modules

9 students awarded 5 or more modules

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	1
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	104
Any other minority ethnic group	4

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	1	2
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: Y1 – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	24.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4.8
Average class size	6.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y1 – Y14

Total number of education support staff	54
Total aggregate hours worked per week	2009

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	3,248,662
Total expenditure	3,363,097
Expenditure per pupil	32,029
Balance brought forward from previous year	-114,435
Balance carried forward to next year	-67,331

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	106
Number of questionnaires returned	44

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	19	6	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	65	20	13	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	43	9	3	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	10	26	23	16
The teaching is good.	76	17	0	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	23	2	10	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	17	2	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	23	7	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	59	36	0	5	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	12	0	5	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	22	0	5	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	17	7	3	15

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are concerned about the amount, consistency and quality of information they receive from the school. Despite many methods of communicating with parents, the school has agreed to investigate and review its procedures in order to improve its contact with all parents. The high turnover in care staff is acknowledged by the school but it does all it can to retain staff once appointed.