



# Northampton School for Boys

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 122117  
**Local Authority** Northamptonshire  
**Inspection number** 292325  
**Inspection date** 21 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Champak Chauhan HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Billing Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Northampton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		NN1 5RT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys	<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 230240
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1098	<b>Fax number</b>	01604 258659
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	432		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Yvonne Edwards
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael Griffiths
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 March 2002		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	21 November 2006	292325

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Northampton School for Boys has specialist status for technology and is considerably larger than the average secondary school. The school admits girls into the sixth form. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and the proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average. Those identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is slightly below average. A small but significant proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils' attainment on entry at age 11 is above average. The school is currently on two sites about two miles apart because it was reorganised in 2004 from a 13-18 upper school to an 11-18 secondary. Years 7 and 8 are taught on a separate site but the imminent completion of building works on the main site will shortly enable all pupils and staff to be based together.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Northampton School for Boys is a highly successful school that is well regarded in the community. Its overall effectiveness is outstanding. Pupils' achievement is excellent and from ages 14 to 16, it is in the top 5% of schools nationally. Results in the national tests at age 14 are well above average, while the proportion of pupils attaining at least five grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations is impressively high. However, the results in French are not as high as they should be. The school has been improving its overall performance in the GCSE examinations for 11 years in succession. Across the school, standards are extremely high.

As a result of its well-deserved reputation, not just for excellence but also for its facilities, the school is heavily oversubscribed. A very large number of parents responded through the inspection questionnaire and an overwhelming majority were supportive of the school and what it does for their children. Some parents paid glowing tributes to the hard work and dedication of the staff, which they felt were often beyond the call of duty.

The success of the school is also a result of other factors. The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, and they are significant strengths of the school. The pupils are highly motivated, and their attitudes and behaviour are exemplary. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers work hard and have high expectations of all pupils. Lessons are characterised by: thorough planning for the range of needs, very good use of subject knowledge for incisive questioning, constant praise and encouragement, excellent relationships and good feedback to individuals on how to improve their work. The school's longstanding specialist status in technology has led to innovative practice in teaching and learning in the specialist subjects. The use of whiteboards and the sharing of data, for instance, were pioneered in technology and are now widely used across the school.

The quality of the curriculum and the care, guidance and support offered to pupils is outstanding. These provide all pupils with very good opportunities to succeed. The school has been very successful in challenging gifted and talented pupils through its excellent Honours programme and this work has been nationally recognised. In addition, the impressive range of extra-curricular activities broadens the pupils' learning. They are offered outstanding opportunities in music, sports and drama in which many excel and there is an exceptional programme of residential experiences abroad, including visits to China, Australia, India and many other countries. Pupils have won many national awards for their success in sports and the school has been awarded 'State Sports School of the Year' status by a national newspaper.

There is a prevailing ethos within the school that it can achieve almost anything, and senior leaders have driven this forward. As a result, high expectations strongly permeate all levels. The headteacher leads by example, insists on high standards and strives to ensure that the school is constantly improving. He is supported extremely well by the senior leaders and together they have steered the school through some potentially difficult times. Their leadership and guidance have ensured that the school has

continued to be successful. As a result, leadership and management are outstanding and the school has an excellent capacity to improve even further.

The school has undergone profound changes recently. Its reorganisation into an 11 to 18 secondary, the induction of 650 new pupils in September 2004, the appointment of significant numbers of new staff, working across two sites and the substantial building work on the main site had the potential to be very disruptive. It is a tribute to all concerned, but especially the senior leaders, that the process had been planned extremely well, that staff morale continues to be very good, and that examination results for 2006 remained high. The governing body challenges and holds the school to account well but not all curricular requirements are being met. The chair of governors works extremely hard on behalf of the school and her hard work and dedication have been appreciated by both staff and parents.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good, with some outstanding features. Students are offered a very good range of academic courses and they achieve well. Their standards in the AS examinations are markedly higher than the national average, particularly for girls. At A-level, however, the boys' performance is only slightly above the national average while the girls continue to perform significantly better than the national average. There is an exceptional programme of mentoring all students by members of staff. This ensures that potential underachievers are quickly spotted and that very few students drop out. The support and guidance provided are highly valued by students, especially in their applications for higher education. Students are offered very good opportunities to take additional responsibilities, for instance as mentors and buddies to younger pupils. Systems for communications with parents are strong. Teaching and learning are good, with outstanding features. Leadership and management are outstanding.

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

- Improve pupils' standards in French, especially in the GCSE examinations.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

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

Overall, the school's standards are outstanding, as is pupils' achievement. From ages 11 to 16, pupils make exceptional progress, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities because of the high quality of support given to them. Pupils' results in the national tests at age 14 in English, mathematics and science are much higher than average. At age 16, the proportion achieving at least five grades A\* to C was 94% in 2005 and 91% in 2006. All pupils left with at least one grade A\* to G this year and 99% left with at least five grades A\* to G. The school does extremely well with the

numbers gaining grades A\*, A and B. Test and examination results are an outstanding achievement and a tribute to all the pupils and staff concerned.

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

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, and they are significant strengths of the school. Pupils are impressively well behaved, both within classrooms and around the school. They are courteous and polite, both to adults and to each other. Their attitudes to learning are exemplary and they try their best, even when struggling with difficult concepts. Their relationships are characterised by care and concern for all. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning. This is evident through their high levels of motivation in lessons and their regular attendance at school, which is considerably better than other secondary schools nationally. Pupils are aware of adopting healthier lifestyles and many are keen to take on extra responsibilities in school. Pupils are developing very well their skills for their future economic well-being. They learn about personal finance and managing money in the citizenship and guidance programme, and also develop their commercial skills during enterprise week. They regularly raise significant sums of money for charity, for example for the treatment of leprosy abroad.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers are dedicated and hardworking, and they endeavour to meet the needs of all pupils. This enables pupils to make exceptional progress from ages 11 to 16 and to achieve very high standards. Pupils are constantly encouraged to strive for high standards in all that they do. This is summed up in the phrase used to motivate younger pupils: 'that'll do...won't do'. Pupils, in turn, respond well to the high quality of teaching and guidance offered to them. They are invariably well behaved in lessons, are highly motivated and have a yearning for learning. The teachers respond well to this and set challenging tasks for pupils who then learn something new in each lesson. Work is regularly marked and very good feedback is offered to pupils on how to improve their work. The high quality of relationships between adults and pupils, often with the good use of humour, leads to a friendly and studious learning environment.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum in the main school is outstanding and it significantly enhances learning and standards. It is broad, relevant and enables all pupils to have a good grounding in the key areas of learning. In the sixth form, students are offered a very good range of academic subjects at both AS and A-level but other provision is limited. The school offered vocational subjects in the past but these have been gradually phased out because of a decline in demand. However, students can study vocational subjects through collaborative arrangements with other providers in Northampton. The school has excellent links with outside agencies to enhance the quality of provision for all pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. There are thorough systems for the induction of new pupils and strong guidance and support for all. Pupils know whom to turn to in times of difficulties and they report that their problems are effectively dealt with by the staff. They value highly the care, guidance and support provided to them. The learning support team works effectively across the school to help pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. The progress of all pupils is systematically monitored by subject teachers who set challenging targets for pupils. The ability of parents to gain access to this and other information about their children on-line is an outstanding feature of the school's provision.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and senior leaders have ensured that the school has continued to thrive and succeed. The headteacher offers calm and authoritative leadership, mixed with care and concern for all. He has ensured that senior leaders have driven forward the agenda for school improvement and that there is a constant and restless search on how to make things better for the pupils. A key vehicle for this is the school's approach to checking the effectiveness of its work through its Quality Initiatives. Senior leaders and team leaders jointly review the effectiveness of work in a particular part of the school, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and propose solutions on how to make things better. Middle managers value this approach. Overall performance is regularly monitored but the school's self-evaluation does not routinely identify mechanisms to assess the impact of actions taken. Senior leaders have a very good day-to-day understanding of what is happening

in their areas of responsibility through the line-management structure. Problems are quickly identified and appropriate action taken to address them.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

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

As you know, the school was inspected recently and this letter summarises the main findings of the inspection. I hope many of you will find time to read the full report. I would like to thank you and some of your parents for finding the time to speak to me. Many of you spoke to me with maturity, honesty and great sincerity.

### **Strengths of the school**

Northampton School for Boys provides you with an outstanding quality of education. Your high levels of motivation, exemplary behaviour and excellent attitudes are outstanding and a credit to the school. Lessons are characterised by your politeness, your desire to learn and being courteous to each other and to adults.

Your teachers are hardworking and they teach you exceptionally well. This enables you to make excellent progress, and your results in national tests and examinations, particularly at GCSE, are outstanding. The staff also provide you with an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is outstanding and it offers you every chance to succeed. Staff give you excellent care, support and guidance. Teachers regularly check your work, show you how to improve it and you are set challenging targets. Your parents have ready access to information on how well you are doing by going on-line, and this is an important initiative.

The headteacher, other senior leaders and team leaders provide outstanding leadership and management. They regularly check on the school's work and are constantly striving to make things better for you.

### **What needs to be improved**

Standards in French are not as high as they should be, especially in GCSE examinations.

I wish all of you all the best for your future.