

Robert Pattinson School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120709
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313722
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Stephen Abbott HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1330
6th form	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Wells MBE
Headteacher	Mr S E MacFarlane
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Moor Lane North Hykeham Lincoln LN6 9AF
Telephone number	01522 882020
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Robert Pattinson School has been a specialist languages college for several years and has recently added a second specialism in science and mathematics. It has a long standing and close partnership with the nearby North Kesteven School, with which it forms the North Hykeham Sixth Form. The school has Investors in People status.

The standards of work among students joining the school are above average. The proportion of students taking free school meals is well below average at 4%, but 20% of sixth formers receive the Education Maintenance Allowance. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average. The very low proportion of students whose first language is not English includes a small number of East European origin. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is just below average but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Robert Pattinson School provides a satisfactory education with good features. It has satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money. The school's strengths include a good range of courses at Key Stage 4 and in the joint sixth form, and care, guidance and support is also good. The languages specialist status gives the school a distinctive nature and adds significantly to students' personal development. The school works well in partnership with other agencies and has a strong international dimension.

Standards are above average when students join the school and above average at age 16. Achievement is satisfactory because in recent years students have made satisfactory progress in each key stage and in the sixth form. Although the students who took GCSEs in 2007 made good progress between the ages of 11 and 16, which is reflected in the school's above average 'contextual value added' rating, closer analysis shows that this was due to the good progress they made in Key Stage 3. Their more recent progress, in Key Stage 4, was satisfactory. Likewise, in the last two years the progress of students in Key Stage 3 has also been satisfactory. There are signs that progress is now improving in Years 10 and 11 in response to newly introduced courses and stronger intervention with underachieving students. The school is therefore confident of meeting its challenging GCSE targets.

Students' personal development, including their moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development has improved and is now satisfactory. Students live safely and healthily, behave well and contribute well to the school and wider community, for example through the student council and through charitable work. Their enjoyment of school is good and their attendance is excellent. Students get along well with adults and each other, reflecting the good care, guidance and support they receive. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. In the better lessons, students are helped to understand the learning objectives and how to improve their work. However, there are inconsistencies in practice, notably affecting assessment, marking, the use of homework, and planning for the full range of students' learning needs. The assessment issues are evident in the school's own monitoring of lessons, but have not yet been addressed fully.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher sets a clear strategic direction for the school and delegates considerable responsibility to heads of department for monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning. This has some benefits but it makes it harder to ensure that the school's policies and procedures are consistently applied. The quality of improvement planning is sometimes good, but plans do not always have clear targets or success criteria. The leadership of the school's specialist provision is good. The new posts of director of studies and student welfare officer have separated academic monitoring and guidance from pastoral and welfare issues, bringing a sharper focus to each aspect. The governing body has improved its oversight of the sixth form and holds the school to account well.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. There is an open admissions policy to a good range of subjects, supported by a comprehensive enrichment programme, which includes the chance to work in the community and to help younger students in school. Teaching is good in the sixth form, helping students to develop more mature attitudes to study

and independent learning skills. Achievement is nevertheless satisfactory, because some students find the transition from GCSE too demanding, resulting in too many unclassified grades at AS level. This is a consequence of the admissions policy, which means that students are admitted with lower than average prior attainment. Standards overall are just below average. Regular interim reviews and reports provide timely and detailed feedback on progress and on what students need to do next. There is good support for entry to higher education although preparation for careers and the world of work is less well developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in Key Stage 3 to provide a stronger foundation for raising standards in Key Stage 4.
- Ensure that assessment is consistently effective, so all students receive regular and meaningful feedback that tells them how to improve.
- Improve the systems for monitoring and evaluation to ensure that: school policies, including assessment and entry to the sixth form, are consistently implemented and their effectiveness regularly evaluated; development plans include more specific and measurable targets.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is satisfactory because recent progress has been satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and there are no significant differences among minority ethnic groups. Participation and achievement in modern foreign languages are good, as befits a languages specialist college.

Students who took GCSE examinations last year sustained above average standards, except in mathematics. Their satisfactory progress in the last two years was cushioned by their good progress in Key Stage 3. Students now in Years 10 and 11 do not have this cushion: their progress in Key Stage 3 was satisfactory but below expectations. They had attained above average standards prior to joining the school at age 11 but, three years later, standards were average. The school is intervening to raise achievement for these students, especially in mathematics, where GCSE results were well below expectations in 2007, due to problems that the school has now addressed. Standards at age 16 are currently just above average, and the school's monitoring records suggest that stronger and earlier intervention is improving progress in Key Stage 4 towards a challenging target.

Nevertheless, progress was good in less than half of the lessons observed in Key Stages 3 and 4. Inconsistencies in assessment, marking and use of homework are restricting achievement in some classes. The findings on assessment are consistent with the school's own lesson observations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students demonstrate good personal development and the great majority of them enjoy their education. This is reflected in their excellent attendance. Students act safely even in the congested areas. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good, racist incidents are rare and exclusion rates are low. Most students and parents are confident that students are safe at school and that any bullying will be tackled effectively. Students know how to lead healthy lives and respond well to healthy options in the dining room. They relate well to each other and to adults. The student council plays a very active role in the life of the school.

Cultural development is good because students have many opportunities to enjoy other cultures. The school has strong international links and offers an impressive range of visits in this country and abroad. Students have good moral and social development and satisfactory spiritual development. The latter has improved since the last inspection, though more opportunities are needed to engage in personal reflection. Students are prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being. Literacy and numeracy standards are above average, but students' leadership skills, ability to work in teams and their independent learning are less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and know what is required for national tests and examinations. They plan lessons to include a motivating start, a range of student activities and time to review progress at the end. Teachers explain the focus of their lessons to students, but too often refer to what the students will do, such as completing a particular activity, rather than to what they will learn. Students relate well to teachers and respond enthusiastically when given opportunities to contribute their views and to discuss ideas in groups and with the whole class. Teaching assistants provide good support to students with learning difficulties helping them to stay focused and record their work accurately. In most lessons, teachers explain topics, give instructions and ask questions competently to provide an effective framework for learning. In these cases students listen well, stay on task and work at a good pace. However, some teachers talk for too long and this limits the time for students to work things out for themselves. Students enjoy using computers to improve the content and presentation of their work and like using the internet to research topics. However, some would benefit from shorter sessions looking at a selected range of websites, pitched at their academic level.

Students' progress is monitored and work is graded using specific assignments at the end of topics, but not all teachers regularly check routine work in books. In these cases, students do not get enough help with how to improve and work is not always well matched to their capabilities. Progress slows, particularly where classroom management is not firm enough, as students take too long to settle, or lose concentration.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum and other activities meet students' needs well. There is a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular provision. The impact of specialist languages status is seen in the high proportion of students studying one or more modern foreign languages to GCSE and the number of active international contacts. The range of courses offered in Key Stage 4 includes an alternative curriculum for students at risk of disaffection, an apprenticeship programme and an improved range of vocational courses. The changes have been particularly beneficial in helping lower attaining students to achieve. The second specialism in science and mathematics has brought improvements in provision for information and communications technology, though students still do not benefit equally in all subjects. The school provides 24 hours of teaching time each week, including less than two hours of physical education, which is below current recommendations for students aged 14 and over.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students receive good care, guidance and support. Teachers and other staff demonstrate care and concern for their students. Good transition arrangements help students settle quickly in Year 7. Procedures for child protection are securely in place through the use of the new Common Assessment Framework. Government requirements for safeguarding learners are fully met and learners' health and safety is promoted well. The directors of studies and student welfare officers provide good academic and personal support to students. Many students are aware of their learning targets but, because assessment is not consistently rigorous, they do not always know what they need to do to improve. Guidance for students about school courses and careers is satisfactory overall. However, some students are allowed to choose inappropriate sixth form courses. The learning support department has very good partnerships with external agencies and works well with parents. There is an effective team of teaching assistants so that the support provided to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is usually good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory with some good aspects. The headteacher provides calm and thoughtful leadership and a clear strategic direction for the future of the school. This is seen in the school's successful and increasing specialist college activities and in the expanding links with the community. A clear commitment to equality is evident in the school's inclusive atmosphere and the good provision for students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, as explained below, consistency of opportunity is not always achieved in practice.

The senior leadership team provides the headteacher with effective support, ensuring that the school is orderly and runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. However, senior managers are not

sufficiently involved in the focused monitoring and evaluation of work in departments. This relies primarily on self-evaluation by heads of department. Since the last inspection much has been done to develop the skills of these key staff in monitoring and evaluating work in their areas of responsibility, but there remains some variability in their effectiveness. For example, the school assessment policy is not consistently applied in some departments. There is also inconsistency between departments, both in their implementation of school policies and in the quality of their development plans. Plans are not always precise enough about what the department aims to improve or what action is planned. Others do not make it clear how the improvement will be measured or how much improvement is anticipated.

Governance is good, an improvement since the last inspection. Governors capably fulfil their strategic role in guiding the school's work and providing challenge for further improvement. The joint management and governance arrangements for the joint sixth form are effective. Financial management is good and resources are managed well. In view of the satisfactory achievement of students, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

1 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Robert Pattinson School, North Hykeham, Lincoln, LN6 9AF

I am writing to tell you about your school's recent inspection. Before I do that, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the inspection team, for your helpfulness in answering our questions and guiding us around the school. We were very impressed with the excellent Chanson de Matin CD featuring Robert Pattinson students.

We judged the school to be giving you a satisfactory education overall, with some areas of strength. We were impressed with the range of courses available to meet your needs, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The great majority of you enjoy school and your attendance is excellent. The languages specialism is giving you lots of opportunities to learn about other cultures as well as ensuring you all learn another language. Your personal development is good: you get on well with adults and each other. We saw one or two examples of unacceptable behaviour, but behaviour was good overall. We were concerned at the number of sixth formers who struggled on AS courses, but in other ways you receive good care, guidance and support. There is a lot of good work going on to improve results in Key Stage 4.

We were impressed with some aspects of the leadership and management of the school, particularly the impact of the language and science/mathematics specialisms, the work of the governors and the partnerships with other schools. However, your progress is satisfactory - you learn roughly as fast as the average for similar students in other schools. For this reason, we judged leadership and management to be satisfactory. We felt that teaching had some good features, especially in the sixth form. Overall though, we felt that teaching was satisfactory because the assessment of your work was not always as good as it might be. We suggested some areas for the school to improve. These were: to speed up your progress in Key Stage 3; to make sure that you all receive regular feedback that tells you how to improve; to make sure that school policies are followed; and to be clearer about the benefits that new ideas are supposed to achieve.

I wish you all the best for the future as your school continues to improve.

Yours sincerely Stephen Abbott HM