

PROGRESS SCHOOL

**GOUGH LANE, BAMBER BRIDGE, PRESTON,
LANCS PR5 6AQ**

Reporting Inspector: Mr R G Dyke HMI

Dates of Inspection: 6-8 July 1999

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Information about the school

Type of school:	Pupils with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour
Type of control:	Independent
Age range:	7-19
Address:	Progress School, Gough Lane, Bamber Bridge, Lancs PR5 6AQ
Telephone number:	01772 334832
Headteacher:	Mrs L Lewis
Managing director:	Mr MC Jones

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MAIN FINDINGS

The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge attainments against age-related national expectations. Judgements in the report are therefore made solely in relation to pupils' progress and capabilities.

1. Progress House School's priority is the reduction of the extremely challenging or self-injurious behaviour of its pupils. This objective is achieved in that, for most pupils, progress in this respect is satisfactory or good, in contrast to their earlier failure in other settings. The progress made by pupils in controlling their behaviour represents a significant achievement on the part of the school. These successes enable pupils to have access to education and to the community. However, pupils make unsatisfactory educational progress because of their limited time in lessons, an under-developed curriculum and the insufficient links between planning for behaviour management, education and residential activities.
2. Despite their serious behavioural difficulties, pupils' attitudes are positive when residential activities and lessons attract and sustain their attention. Too often, however, the pace of their day is slow, so that pupils spend long periods waiting between activities, and behaviour becomes more difficult to manage. There is a potential for very difficult behaviour, and it does occur on occasion; the presence of adequate numbers of staff with expertise in behaviour management means that it is usually diverted successfully or is well managed.
3. The quality of teaching within a restricted curriculum varies from very good to poor according to the effectiveness of teachers' planning and resourcing of lessons, and is too often unsatisfactory.
4. The curriculum is poor. The school has only just begun to develop its curriculum, and progress in this respect is slow. The school has no sure means of moving forward within an acceptable timescale. The behaviour management strategies, Access to Learning programme, communication programmes and subject development are only just beginning to be linked. Objectives for lessons do not focus sufficiently on the subject being taught. The planning of residential activities is insufficiently detailed and the contribution these activities make to pupils' progress is limited.
5. Detailed assessments are made of developments in pupils' behaviour, enabling the effectiveness of intervention strategies to be monitored and successes to be demonstrated. Individual education plans are at an early stage of development. The assessment and recording of pupils' educational progress is only beginning to be addressed.
6. The school provides well for the social and moral development of pupils and satisfactorily for their cultural development but there is less awareness of their spiritual development.
7. All staff contribute strongly to the welfare and guidance of the pupils. The health, safety and well being of the pupils are high priorities. Pupils are treated with respect and their dignity and privacy are safeguarded meticulously. Child protection procedures are well established, clearly documented and understood by staff. Staff support the aims and ethos of the school with commitment and energy.

8. Partnership with parents and carers is a strength of the school. Impressive efforts are made to support families, to develop parents' skills in managing their child, and to keep them informed of progress and problems. A substantial proportion of pupils' activities takes place within the community.

9. The school benefits from decisive leadership from its board of directors, who are prepared to consider and implement innovative solutions to meet pupils' highly individual needs. However, the board of directors have not fully recognised the scale, complexity and urgency of the task of developing the school's curriculum. The headteacher is rightly seeking to give the school a clearer educational direction but curriculum leadership and co-ordination are ineffective. The school development plan does not address satisfactorily the improvements required to the curriculum. The management of residential provision is satisfactory and is strongly focused on the welfare of children. On a day to day basis, most aspects of this large and complex organisation are managed well.

10. With the recent appointment of a deputy head, there is a sufficient number of teachers to deliver the current curriculum. The school is well staffed with residential care staff. Arrangements for the induction and training of newly appointed staff in the school's methods of working are very good. Training, advice and guidance for care staff in the management of pupils are also very good. However, the teachers do not have the specialist expertise to support the necessary curriculum development. They lack access to suitable professional training.

11. The nature of the educational accommodation limits the quality of pupils' experiences as rooms are small and lack specialist facilities. Residential accommodation has the advantage of being placed within the community, but its quality varies from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. Provision for sleeping-in staff is unsatisfactory. Resources are inadequate in school and in most residential houses.

12. While financial control and monitoring are exceptionally thorough, financial planning within the school development plan is weak. The school has a range of strategies to make the best use of staff; these strategies help it to operate efficiently.

13. Statutory requirements for the maintenance of attendance registers are not fully met.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

14. In order to improve the progress made by pupils and the quality of their education, the directors of the school and the headteacher should:

- provide each pupil with adequate access to learning;
- improve the quality of teaching
- establish a broad and balanced curriculum relevant to pupils' needs with a detailed scheme of work for each subject;

- accelerate the process of curriculum development;
- strengthen the links between residential activities, behaviour management strategies, Access to Learning programme, communication programmes and subjects of the National Curriculum;
- plan the residential curriculum in greater detail;
- further develop individual education plans and establish the assessment and recording of pupils' progress in all subjects;
- improve the school development plan to show the detail of curriculum development and costings for each initiative;
- develop teachers' subject knowledge and their expertise in planning the educational programmes required by the pupil group;
- improve the quality and suitability of school and residential accommodation;
- provide satisfactory resources for learning in all settings;
- ensure that statutory requirements for the maintenance of attendance registers are met.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

15. Progress School is an independent mixed day and residential school for pupils with severe learning difficulties and extremely challenging or self-injurious behaviour. The school was established in 1997 to provide a specialised educational regime with a high ratio of staff to pupils. It draws pupils from all over England and one from Scotland.

16. There are 19 pupils, 16 of whom are boys; pupils' ages range from 9-18. All have histories of failure or exclusion in their previous school placements. The school staff includes the headteacher, four teachers, a full-time language and communication therapist, a nurse, a team of 97 care staff known as 'residential educators', six house leaders, six training and support leaders and teams for administration and maintenance. A deputy headteacher has been appointed, but will not take up post until the spring term 2000. A team of five, qualified in psychology, form the psychology department, which trains and supports the large staff, collects and processes data on pupils' behavioural progress and supports the planning of pupils' individual programmes. There is a staff tutor, long experienced in this field of work, and a senior part-time member of staff with responsibility for quality assurance, formerly the headteacher of a school for pupils with similar difficulties.

17. All but two pupils are resident. Pupils are accommodated singly and in small groups in seven houses in the communities south of Preston. Each house has a team of residential educators, and one pupil is additionally supported at present by a parent. Each residential house is also used for social education and to deliver part of the behaviour management programme. There is a central school building, utilising two former detached houses to provide classrooms and offices. All the properties used by the school are leased from a local housing association.

18. The school does not close for holidays, so as to avoid disrupting learning programmes and beneficial routines, but pupils are taken on holidays by staff and parents.

19. The school's priorities are:

- to provide consistent round-the-clock seven-days-a-week support;
- to reduce and preferably eliminate pupils' dependence on drugs to control behaviour;
- to remediate behavioural blocks to educational, social and emotional development;
- to improve pupils' access to learning through developing their ability to learn;
- to teach key life skills at a level appropriate to individuals;
- to develop pupils' communication skills;
- to enable pupils to live as other children do, in houses in the community, attending school;
- to provide pupils with access to the National Curriculum as far as this is practicable;
- to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and in society;
- to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experience of adult life.

20. The basic annual fee for a 52-week placement for a residential pupil is £99,442, but additional staffing costs may be involved if pupils have exceptional needs. The funding for the majority of pupils is provided jointly by their home education authority and social services department, but some pupils' funding includes a contribution from their health authority.

Key Indicators

Attendance

Percentage of half days missed through absence for the latest reporting period (03.01.99 - 12.06.99):

	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
R-Y6 (4 to 11 years)	0.6%	0
Y7-Y11 (11 to 16 years)	11.8%	0

During the week of the inspection, one pupil was convalescing after a period of self-injurious behaviour and was unfit to attend lessons. Another pupil was away from school attending a family wedding.

Exclusions

No exclusions have been made.

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	10
Satisfactory or better	60
Less than satisfactory	40

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY THE PUPILS

Attainment and progress

The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge attainments against age-related national expectations. Judgements in the report are therefore made solely in relation to pupils' progress and capabilities.

21. The school's priority is the reduction of the extremely challenging or self-injurious behaviour of its pupils. This objective is achieved successfully in that, for

most pupils, progress in this respect is satisfactory or good, in contrast to their earlier failure in other settings. The school is able to present exceptionally detailed data demonstrating pupils' progress in such measures as occurrences of aggressive and self-injurious behaviour, the extent of periods of calm behaviour, the reduction (and, in many cases, the elimination) of behaviour-controlling medication, and the reduction in the requirement for additional staffing. There is also evidence of behavioural progress in anecdotal records kept by residential educators, from accounts of pupils' increased acceptance of social contact and from pupils' achievement of basic steps forward such as unsupported visits to their own homes for the first time in many years.

22. Some pupils respond quickly and very successfully to the school's strategies, for example showing improvements in behaviour at the same time as their drug intake is reduced. For a small number of pupils, progress in managing behaviour is slower as their extreme difficulties are more resistant to the most skilled intervention. Strenuous efforts are made by the school to overcome their problems.

23. The progress made by pupils in controlling their behaviour represents a significant achievement on the part of the school. It enables pupils to have access to the community and to education.

24. Pupils make unsatisfactory educational progress. The educational provision does not fulfil its potential to carry pupils' development further forward when barriers to progress have begun to lift. This is due to a number of factors:

- time in lessons is insufficient due to late starts, early finishes and timetabling factors;
- the curriculum has barely begun to be developed and a limited range of subjects is offered;
- the quality of teaching by teachers and residential educators is too often unsatisfactory;
- arrangements are only just being made to assess and record pupils' capabilities within subjects so as to inform planning and monitor progress.

25. Pupils' performance is transformed when lessons have a practical basis, surroundings are suitable, and staff are confident in the subject. Stereotypical behaviour ceases, pupils concentrate for longer periods, they take independent and sensible action, they appreciate and respond to the presence of other pupils and adults, and they make good progress.

26. Pupils' progress in speaking and listening is satisfactory. Good progress is made within some individual sessions, but the work is insufficiently carried through into other lessons and into the residential setting for high rates of progress to be maintained. Reading and writing skills are less well developed as the school policy and practice for literacy are at an early stage of preparation.

27. Pupils' progress in number lessons is satisfactory, but progress in other aspects of mathematics, as far as can be ascertained in the absence of records, is limited as there are few resources, insufficient time is allocated to the subject and pupils' strengths and weaknesses are not known.

28. Science is not taught and pupils' understanding of the world in this respect and their exploration of the environment is not strongly supported through other activities.

29. Pupils have made little progress with information and communication technology, despite its great potential to support many aspects of their work as they have only recently had access to a computer. Progress in physical education is satisfactory within a limited range of activities. Pupils' progress in personal, social and health education is satisfactory.

30. The progress of pupils aged 16 and over has been enhanced by a recently drafted scheme of work for some aspects of the 16-19 curriculum which is already beginning to support good progress in work related to life skills. The curriculum co-ordinator is aiming toward an appropriate nationally recognised accreditation for pupils in life skills work.

31. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in other subjects as design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music and religious education are taught little or not at all.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

32. Despite their behavioural difficulties, pupils' attitudes are positive when residential activities and lessons attract and sustain their attention. Staff put a great deal of effort into promoting pupils' positive attitudes toward others and toward work. Too often, however, in both school and residential provision, the pace of their day is slow so that pupils spend long periods waiting between activities, and behaviour becomes more difficult to manage.

33. There is a potential for very difficult behaviour, and it does occur on occasion. The presence of adequate numbers of staff with expertise in behaviour management means that it is usually diverted successfully or, when it does occur, it is well managed. During the inspection a number of minor outbursts and one major incident were seen to be handled calmly and professionally by staff working in a consistent manner, reflecting their intensive training.

34. Pupils' personal development is the focus for much of the school's planning and provision. Pupils find it difficult to relate to adults and to peers for much of the time, but improvements are clear. The ability of pupils to work alongside their peers is regarded as a significant indicator of progress. Staff observe pupils closely, seeking appropriate opportunities to make further demands upon their tolerance and willingness to co-operate.

Attendance

35. An admissions register is kept and a register of pupils' residence at the school overall. However, no register of attendance at morning and afternoon sessions is kept so that statutory requirements are not fully met. Attendance at lessons is often disrupted due to the behavioural difficulties of the pupils, but there is no detailed record of attendance to ensure that the location of all pupils is known and to support the monitoring of their progress in terms of attendance at lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

36. While the quality of teaching for some sessions and lessons is good, the quality of teaching overall by teachers and residential educators is too often unsatisfactory.
37. Although each lesson is planned on a suitable pro-forma, planning often fails to focus effectively on the subject being taught. Objectives for a mathematics lesson, for example, made no reference to mathematical skills, and planning for an art lesson made little reference to any aspirations for pupils' artistic experience or development. The planning pro-formas include a section for evaluation of the session by the teacher or residential educator. This is a valuable development, although differing levels of staff expertise and experience mean that evaluations show varying degrees of insight into the quality of lessons.
38. There is some good practice in the planning for support of behavioural programmes within lessons, but most lesson planning and teaching does not fully exploit the potential of subjects to contribute to pupils' broader development, for example in terms of receptive and expressive language and independence of action. The planning for residential activities is generally limited to naming the activity to be undertaken on the daily planner, such as "art" or "walk out".
39. The language and communication therapist is involved in teaching within the English curriculum and in team teaching, as well as in individual therapy sessions and in providing advice to teachers. However, pupils' use of language during lessons and in residential settings is not always effectively promoted by teachers and residential educators. Questioning is not used consistently or with sufficient skill to elicit effective responses from pupils.
40. Good and consistent use is made of symbol cards to make pupils aware of the content and progress of lessons. In effect these present a plan for the lesson, with elements of the lesson signified as completed by turning the cards over. The consistency of use makes the system meaningful and supportive for the pupils.
41. Some of the classrooms restrict the quality of teaching. Teachers do not have access to rooms large enough to provide richly resourced learning environments for those pupils able to tolerate and take advantage of such facilities.
42. Teachers are unable to provide a suitable continuum, quantity and variety of resources even for the very restricted range of subjects currently being taught. In lessons where pupils were given access to attractive practical resources, they responded well.
43. Good relationships between staff and pupils, and the enthusiasm of staff, enable pupils to experience success in some sessions despite adverse conditions of environment and resources.

44. Pupils' independence is not sufficiently promoted in lessons and in other settings. For example, liquid soap was put on to a pupil's hand for him when he was well capable of handling the dispenser for himself; a pupil was deterred from opening and pouring from a liquid paint container until he managed to evade supervision, open the container and put an appropriate amount of paint into his palette. In contrast, in a life skills session at lunch time in a house, with encouragement from a teacher and residential educators, pupils carried out many independent actions spontaneously as they set the table, found items in cupboards, filled and carried jugs and filled glasses. When lessons are conducted in small bare classrooms with only the materials carried in by the teacher, such opportunities are absent.

45. As pupils' capabilities in subjects other than communication skills are not assessed or recorded, teachers are unable to plan with confidence for pupils' progression. As a result, a number of objectives set for pupils to achieve during lessons were already well within their capability, so that the lessons had to move on to address activities other than those planned for, or they finished early.

The curriculum and assessment

46. The priority of bringing challenging and self-injurious behaviour under control is addressed by the Access to Learning programme. This is a detailed and extensive scheme of pre-planned sessions which is adapted by the psychologists to meet pupils' individual needs. The course is largely delivered by the residential educators, who are trained for the purpose. It is aimed at establishing and then enhancing pupils' self-control of behaviour and their response to adult direction. It includes, for example, programmes to enable pupils to make and sustain eye contact and a programme to stop a pupil constantly pulling down his bedroom curtains. Good and consistent use is made of the skills learned by pupils within the Access to Learning programme by all staff in residential and school settings.

47. Some of the goals of the programme could be supported by a richer and more stimulating academic and residential curriculum. The interdependence between the Access to Learning programme and the remainder of the curriculum has not been fully mapped. For example, pupils' absorption into interesting and attractive practical activities in both school and residential settings could contribute more strongly to supporting good behaviour.

48. The school's brochure states "The National Curriculum subjects, religious education and sex education for Key Stages 3 and 4, are all provided at an appropriately modified level". This remains an aspiration as the curriculum is poor. It is confined to aspects of English, mathematics, personal, social and health education, physical education, art and key life skills. The contribution to be made to pupils' development by a programme of sensory experiences is insufficiently considered. The time available in lessons is restricted for many pupils for a variety of reasons including limited timetabling and poor use of time. A substantial proportion of lessons is taught by residential educators who are not qualified teachers, under the guidance of teachers whose own experience and specialist expertise is limited.

49. Schemes of work are being developed for English and mathematics, but more detail is required to make these into practical documents which can guide and support

the work of the teachers and residential educators. English is confined mainly to communication skills with only very limited inclusion of early reading and writing skills. Mathematics is focused almost exclusively on number. Science, as a core subject of the National Curriculum, is not taught and pupils' understanding of the world in this respect and their exploration of the environment is not strongly supported through other activities.

50. One computer, acquired four months before the inspection, has enabled information and communication technology (ICT) lessons to be added to the curriculum for most pupils.

51. Physical education is relatively well developed; it acts as a useful vehicle for pupils' social and behavioural development and there is a planned progression of activities, including swimming. The scheme of work includes clear and practical links to other subjects, for example counting and awareness of distance in mathematics. The subject co-ordinator is aware of the potential for planning the extension of activities into the residential setting, although this has not yet begun.

52. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught in relation to the individual pupils' needs and it includes sex education which is planned at a time and with an approach which is suited to the individual. Parents and carers are fully informed about the approach to be taken. A scheme of work for PSHE is in the early stages of preparation.

53. A small number of art lessons is provided but these are limited in scope. Some pupils have music therapy sessions provided by a visiting therapist.

54. The curriculum for pupils aged 16-19 has been enhanced by a recently drafted scheme of work which adopts the Accreditation for Life and Living Skills (ALL) project materials and which will enable pupils to receive national accreditation for their achievements. A small number of older pupils attend relevant courses at local further education colleges, accompanied by staff from the school.

55. School timetables have been compiled and have been refined recently. They aim to give the pupils as varied an experience as possible. Many anomalies emerge, however. For example, on two occasions pupils repeated the same mathematics lesson within the space of two hours with different staff. The timetable fails to allow for travelling time on occasion, and some lesson periods are too long for pupils' attention spans.

56. Residential activities vary between houses and between pupils. Some pupils, for example, go horse-riding, trampolining or swimming while others go for walks or trips out in the minibus. Several pupils access a sensory play facility in Preston. There is no overall planned programme of activities. A recent scheme to involve teachers in planning and leading weekend trips was very successful but changes to the teachers' working week led to difficulties in staffing lessons. Residential educators lack the range of ideas and resources necessary to engage the pupils in suitable activities and would benefit from more guidance and training. Planning for residential activities is minimal, and much more could be done to ensure that these activities complement the school curriculum and address pupils' personal objectives. The school should consider

how to provide a 24 hour curriculum, with residential and school-based work each contributing to the other's goals.

57. Assessment is very detailed in respect of behaviour management and is a feature of the day-to-day work with the pupils. The assessments are collated and analyzed by the psychologists, providing clear evidence of progress which is often presented graphically for annual reviews and monthly monitoring meetings. This objective evidence is welcomed by parents, who feel re-assured that claims of progress are substantiated, and also that, should pupils not make progress, or even regress, the system will ensure that they are informed.

58. The assessment of educational progress in other than communication skills is only beginning to be addressed as the school experiments with checklists of attainment derived from the new schemes of work for numeracy, physical education and the 16-19 curriculum. Individual educational plans are at an early stage of development, so that some targets for pupils are too broad or do not refer to pupils' performance. Annual reviews are very detailed with respect to pupils' general and behavioural development and include reports from the whole multi-disciplinary team. These can include video material. Information about educational performance in reviews is often too generalised, making it difficult to track pupils' progress over time.

59. The school is beginning to compile Records of Achievement for pupils. These present attractive photographs of pupils engaged in activities, but an effective system of annotation is needed in order to clarify the nature and significance of the achievement being illustrated.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

60. The school provides well for the social and moral development of pupils and satisfactorily for their cultural development but there is less awareness of their spiritual development.

61. Many school and residential activities take place in the community. Trips to locations such as fast food restaurants and local shops are used to support the development of pupils' communication and self-help skills and to provide a real social context for learning. The gradual inclusion of group work as opposed to individual teaching in pupils' programmes of work draws them into a broader range of interactions. The staff report that some pupils demonstrate better social behaviour and co-operation when taught in small groups. The recent introduction of a shared break time in the morning is a good opportunity to extend social development. A wider range of play equipment in the school playground would enhance the value of this.

62. Moral development is a continual focus of attention, forming part of the behaviour management programmes through which pupils are encouraged to behave in more acceptable ways towards themselves and others. The difference between right and wrong is not easily understood by many pupils, but is constantly demonstrated and explained by staff.

63. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, supported by the many outside visits, and the school has taken realistic steps to include positive models of different cultural heritages in the material it uses.

64. Spiritual development is a difficult area for the school to address. Self-awareness and self-knowledge are quite appropriately the principal focus of development for some pupils. For more able pupils, the awareness of the feelings of others could be more strongly emphasized. The narrow curriculum means that there is no contribution to this aspect of pupils' development from religious education or from activities such as exploration and discovery in science.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

65. All staff actively promote the welfare and guidance of the pupils. Staff share a very clear focus on pupils' health, safety and general well-being; they make good relationships with the pupils and are very sensitive to their needs, which for many involves oversight on a minute-to-minute basis. Pupils are treated with respect and their dignity and privacy are safeguarded meticulously. Continual efforts are made to find ways to support the pupils and especially to divert pupils from self-injurious behaviour. Detailed individual guidelines on the management of each pupil's behaviour assist staff in taking a consistent approach. The introduction of photographs to illustrate aspects of behaviour management has added to the value of these guidelines. The presence of residential educators in school means that behavioural management strategies are carried across from residential to school settings in a consistent manner.

66. The nature of pupils' behavioural difficulties mean that physical restraint is necessary on occasion. Staff are well trained in appropriate methods, and all use of restraint is logged in detail; records are countersigned by the headteacher.

67. The admission of new pupils is well managed; the induction programme includes staff spending time in pupils' homes.

68. The atmosphere in the residential provision is relaxed and supportive. However, informal free time is not well planned. In the absence of a sufficient range and quantity of resources for pupils' choice of activities and for play, much time is, in effect, spent waiting for major events such as meals or bedtime. At these times, pupils understandably become restless and more difficult to manage, and stereotypical behaviour surfaces.

69. The three girls amongst the pupil group are placed separately in the residential houses. The good proportion of female staff supports their welfare, but the school has no formal policy or postholder to promote their interests. The wide age range of pupils and predominance of older pupils means that the school will need to consider carefully how to meet the needs of younger pupils, particularly as they achieve the potential to relate to their peer group.

70. Guidance for the management of each pupil is reviewed in detail and updated each month at the individual care and education plan (ICEP) meeting which is attended by key staff. Monitoring of behaviour is meticulous; written records are

analyzed and presented graphically by the psychologists for reporting and to guide further intervention. It is at these meetings that adjustments are agreed to the strategy for managing behaviour or to the pupils' objectives for learning. Communication about any changes to the approach for the pupil is effective; points for action are recorded and each of those present has a responsibility to inform others.

71. The school has agreed with one pupil's parents and home authority that a member of staff will sleep in the pupil's bedroom to calm panic attacks during the night. There is a plan for the phased withdrawal of the member of staff. This should be pursued urgently, as the practice is not acceptable.

72. The full-time nurse knows the medical needs of each pupil in detail and has done much to build effective relationships with doctors and dentists so that they can understand the pupils' difficulties and provide a suitable service. The nurse attends directly to pupils and also supports and trains staff to manage a range of medical procedures. Appropriate procedures are followed for the storage of medical and first-aid supplies and the administration of prescribed drugs is closely monitored.

73. Arrangements for child protection are firmly established and effective. The written guidance is clear and staff are well trained.

Partnerships with parents and the community

74. Partnership with parents and carers is a strength of the school. Impressive efforts are made to support families, to develop parents' skills in managing their child, and to keep them informed of progress and problems.

75. Parents who live at a distance from the school are kept informed by telephone calls from the headteacher at the time of their child's regular review meetings if they are unable to attend; by written reports from the meetings, and by a monthly staff/parent newsletter. Parents report that staff make spontaneous phone calls to them when pupils have had a particularly good day or made some minor breakthrough in their development. These calls are particularly valued.

76. One parent whose home is in the south of England has stayed and worked with the staff team looking after her child, effectively becoming a team member on a voluntary basis. Another parent has taken employment with the school and trained as a residential educator in order to enhance the quality of her care for her child and to increase her insight into ways of meeting his needs.

77. All parents of newly admitted children are encouraged to take the basic two-week training programme designed for new residential and teaching staff at the school, but only a limited number take up the offer as other commitments preclude time away from home.

78. The school provides two flats for parents' use, to encourage their visiting and participation in school activities.

79. School staff are sent home with pupils when necessary to assist families in managing behaviour, and on occasion they accompany parents and pupils on family holidays to provide support.

80. A substantial proportion of pupils' activities takes place within the community, and access to a range of community settings is a major target for all pupils. Some older pupils attend courses in local further education colleges.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

81. The school benefits from decisive leadership from its board of directors, who are prepared to consider and implement innovative solutions to meet pupils' highly individual needs. The directors have established a clear and positive ethos for the school; this is supported by all staff with commitment and energy. However, the board of directors have not fully recognised the scale, complexity and urgency of the task of developing the school's curriculum.

82. The directors undertake frequent reviews of procedures and policies and implement organisational changes without delay. There is an appropriate range of staff meetings. These are purposeful and the outcomes are minuted. The effectiveness of the pattern of meetings is kept under review. There is no documented overview of the pattern and purpose of meetings throughout the organisation; this would be beneficial both for further review and to inform staff.

83. The headteacher, who took up post ten months prior to the inspection, is rightly seeking to give the school a clearer educational direction, but curriculum leadership and co-ordination are ineffective, and stronger support from the directors will be necessary if improvements are to be made within an acceptable timescale. The newly qualified teaching staff, trained only in mainstream education, with a limited range of National Curriculum subject knowledge between them, do not have the necessary expertise to undertake the broad range of highly specialised curriculum development which is necessary. There are subject co-ordinators for only English, numeracy, physical education and 16-19 curriculum. Co-ordinators do not have time allocated for curriculum development. The school development plan makes reference to the improvements required to the curriculum and sets out a timescale, but does not explain how these will be achieved.

84. The management of residential provision is satisfactory and is strongly focused on the welfare of children. While each house has its own dedicated team, the central scheduling of staffing makes good use of the flexibility of the large overall staff group.

85. On a day-to-day basis, most aspects of this large and complex organisation are managed well. A well-written policies and procedures document reminds staff of the practices and expectations of the school which are explained to them during the induction process. Timetables require further refinement in order to present a clear

and concise account of activities and locations. Good use is made of mobile telephones to keep the dispersed staff aware of changes to routine and to ensure that assistance can be summoned when necessary. This has the advantage of making staff feel more confident when undertaking activities in the community, and it enables staff to be deployed more efficiently.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

86. The staff of the school is a multi-professional team which includes teachers, psychologists, a communication therapist, nurse, an administrative team, a maintenance team and residential care staff. The care staff are additionally trained by the school to support the behaviour management programme and are known as 'residential educators'. A team of six more experienced and highly trained residential educators, under the leadership of the staff development co-ordinator, forms the group of 'training and support leaders' who contribute to staff training, monitor residential staff performance and provide assistance on an immediate basis wherever it is needed. There is an appropriate structure of house leaders and senior residential educators. The school is well staffed with residential educators and care staff. The recent appointment of a small number of residential educators to school-based rather than residential posts offers potential for development of their skills in classroom support.

87. The requirement for residential educators to work a day shift, undertake sleeping-in duties and then work a further day shift should be reviewed as staff may have little or no sleep when one or more pupils have a disturbed night.

88. The number of teachers, with the appointment of the deputy head, is adequate to deliver the current curriculum and to guide the work of the residential educators, but the amount of curriculum development work required and the consequent improvements to the organisation and delivery of the curriculum will put pressure on the teachers, and their number should be kept under review.

89. The majority of senior staff are well qualified. Two senior managers have no significant formal qualification although they have long experience in this field of work. In particular, the head of care has no formal qualification and given the direct role of this post holder in managing and directing the work of others and in ensuring quality standards in care, the lack of a formal qualification is unsatisfactory. Only about one in five residential educators has qualifications relevant to the role and the majority have no formal qualifications.

90. Arrangements for the induction and training of all staff in the school's methods of working are very good. As a result, staff quickly learn to work as a team and put into practice in a consistent manner the school's principles of relating to and managing the pupils. Supervision of staff in the early stages of their work at the school is good. Psychologists, training and support leaders and house leaders have a well co-ordinated role in supervising and guiding new members of staff. The competency of residential educators in the care role is closely monitored and recorded and assessments are used to plan training requirements. Training arrangements for care staff are very good.

91. The teachers are all recently qualified. Their training has been for mainstream education. The demands of teaching pupils with such challenging and complex needs, planning and guiding the teaching role of residential educators and co-ordinating several areas of the curriculum are considerable, and the school will need to consider how to supplement the teachers' expertise and experience. The deputy head designate has greater experience in special education but will not take up her post until spring term 2000.

92. There is no formal appraisal of teachers although the headteacher has undertaken a small number of monitoring visits to classrooms, and the resultant written feedback and advice to teachers is valuable. This process should be extended to include teaching carried out by residential educators and undertaken on a regular basis. Access to professional development for the teaching staff is unsatisfactory. Support to undertake curriculum development is not available and teaching staff have few opportunities to take part in training with other professionals or to observe good practice in other special schools.

93. There is inevitably some turn-over of staff within the large staff group. This is not excessive, and the school takes steps to anticipate periods of likely departures to new jobs and to college and other courses by planning the recruitment process well in advance.

Accommodation

94. Some of the school rooms constrain the quality of teaching and learning as they are cramped, stuffy, lack storage space and have extremely harsh acoustics which make conversation and listening difficult and amplify the sudden noises made by some pupils to painfully loud levels. A range of measures to improve acoustics and to relieve the sterility of the rooms was discussed with staff.

95. There are no classrooms large enough to provide richly resourced learning environments for those pupils able to tolerate and take advantage of such facilities for group work.

96. One classroom provides a valuable model for development, as it includes a large built-in cupboard with bookshelves internally and on the inside face of the doors. When the doors are open, the cupboard forms an attractive and accessible book corner; when they are closed, resources are secure and the room is free from distractions.

97. With the exception of the small room with the computer, the room with the book corner and a room with an alcove kitchen, there are no specialist subject rooms. The alcove kitchen, cramped and poorly lit, restricts the quality of pupils' work and of adult support. However, the kitchens in the residential houses provide realistic learning environments for life-skills work. The school has begun to develop a relaxation/sensory room but this is at an early stage and the small room means that the range of facilities will be limited.

98. The bedrooms of some pupils, who are able to tolerate and look after pictures and personal possessions, are attractive and pleasant. Other pupils, despite the patient

and determined efforts of staff, are quite unable to tolerate furniture and possessions around their bedrooms. While the extremely destructive nature of some pupils has to be acknowledged, more ingenuity could be applied to the presentation of an attractive environment in the houses and in school. Some residential lounges are unnecessarily bare and shabby. Plain emulsion-painted walls in bedrooms and day rooms would benefit from more frequent repainting when surfaces are worn, and could feature, for example, painted or stencilled patterns or posters pasted on walls to relieve the sterility of many of the environments. The quality and condition of furnishing in day rooms in houses varies unduly. In one house, a playroom crowded with toys and books, with chairs and a small table, is a pleasant and interesting place for pupils to relax in when they are able to tolerate these surroundings.

99. Most houses and the school building lack displays of pupils' work and of pictures and artifacts relevant to pupils' activities. One house is making a time-line frieze depicting pupils' activities, displayed high on the lounge wall so as to be free from damage. The frieze helps to personalise the room and it provides an instant and appropriate talking point with pupils for visitors.

100. Provision for staff on sleeping-in duty is poor. The sharing of rooms and use of lounges as sleeping areas is unacceptable. In all but one house, two staff sleep-in each night; one usually sleeps in a bed in the office and the other on a mattress in the same room or in the lounge. Bathroom facilities for staff are poor in most houses although in two houses shower units are being installed to improve facilities.

101. The use of houses within residential areas supports the school's aim to provide normal living conditions for its pupils. The policy brings with it the potential for friction with neighbours when the school's activities, for example vehicular traffic and parking, impinge on their lives. When such difficulties do occur, the school is able to demonstrate that it takes appropriate and practical steps to resolve them.

Learning resources

102. Learning resources are limited in school despite recent additions of equipment and books. Staff strive to provide age-appropriate material. The range of books available in the reading corner is a valuable resource and their storage and display is ideal. Some large texts for shared reading would be useful additions for work with groups of pupils. There is only one computer and limited software for pupils' use. Some musical instruments are available, including a keyboard, but insufficient use is made of them.

103. Resources in the majority of houses are extremely limited and are regularly damaged or destroyed. Pupils need more of the durable resources which they can use freely, as well as a wider range of consumable resources. Some less durable resources to be used under close supervision in the houses would provide pupils with enjoyable experiences, for example, a keyboard or a computer.

104. Staff make good use of the community as a resource, especially local shops, cafes and leisure facilities, which give pupils valuable real-life experiences.

The efficiency of the school

105. Financial control and monitoring are exceptionally thorough. The directors are kept closely informed of financial matters and the financial performance of each house is monitored. The financial planning function of the school development plan is weak.

106. The board of directors constantly review the school's organisational policies and practice. When these are found to be less than fully effective, immediate action is taken to address any weaknesses, and the outcomes of the action are monitored.

107. The school has a range of strategies to make the best use of its staff. This includes the deployment of a small team of more experienced residential educators whose role includes responding to emergencies and unforeseen shortfalls in the staffing of the houses, thus permitting houses to function without their own individual reserve of staffing. The use of mobile telephones allows the smallest reasonable group of staff to accompany pupils into the community, as additional staff can be summoned if needed. The additional staffing appointed for most pupils on first admission is reduced as soon as possible, and the reduction is seen as a goal to be attained. These measures help the school to operate efficiently.

108. Pupils' restricted access to learning and limited educational progress reduce the efficiency of the school.

109. The school's accounts have been audited recently and are described as presenting a full and fair account of the school's finances.

Health and safety issues

110. A number of health and safety issues were raised with the school:

- fire practices should be held regularly in all premises;
- the school's general strategy to deal with pupil absconsion should be documented;
- uneven ground and poor ground surfaces around one residential house present a hazard;
- pupils' towels should not be placed over each other on radiators in bathrooms to dry;
- the use of shared fabric towels in staff toilets is not acceptable;
- one staff toilet in an internal room has no ventilation;
- some door closers in the main school building require adjustment or replacement. The school should continue to seek a source of sufficiently strong closers

for all doors in order to avoid danger and damage when these are slammed by pupils during episodes of disturbed behaviour;

- the school should consider whether safety inserts should be fitted to the hinged edge of some doors, for example in the school vestibule areas where pupils and staff gather, to avert the possibility of trapped fingers.

CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

English

111. Speaking and listening are given a high priority and most pupils make satisfactory progress. Progress is limited in some lessons because there is little new learning; pupils' skills are rehearsed and not extended. The range of attainment is from pupils who are only able to use the most basic non-verbal communication, for example, making fleeting eye contact, to those who have a restricted amount of expressive and receptive spoken language. The majority of pupils have some expressive language but many understand at only a one-word level. Many pupils are quite proficient in using a small range of non-verbal signs, some highly personalised, to support their communication.

112. Progress in reading and writing is limited because little teaching is planned to focus on these skills and use of the computer to support literacy has only just begun. Attainment in reading ranges from pupils who comprehend the 'visual schedule' of symbol cards which helps them to understand the progress of lessons and a small number who can recognise their name, some 'social sight' words and symbols, to three pupils who can read the first books from a reading scheme. Some pupils can produce marks on paper using a range of media and a very small number can make recognisable copies of letters.

113. Pupils show satisfactory or good attitudes to lessons, mainly in speaking and listening. One pupil is keen to learn to read and articulates this view frequently. Responses are usually better in group lessons than in individual sessions.

114. The quality of teaching varies from good to unsatisfactory. In a good lesson with two Year 11 boys the teacher was very clear about the response she required from each pupil. Her questions, supported by signing, were well phrased and she referred to past learning to prompt the boys' responses. The management of the pupils to take turns and to wait was good. In weaker lessons, the aims were limited, the tasks were too prolonged and the teacher failed to engage the pupils' interest or attention.

115. The curriculum for English is underdeveloped. Speaking and listening are rightly emphasised but the early stages of reading and writing are not planned within

an overall programme. A small number of pupils have read the early books in several reading schemes and they repeat these because the next books are too difficult. There is no planned programme to support progress in reading or writing, and the potential links between residential and school activities in this respect have not been exploited. The assessment of speaking and listening skills by the language and communication therapist is very good and specific recommendations are made. There is no assessment of other skills in this subject.

116. English has a co-ordinator, but currently the plans for development in the subject are unsatisfactory. Resources for English have been increased recently, but staff awareness is limited with regard to the range of material available at a level appropriate for the pupils.

Mathematics

117. Progress in mathematics is very limited as the subject has only been introduced recently and no records of pupils' strengths and weaknesses have been kept. However, progress in number lessons is usually satisfactory. Some pupils can rote count to five, recognise colours and some coins. The more able pupils can count by rote to 20, recognise coins and the value of one pound.

118. The quality of teaching varies from good to unsatisfactory. In the best lesson with a Year 11 boy, the 'visual schedule' of symbol cards worked well to enable him to understand the structure of the lesson. The teacher was successful in gaining and regaining his attention, the objectives for the lesson were appropriate, the feedback given was related to the tasks and well received by the pupil who showed increasing enjoyment and a good sense of achievement. He was well motivated and achieved the objectives of the lesson. In a less successful lesson the teacher was surprised by what the pupils already knew, and as a result the planning for the lesson was overtaken by what the pupils could already do and progress was limited.

119. The co-ordinator, appointed recently, has begun the process of developing the curriculum for mathematics using an appropriate structure which reflects the specific needs of the pupils. Further development is required which builds on this good start and includes detailed schemes of work and related assessment which records pupils' small steps of progress. Resources in the subject are limited and current development planning does not recognise the additional materials which are required.

Science

120. Science is not taught.

Information and communication technology

121. Pupils have made little progress with ICT as they have not had access to equipment. One computer was acquired for pupils' use four months prior to the inspection. Software is limited, and there are only two suitable working input devices for pupils' use. There is neither a scheme of work nor adequate resources to support a continuum of activities. Staff are just beginning to explore the potential for development, but lack the experience and specialist expertise to readily identify the

most appropriate resources and to plan for ICT to achieve its full potential in contributing to work in other subjects and to pupils' personal development.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

122. In physical education, pupils' progress is satisfactory within a restricted range of activities. Pupils' certificates for swimming represent a considerable achievement. In the absence of facilities within the school, community facilities are well used. A physical education lesson with a group of pupils in a local sports hall was very successful, producing some real effort and good responses from pupils. There is a subject co-ordinator with the necessary subject expertise. A scheme of work is being developed which plans a progression of appropriate activities, although it does not as yet indicate the contribution to be made within residential provision. An assessment checklist has been prepared. Pupils' progress is enhanced through joint planning and teaching involving the school's communication and language specialist.

123. Pupils make limited progress in art, although pupils very much enjoyed an art lesson when they were given free access to attractive materials. The subject is included on some pupils' timetables, but there is no scheme of work and planning pays little attention to pupils' artistic experience and development. There is a limited range of resources, and the classroom used lacks space, storage and display facilities and a water supply. The potential for the subject to be developed in residential provision is not fully recognised.

124. Pupils' progress in personal, social and health education was satisfactory within the small number of lessons observed and in other lessons and activities which contributed to their development in this respect. The curriculum is beginning to be planned, although staff responsibility for carrying this subject forward is unclear. Elements of the behaviour development programme contribute strongly to pupils' personal and social development, for example when an aim of the programme is to tolerate working with others. Recording is detailed in areas associated with the behavioural development programme, but otherwise, long-term progress is difficult to assess accurately.

125. The curriculum for pupils aged 16-19 has been enhanced by a recently drafted scheme of work for some of its aspects which is already beginning to support good progress in work related to life skills. The potential for planning a '24 hour curriculum' involving residential provision has been recognised but has not yet been addressed in the scheme of work. The assessment and recording of pupils' progress is being explored. The curriculum co-ordinator is aiming toward an appropriate nationally recognised accreditation for pupils in life skills work. This promises well to support and recognise progress.

126. Other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are not taught.

INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

- 20 lessons and individual teaching sessions were observed in school and in the community for most or all of the session. Other lessons were observed briefly. Plans for lessons were scrutinised;
- the management and movement of pupils in and around school was observed;
- the implementation of behavioural training programmes was observed in school and in houses;
- residential activities were observed;
- domestic routines at the beginning and end of the day, and lunchtimes, were observed in houses;
- staff meetings of various kinds were attended;
- the school's documentation including schemes of work, staff handbook, training manuals, and policy documents were scrutinised;
- inspectors looked at pupils' records and individual education plans;
- discussions were held with senior management and with staff representing all sectors of the school's work;
- a questionnaire was sent to all parents and an opportunity provided for parents to telephone the reporting inspector. A parent was interviewed in school.

Data and indicators

Pupils

Number of pupils on roll	Girls: 3; Boys: 16; Total: 19
Boarders	Girls: 3; Boys: 14; Total: 17
Number of pupils with a statement	19

Pupil numbers according to National Curriculum year groups

	Boys	Girls	Total
Year 4	0	1	1
Year 5	0	0	0
Year 6 (age 10-11)	0	0	0
Year 7	1	0	1
Year 8	1	0	1
Year 9	2	0	2
Year 10	4	0	4
Year 11 (age 15-16)	5	2	7
Year 12	0	0	0
Year 13	1	0	1
Year 14	2	0	2
Total	16	3	19

Placing authorities

Barnet, Bexley Bolton (4 pupils), Devon, Edinburgh, Greenwich, Hertfordshire, Lancashire (3 pupils), North Yorkshire, Oxfordshire, Sefton, Surrey, Telford & Wrekin, West Sussex

Staff

Number of teachers (including head): 5

Number of residential educators: 97

Number of house leaders: 6

Number of training and support leaders: 6

Number of psychologists/assistant psychologists: 5

Adult to pupil ratio: 6.3 adults per pupil

Financial data

Income	Last financial year (£) 1998/99	Forecast this financial year (£)
Basic Budget	1,591,030	2,012,721
Grants	0	0
Income from facilities and services	0	0
Donations/private funds	0	0
Other income	8,676	35,000
Total income	1,599,706	2,047,721

The annual fee for a 52 week placement for a residential pupil is £99,442. Further costs may be incurred when a pupil requires additional staffing, for example during the initial period of admission.

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires returned: 11 (58% return)

	Agree	Disagree
I am happy with the school my child attends.	11	
I think this school meets my child's special education needs.	11	
I believe that the school helps me to understand what my child is taught.	11	
I think that the school keeps me well informed about my child's progress.	9	2
I am happy with the standards of behaviour at this school.	10*	
I believe that this school helps my child have positive attitudes to school work.	10*	

I believe that this school helps my child to mix well with other children.	10*	
I believe that this school promotes the personal and social development of my child.	11	
I think that this school prepares my child for the next stage of education and training.	10*	
I feel supported by the school.	11	1
I feel that my child is safe at this school.	11	
I believe my child likes this school.	10	1**

* individual parents considered these questions inappropriate to their children's circumstances.

** one parent felt that their child would not like any school.

Parents' comments mainly referred to the school's successes and strengths, for example enabling their children to make progress socially and educationally, and helping parents to come to terms with their children's behaviour and to manage it more readily. Two of the parents felt that the school should keep them more closely informed.

One parent took advantage of the opportunity offered to all parents to speak to the reporting inspector on the telephone prior to the inspection. A parent was interviewed during the inspection. Another parent wrote a letter to the inspectors describing the school's work with her child.