

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTHEASE MANOR SCHOOL

Rodmell, Lewes

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114645

Headteacher: Roger Dennien

Reporting inspector: Mary Last
17171

Dates of inspection: 27th – 29th March 2001

Inspection number: 184741

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Independent Special School
Age range of pupils:	10 to 17 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Northeast Manor School Rodmell Nr Lewes East Sussex
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Telephone number:	01273 472915
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Cyril Mann
Date of previous inspection:	1 st – 5 th May 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Northeast Manor School is an independent school with weekly residential facilities. It is approved by the Department of Education and Employment for up to ninety-six boys and girls with specific learning difficulties. Currently, eighty-one pupils between ten and seventeen years of age are on roll: they are taught in classes of about seven. Forty-seven pupils are weekly residents, of which eleven are girls. Pupils are placed at the school from London and the south east of England with all but twelve funded by their local education authorities. They come from a wide variety of backgrounds. The majority of pupils have statements of special educational needs for specific learning difficulties and a significant number also have additional learning or behavioural difficulties. Pupils' attainments are below national expectations upon entry to the school. No pupils have English as an additional language. The school is set in a large rural campus with beautiful, well-maintained buildings which have been extended to provide well-equipped classrooms.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Northeast Manor School is a highly effective school. The standard of teaching and learning is good. Staff are totally committed to ensuring that the pupils grow in independence and ability. The pupils respond positively to the school's high expectations. They achieve well, with over a third gaining five subjects at Grade C or above in GCSE examinations. All pupils make very good progress in their personal and social development. The headteacher and management team provide very good, clear leadership to ensure the school meets its aims. They are fully involved in the life of the school through the parts they play in evening activities and regular teaching commitments. Residential pupils benefit from good quality accommodation and high levels of care. The school is, rightly, very well thought of by the parents. It provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teachers are skilled at developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem. They teach strategies which are successful in helping pupils to become responsible and independent in their learning.
- The school has high expectations of pupils. They feel challenged, well supported and enjoy their time at school.
- As they get older, pupils who have difficulties with behaviour learn to accept responsibility and understand how their actions affect others. Effective strategies for improving behaviour are consistently well used by staff.
- Parents are very supportive and happy with the work of the school.
- Arrangements for resident pupils are of high quality and have a significant impact upon their personal and academic achievements.
- The headteacher and staff rigorously review the school's work and share a positive approach to raising standards.

What could be improved

- The teaching of language and literacy skills consistently across the curriculum.
- The consistency with which pupils' learning targets are identified and communicated to parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has responded very well to the findings of the last inspection in 1995. It has addressed all the key issues and maintained the high standards of teaching and learning found then. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully introduced and these have enabled the school to meet the pupils' learning needs more effectively. However, the school continues to seek a consistent approach to defining the content and use of pupils' targets in their individual educational plans (IEPs). The school has improved the planning, monitoring and evaluation of its curriculum. As a school which is constantly seeking to raise standards, the staff and governors continue to explore improvement in the ways in which its policies are implemented and how the varying needs of all its pupils are met.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Upon admission to the school, all pupils are working below the standards expected for their age because of their specific learning difficulties. Many lack concentration, self-confidence and positive attitudes to work when they start at the school. However, soon after joining the school, pupils begin to make good gains in their learning and, by the time they are sixteen, they succeed in public examinations. Their achievements are especially good in speaking with confidence to visitors and in their maturity and self-confidence. Some younger pupils have difficulties in behaving well in lessons when they enter the school but they develop an understanding of the need to work hard after they have been in the school for a short while. Over a third of the pupils who left at the end of the last academic year achieved over five GCSE passes at Grade C or above and all did well in relation to their previous achievements and were sufficiently confident to be able to continue their studies in further education when they left Northease Manor.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils show positive attitudes and responses to work. They are nearly always willing to try hard and enjoy the tasks set in lessons. Around the school, pupils are polite and courteous and speak to visitors with interest and confidence. Some younger pupils are still learning how to settle down but older pupils show mature attitudes to work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: pupils behave well in lessons and around the school during breaks and evenings. and know that they are responsible for their own actions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: by the time they are sixteen, the pupils are confident young people who have enjoyed their school experience, are mature and communicate with ease and confidence. They enjoy opportunities to help others in lessons and in the dining room, for example, where they collect plates and serve food.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 10-11	aged 11-17
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is consistently good in all subjects and age groups and effectively meets the needs of all pupils. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. Teaching is good in fifty-five per cent of lessons and very good in a further twenty per cent. Teaching is satisfactory in the remaining twenty-five per cent. In English, mathematics and science, teaching is good with a wide range of practical and theoretical activities, which help pupils develop their understanding and skills. Teachers place a good emphasis on enabling pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour and acquire strategies which help them deal with their specific learning difficulties. The school promotes a strong emphasis on teaching language and literacy within all subjects but these principles are sometimes not fully applied by all teachers. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and pupils and teachers enjoy strong, supportive relationships, and work together happily and purposefully in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: the curriculum is well structured and enables all pupils to participate and play a full part in the life of the school. The curriculum covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum with good opportunities for pupils to study for public examinations. There is a growing awareness of, and planned emphasis upon, the use of literacy and numeracy across the school but departmental arrangements for the promotion of language are inconsistent. All pupils benefit from a good programme of extra-curricular activities. Careers education is very good and prepares pupils well for moving on to further study or work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the school provides good opportunities for pupils' social and cultural development through the wide range of tasks and materials used in classes and in evening activities. Arrangements for the pupils' spiritual development are satisfactory and addressed appropriately in assemblies. The school's focus upon moral issues is very good and clearly helps pupils distinguish right from wrong.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the school has well-established procedures for caring for the pupils whether day or resident. Pupils feel safe at school, the standards of residential care are high and recognised by parents as a strength of the school. Child protection arrangements are good. Assessment procedures are good and fully identify pupils' progress but there are some weaknesses in the consistency and use of pupils' targets in their IEPs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the headteacher and senior management team provide very clear and informed leadership to the school, are continually seeking to keep abreast of national initiatives and to raise standards. The headteacher, the bursar and the chair of governors meet regularly to discuss issues of immediate importance and to ensure that the school is working effectively to meet its aims.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good: there are sufficient skilled and knowledgeable governors to ensure that all necessary procedures are in place. A good committee structure shares tasks amongst governors and those who met inspectors are hardworking and committed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: the school has good systems for identifying its strengths and weaknesses and sets relevant targets for future development which are linked to raising standards of teaching and learning. Whilst a few aspects of work are insufficiently reviewed, the rigorous systems for identifying data on results and achievements is proving very useful in informing governors about the work of the school.
The strategic use of resources	The school has a good range of resources and very good accommodation which it uses well. There are sufficient teaching, support and care staff to ensure that the pupils are well taught and cared for. There are very good procedures for ensuring that the school makes best use of the income

	from fees with very detailed, accurate records and accounts. The school spends its money wisely.
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The school is fortunate in having very good accommodation which, together with the resources for learning, is regularly reviewed in terms of suitability and extended or renovated as necessary.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The improvement in pupils' attitudes • The progress made by their children • The friendliness of the staff • The accommodation and facilities including residential provision • The approachability and expertise of the headteacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they receive about their children's work and progress between Annual Reviews

The parents are very supportive of the school and express unanimous praise for the way in which their children are cared for and supported in their learning. They appreciate the commitment of the staff and the fact that they phone them regularly whenever they have anything to report – but not just when there is a problem. Many are surprised at how well the pupils achieve in the light of their previous negative experience of education. A minority of parents are not fully aware of the school's system for setting targets in the pupils' IEPs and, as a result, do not know what their children are learning. Inspectors agree with the views of the parents. They support all the positive features but also agree that the school's current procedures for identifying what pupils learn through their targets and communicating this information to parents are not fully effective.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Teachers are skilled at developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem. They teach strategies which are successful in helping pupils to become responsible and independent in their learning.

1. The quality of teaching in the school remains good overall, as it was at the last inspection. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects, consequently, they teach with confidence and plan interesting lessons, which motivate and stimulate the pupils. In over half of the lessons, teaching is good and, in a further two out of ten, it is very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection. In the very best lessons, teachers address the pupils' learning needs specifically and consistently. They do this by paying particular attention to their own ways of using language and speaking to the pupils, always ensuring that pupils understand through demonstration, explanation or practice. For example, in a very good physical education lesson with eleven- and twelve-year-old pupils, the teacher explained and demonstrated various ways of turning, running and passing before introducing the phrase 'moving-pass'. He then ensured pupils' active understanding through the practical activities that followed. Similarly, in a mathematics lesson with thirteen-year-old pupils, the teacher ensured their understanding by linking mathematical vocabulary, such as 'pentagon', 'hexagon', 'parallel' and 'trapezium', to the pupils' own experiences. For 'trapezium', for example, he encouraged pupils to think of the circus and they were then able to relate the shape on their worksheets to a trapeze. In this lesson, the teacher also very effectively promoted the pupils' skills of independent learning. Rather than help them himself, he paired them so that they helped each other, placing higher attaining pupils with those requiring more support. Relationships in the class were very good and the teacher's expectations high, consequently, pupils worked harmoniously together and co-operated well to achieve accurate answers. They were imaginative in using any means at their disposal to help them succeed such as referring to information printed on the side of one pupil's pencil case.

2. In high quality lessons, the teachers pay rigorous attention to the school's policy for promoting language and communication. For example, they adjust their volume, tone and vocabulary in relation to the pupils they are talking to. They do this effectively and concentrate well on the skills needed by the pupils such as phonic work, pronunciation or extending their vocabulary. Teachers often sit alongside pupils, working quietly with them on a specific skill or task. In a small minority of the lessons where teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers do not place enough emphasis on this aspect of their work. As a result, the pupils' language needs are not a systematic focus of teaching. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to reinforce the pupils' use of language in all subjects. One of the school's main aims is to encourage pupils to learn effectively in groups and teachers plan their lessons accordingly so that pupils frequently co-operate when working with others on shared tasks. In French, for example, pupils practised calling the emergency services, speaking to each other as well as to the teacher. Relationships were very good, pupils wanted to do well and tried very hard, as a result the amount of spoken French was high.

3. Teachers make very good use of time in lessons and insist that the pupils work very hard. Lessons start promptly and pupils continue to work until the very end. Teachers make good use of the last few minutes of each lesson to review what the pupils have learnt. Pupils respond positively to this initiative and are confident in saying how well they think they have achieved; this informal self-assessment helps both pupils and teachers to plan the next appropriate steps of learning and it boosts the pupils' confidence and self-esteem to know they have done well. As a further aid to their independence, older pupils often choose the

focus of their work through a good selection of courses and a wide range of after-school and evening activities. Staff make good use of these times to reinforce pupils' learning in a more informal way and may discuss books or films with them to encourage them to voice their views and opinions. Within lessons too, teachers plan for pupils to follow their individual interests and skills. For example, in a music lesson with fifteen- and sixteen-year-old pupils, each had chosen the focus of his work. One pupil was studying for an examination in drumming, one learning preliminary music reading skills on the keyboard, one picking out guitar chords to accompany an Elvis Presley song, whilst two were using computers for composition or to research into the instruments of the orchestra. In this case, the gifted musician and teacher moved around the room helping pupils individually with their skills and knowledge. He also drew upon his experience of the pupils' language needs to consistently emphasize and consolidate musical terminology. This was done diplomatically and discreetly so that the pupils reinforced their skills, use and understanding of terms such as 'key signature', 'time signature' and 'transposition'. For the latter, he asked a pupil why he thought it would be easier to play a song in the key of C rather than B flat and then helped him change the first few chords before leaving him to take responsibility for the remainder, which the pupil completed successfully. Conversation with these pupils revealed just how much they have grown in self-esteem and confidence by the time they are approaching school leaving age. They discussed their work easily and comfortably explaining what they had done and then demonstrated their practical skills on saxophone, keyboard, drums and computer. The atmosphere for learning in such a practical lesson is one of comfort, yet challenge, with pupils listening critically to each other and having the confidence to play in front of a visitor.

4. Where pupils' specific learning difficulties are particularly well addressed, it is often when studying the use of language through text in English lessons. For example, in a lesson in preparation for GCSE, some older pupils developed a good understanding of the impact made by language in factual current affairs articles. They made good use of newspapers to identify different styles of writing and to inform their arguments about the 'Greenhouse Effect' and were then able to enter into a lively discussion.

5. Teachers give freely of their time to support the pupils in lessons and at other informal times of the day. Teachers and residential staff show a great commitment to the pupils' progress and well-being and are quick to acknowledge both effort and achievement. All staff are skilled in improving pupils' attitudes to learning and many parents commented on how their children swiftly develop positive attitudes to work and study soon after entering the school. The pupils appreciate the support they receive and, as a direct result of high standards of teaching and the very good relationships they enjoy with all adults, they achieve results which exceed anything they or their parents would have expected.

The school has high expectations of pupils. They feel challenged, well supported and enjoy their time at school.

6. In conversation, and during observations with the pupils, it is evident that they are happy at Northease Manor School. Despite their problems with specific learning difficulties, even the youngest pupils in the school are eager to talk to visitors. They discuss their work politely and explain what they have been doing. One younger pupil discussed at length his interest in American wrestling with an inspector who shared his enthusiasm. He gave his views, quite logically, on how the wrestlers managed to make the whole of their fighting appear realistic, and yet never get injured. He justified his choice of favourite wrestler and clearly understood the dangers attached to the sport. The oldest pupils in the school are unanimous in their praise of the school and how it has helped them. Many remember the time when they first entered and are proud to recall the progress they have made since then. The pupils strongly feel that Northease Manor School is 'a good place to learn where no one laughs at us', where any occasional bullying is immediately dealt with very firmly and where

behaviour in general 'is better than in other schools'. Many pupils recall the unhappy times they experienced elsewhere and now enjoy the fact that staff understand their difficulties and provide them with strategies to overcome them.

7. Pupils feel that the level of challenge in lessons is 'just right'. During lessons, in prep and in the evenings, they feel well supported by staff who they feel take genuine interest in their well-being. Many value the opportunities to visit the homes of their friends in the evenings. Whilst being appreciative of all that is offered in the evenings, some reported that they would have liked more activities organised for them.

8. Whilst older pupils realise that to achieve well in public examinations, a great deal of work is required, they also feel that they receive too much homework at weekends. Some felt quite strongly that, when they see little of their families, a large amount of work limits their social opportunities. Inspectors understood this point very well but also agreed with the staff who pointed out that the homework was not only designed to help pupils achieve good grades, but also to instil a sense of purpose and self-discipline to work at home as well as at school. Meal times are enjoyable and, at supper, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the food, agreeing with inspectors that it was well cooked with relevant choices.

9. The employment of a former pupil as a residential care worker provides a positive role model for the pupils. After leaving Northease Manor, he successfully completed a college course, and now works there full-time. He too was enthusiastic about his time as a pupil and responded well to questions posed by a current pupil about how life at the school had changed. His employment at the school shows how well they can achieve after leaving.

10. By the time they are approaching school leaving age, the pupils are confident and take a pride in their achievements whether they be academic examinations or personal skills. They speak with enthusiasm about school productions, their art work and the opportunities provided for them to learn musical instruments.

11. The confidence and maturity with which the pupils behave in and around the school, the way in which they respond to visitors in classrooms and the very good relationships they have with staff are a testimony to the high standards achieved by the school in developing the pupils' personal and social skills.

As they get older, pupils who have difficulties with behaviour learn to accept responsibility and understand how their actions affect others. Effective strategies for improving behaviour are consistently well used by staff.

12. Pupils behave well in lessons and during all other activities within the school or out in the community. Many pupils enter Northease Manor with poor attitudes to learning and have difficulty with their work because they cannot concentrate or sustain their motivation. The school has high and very well-documented expectations that all pupils will do well and try to do their best. These expectations are enshrined within the pupils' experience from the time they start at the school. Teachers and residential staff commit themselves to supporting pupils from admission onwards and work extensively and intensively with them to engender positive attitudes to work and relationships. As a result, pupils very quickly learn that, when they behave well, they can work more effectively and they soon learn to take responsibility for their behaviour.

13. Nevertheless, from time to time, the school recognises that some pupils still experience difficulties dealing with their behaviour problems. The school handles these incidents effectively through the support provided by a comprehensive network of staff, centring upon each pupil's tutor and residential worker where appropriate. Teachers use tutorial lessons very effectively to remind pupils of rules and expectations. When necessary, they meet with individual pupils and the use of this private time helps the pupils see the effect of their actions on others and identify how they can improve their standards of behaviour. Where such low-key action is not successful, the school swiftly puts other, more formal, procedures into place, by using consistently applied behaviour management plans. For example, a meeting was called to discuss the ongoing unacceptable behaviour of some pupils who were giving cause for concern in lessons due to their insistence that the work was too hard. Staff were extremely well organised, first listening to results from some recent diagnostic tests, then an explanation of the implication of the results on the pupils' attitudes and achievements in classes. During discussion, it soon became clear that, although they each had some genuine difficulties with processing and following instructions, the test results clearly indicated that other tasks which they claimed to be too difficult, were clearly within their capabilities. All teachers contributed to an informed debate about the best ways to meet the pupils' needs. This well-organised meeting represented good use of staff time and culminated in action plans which identified valuable strategies to teach, support, help and monitor each pupil's progress and attitudes to learning.

14. From time to time, the school has to deal with unusual incidents, one of which occurred during the inspection. It is to the credit of the staff that the matter was resolved swiftly, with appropriate reference to the authorities, but without undue disruption to the school and other pupils. The staff involved provided very good support and counsel to the parents and pupils, emphasizing the seriousness of the pupil's actions but also offering help and further guidance.

15. As a result of these strategies and the effectiveness of the teachers' behaviour management skills in lessons, pupils develop mature attitudes and are confident and positive young people. They may not have fully conquered all their learning difficulties, but have learnt ways of managing their own behaviour and dealing with problems on a daily, and longer-term, basis.

Parents are very supportive and happy with the work of the school.

16. In all contact with parents, their overall response has been one of praise for the work of the school. During the parents' pre-inspection meeting, there was a high level of agreement that, very soon after entry to the school, pupils start to show gains in their attitudes, learning and behaviour. One parent said that within six weeks of her daughter entering the school in a very distressed state, she had established good social relationships with other pupils. Two parents described such gains as 'from duckling to swan' and 'amazing'. This immediate, focussed response to the pupils' needs upon admission is a major strength and an illustration of the school's commitment to ensuring that pupils should become confident and competent learners as soon as they are able.

17. Parents were unanimous in the meeting and in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire that standards of personal and academic achievements in the school are very high. Several gave instances of pupils who had no previous positive experience of education and who, after several successful years at Northease Manor, are preparing for public examinations – something their parents never dreamt they would do. The staff team includes members from a wide range of professions and clearly contributes positively to such success. Parents were quick to acknowledge this work, citing independent counsellors, speech therapy, educational psychology and the specific support provided for individual

pupils by all staff, as being particularly valued. The successes mentioned by parents are supported by the school's published statistics concerning the pupils' achievements in public examinations. At the end of the most recent academic year, results show that eight out of twenty pupils aged sixteen, achieved five or more GCSE passes at Grade C or above and all continued their education at colleges of further education. Lower attaining pupils also achieve well in relation to their previous attainments, and to the learning targets set for them. For example, many pupils enter the school hardly able to read and they succeed in increasing their skills so that they can read, understand and make good use of written text. The pupils' overall levels of attainment when they join the school are low, for example many are working at the two lowest levels of the National Curriculum; these examination and test results, therefore, clearly reflect hard and very effective work by teachers, support staff and pupils. They represent very good gains in learning over the time the pupils are at Northease Manor School. Parents praise the high standards of pupils' educational and personal achievements and recognise them as the major strength of the school.

18. The parents of day pupils praised the opportunities for their children to participate in evening activities at the school. They are also willing hosts to resident pupils, who spend some evenings at the homes of their friends. These flexible arrangements are very good and enable both sets of pupils to gain maximum benefit from school activities. The parents of resident pupils praised the facilities and the commitment of the staff although one or two felt that the bedrooms could be made more homely. Other parents felt that the pupils were able to personalise their rooms appropriately and inspectors' observation of the facilities supported this latter view.

19. The school provides a large amount of information about its activities which is well produced and attractive. However, whilst parents find the school welcoming and friendly, several raised concerns about the amount and frequency of information provided about pupils' progress. Inspectors support this view and details are included in a later section of this report. The parents feel that the school is continually striving to improve standards and quoted good developments in the quality of accommodation, the level of staff skills and information and communications technology: these recent improvements have helped raise standards of teaching and learning. In conclusion, the parents described the pupils as being 'challenged', 'spirited' and 'full of confidence' – descriptions which inspectors are pleased to confirm.

Arrangements for resident pupils are of high quality and have a significant impact upon their personal and academic achievements.

20. Arrangements for resident pupils are of high quality and provide safe, secure and comfortable accommodation with good quality care and support for the pupils who board from Monday to Friday. The school has improved its provision and eleven girls and thirty-six boys are currently weekly residents at the school. The recent social services report is supportive and complimentary and states that all arrangements for resident pupils meet necessary requirements. Most importantly, the pupils also report that sleeping arrangements are comfortable and that they feel secure and well cared for. The fact that many teaching staff are involved in evening activities helps to promote consistency in the management of the pupils' behaviour and achievements. Although there is a distinct and planned difference between the formality of the school and the freer, relaxed environment of the residences, the good quality care plans identify key issues for attention and action to promote pupils' maturity and responsibility. Staff know and understand the pupils well. Their consistent approach helps pupils understand the necessity of maintaining good standards of behaviour in lessons and during leisure time.

21. The provision of high quality and comfortable accommodation is a strength of the school. Parents and pupils report their satisfaction with the accommodation and the high quality residential support provided by the staff. The school has converted cottages opposite the main school gate to provide well-maintained accommodation sufficiently apart from the school to enable the resident girls to feel independent. The staff take care to stress regularly how pupils should take care when crossing the busy road and pupils feel confident in getting to the main site. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their independence, they can visit the homes of their school friends who are day pupils, make drinks in the evenings and, as they grow older, increasingly make use of local facilities. For example, in the nearby town where they use the leisure centre and benefit from many other organised trips and activities. Nevertheless, some pupils suggest that they would benefit from further opportunities to take part in sporting activities; inspectors feel the school provides an appropriate number and range of such activities and, during the inspection week, several recreational trips, including a football match took place. Despite these minor criticisms, pupils enjoy taking part in all aspects of school life. As a direct result of the experiences provided by the school, the dignity with which they are treated and the high expectations placed upon them to take responsibility for their own actions, pupils develop mature and responsible attitudes.

The headteacher and staff rigorously review the school's work and share a positive approach to raising standards.

22. The headteacher, senior management team and governors have worked efficiently and very closely together to maintain the high standards of teaching, the pupils' good academic and personal achievements and the support of the parents since the last inspection. In conversation with inspectors, governors showed a full commitment to their roles, good knowledge of areas where they hold responsibility on the governing body and an awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Together with the headteacher and senior staff, they are well placed to continue to raise standards in a school which is always seeking to respond swiftly and appropriately to its pupils' needs.

23. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully introduced several new initiatives. These include a wider choice of courses for pupils aged fourteen to sixteen, the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies and other strategies for raising standards in teaching and learning. For example, in order to meet the pupils' language and communication needs more systematically, the school has introduced a detailed, language development initiative, known as 'Language Across the Curriculum' (LAC). Each of these initiatives has helped pupils to improve their learning strategies as they absorb new ways of working out problems and coping with their individual difficulties. These developments are now regularly evaluated within the school's extended programme of classroom observations; such observations have resulted in the identification of targets for teachers so that they may both improve their own standards as well as pupils' achievements. The effectiveness of this monitoring is demonstrated by the identification, in several teachers' own targets, of the need for an increased emphasis on LAC, an area for development which features later in this report.

24. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have worked hard to instil an understanding that everyone plays an important part in maintaining high standards in the school by analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of its work. The staff are an effective team with very good relationships, they openly and frankly share their thoughts and concerns about themselves and their pupils. As a result of this strength, teachers are confident to describe incidents in lessons where things have not gone well, as well as sharing successes. Through these practices, the school is successfully developing a self-critical culture in which all adults and pupils reflect on their own experiences. They feel valued by

managers and share their views and suggestions about the future of the school and its strengths and weaknesses.

25. The senior team and heads of subject monitor the school's performance very well, and this is an area of strength. The analysis of pupils' progress and examination results and the good procedures for observing lessons have led to an increased focus upon raising standards through clear target setting. These help the school to determine a clear focus on the work ahead. The school makes good use of any surplus money from year to year to invest in planned capital projects such as buildings or equipment. Resources are deployed well to improve the quality of education for the benefit of pupils and the school succeeds in getting the best value from its use of its funds and resources. Levels of staffing are good. The teaching and residential staff are very skilled and the learning support assistants are well deployed and effective in supporting pupils' learning.

26. The senior managers and governors have high expectations of both staff and pupils and they all promote a culture in which to do well at school is something to be proud of and to aim for. Much of the school's success is a direct result of the headteacher's steady and long-term influence and is reflected in the very positive attitudes to learning and the high standards of pupils' achievements and personal development.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The teaching of language and literacy skills consistently across the curriculum.

27. As a response to the previous inspection, the school aimed to improve its methods for meeting pupils' needs more systematically by introducing a policy, guidelines and strategies for promoting higher standards in the pupils' communication and literacy skills. The policy and strategy were detailed in a document entitled 'Language Across the Curriculum' (LAC) and the current updated guidelines still act as a guide for this aspect of the teachers' work. The introduction of this initiative was accompanied by a comprehensive programme of training for all staff. Since this introduction, insufficient, further follow-up training has been provided and there are now some weaknesses in the implementation of the LAC initiative.

28. The LAC document is clearly written, well informed and useful because it provides good guidance and examples of ways in which pupils with specific learning difficulties might be helped to improve their understanding and use of language and communication skills. In the very best teaching, staff pay very good attention to these procedures and explicitly plan opportunities for pupils to develop or consolidate their language work in all lessons whatever the subject. For example, teachers ensure that work is well written on the whiteboards, and they include key vocabulary which pupils may need to understand the context of the lesson. They adjust their language to match the pupils' needs and ensure that they do not overload the pupils with too much external information such as talking, asking questions or commenting too fully whilst pupils are working.

29. The importance and implementation of these strategies are essential because the difficulties the pupils experience with learning are made more difficult when they try to concentrate on more than one thing at a time. It is clear that they learn best when their attention is focussed. In lessons, or more often parts of lessons, where this does not happen, the pupils' concentration, and, therefore, their capacity to learn, is limited. It is crucial, and expected by the school's management, that, in all lessons, staff promote this policy and provide a good role model for speaking, listening, reading and writing. Where lessons are no more than satisfactory, the lack of attention to such priorities is a main area for improvement. For example, in a science lesson, the teacher asked good questions to probe pupils' understanding, but did not give sufficient time for the pupils to think about forming their

responses, resulting in only some of them being able to answer. Similarly, in discussions during several subjects, pupils were sometimes expected to respond too quickly and therefore only make superficial comments because they had been given insufficient language processing time.

30. The quality of teachers' written presentations on the whiteboard is also inconsistent. In the best lessons, writing is well spaced, written in upper case letters only when appropriate, and pointed out to pupils as the lesson progresses. However, in other lessons, the teachers write very quickly, sometimes in upper case letters only or with very small writing. They put too much information on the board showing that they have not fully considered the problems frequently faced by pupils in tracking through many words to find the specific vocabulary they need.

31. The ways in which most teachers prepare and present worksheets and other written or printed materials, such as displays, are good. This good practice has yet to spread to all teachers' presentations. Many good displays include opportunities for pupils to think of a response or look carefully at a picture. Photographs of far northern landscapes ask pupils to look for particular features such as trees or snow lines. Several English displays include pupils' work and good examples of the use of English for particular purposes such as similes, or how to write e-mail addresses. Where teachers have taken time over such planning, the outcomes and quality of materials is good. Teaching overall within the school is good and these omissions should be seen in the context of the high standards promoted by the school. The school has a well-organised system for regularly monitoring the work of all teachers and this has been useful in setting teacher targets and identifying areas for improvement. These observations have recently included comments on inconsistencies in the implementation of the LAC initiative. Nevertheless, the school is not currently achieving its aims that all teachers should apply the procedures systematically.

The consistency with which pupils' learning targets are identified and communicated to parents.

32. All pupils have targets, specifically linked to their language and communication difficulties, which are drawn up by the language teachers in consultation with the speech and language therapist, personal tutors and other relevant staff. These targets, together with personal care targets (which form part of the resident pupils' care plans), are effective in helping pupils to tackle their particular problems and deal with their learning difficulties, thus raising their awareness of how they can become more independent. However, the content of IEPs and the ways the teachers plan to meet the pupils' individual needs differ between teachers and subject. In the best practice, targets from Annual Reviews are translated into specific methods or planned series of tasks which pupils tackle in order to extend their knowledge or skills. Teachers clearly identify exactly what the pupils should do to raise their levels of achievement. Where the content and use of the targets are less effective, the language from the Annual Review does not specify exactly what the pupil should be expected to learn before the next review. The targets are less effective, for example when they are written in such terms as 'to develop', 'to improve' or 'to achieve National Curriculum level 5'. In some subjects, teachers also set subject specific targets for groups of pupils. Where the groups are carefully identified and the work well matched to the pupils' needs, they learn well and benefit from such focussed work because they are all working at shared tasks appropriate to their abilities. However, targets vary in quality in different subjects and the school is continuing to identify effective strategies for improving them.

33. Whilst parents are, overall, supportive about the work of the school, during the pre-inspection meeting, a few expressed concerns about the amount and quality of the information made available to them. It became clear that some parents did not receive

sufficient information about the work their children are doing and the targets set for them. The school is rigorous in meeting its requirements for the Annual Review of pupils' statements. However, the information sent to parents between such reviews does not provide a full picture of the pupils' learning targets in their individual educational plans. One parent, for example, was not aware that interim targets are set between reviews and therefore had little idea of the current work her daughter was studying. Some other parents agreed with this view, whilst others were positive in their opinion that the school provides plenty of information, particularly if parents request it. However, several parents seemed surprised to learn that the school reviewed targets termly or more frequently, and two parents also commented on the same issue on their parents' questionnaire. The school stresses its commitment to communicate regularly and effectively with parents. Staff believe in the effectiveness of the school's 'open door policy' and the strategies it has in place to contact parents immediately by telephone to relay good news and issues of concern. The school has already started to review the way in which targets and other details of pupils' progress in the medium- and short-term are identified and incorporated into the pupils' work. It is also formulating a policy for systematic communication of this information to parents.

34. Despite this valid concern from a few parents, their support for the school remains very high. The school acknowledges that even though it thought its communication to be effective, the fact that even a few parents were not satisfied, means that the matter should be addressed urgently.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards even further the headteacher, staff and governors should:

Specify, regularly monitor and reinforce the expectations and requirements of staff regarding the implementation of the 'Language Across the Curriculum' document (LAC) to:

Ensure all staff carry out those requirements by training them where necessary.

Monitor the effect of such training on the quality of teaching and learning and the pupils' understanding and progress.

Share the existing good practice in the school between all staff to promote consistency.

Ensure that any professional targets relating to the LAC initiative are monitored and met.

Regularly monitor the implementation of the LAC document throughout the school to identify its impact on pupils' achievements and to identify its strengths and weaknesses.

Improve the effectiveness of Individual Educational Plans and pupils' targets by:

- ensuring consistency in the school's procedures for identifying the content and use of individual targets;
- reviewing the school's practice regularly to ensure that targets are enabling pupils to make progress;
- contacting parents to share what has been changed and to explain the implications for their children's work.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	20	55	25	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	81
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.5

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.8

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 – Number too small to report

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	11	2	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	4	6
	Girls	0	0	1
	Total	0	4	5
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	0/5	31/44	46/55
	National	35/36	23/24	30/31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	0/0	8/0	8/23
	National	21/21	23/24	23/18

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	2	4	5
	Girls	0	0	1
	Total	2	4	6
Percentage of pupils	School	15/10	32/58	40/58
	National	34/33	27/27	31/31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	0/0	8/5	8/5
	National	22/22	24/22	22/21

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	16	4	20

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	6	16	0
	Girls	2	4	0
	Total	8	20	0
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	40/6	100/100	0/5
	National	13	27.1	47.6

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36/37
	National	38

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	78
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	9	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y10 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4.45
Average class size	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	179

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	1,419,223
Total expenditure	1,706,805
Expenditure per pupil	2,107.66
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,745
Balance carried forward to next year	-264,837*

* This deficit is covered by savings on deposit.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	81
Number of questionnaires returned	42

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	24	14	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	31	5	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	41	10	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	45	5	0	13
The teaching is good.	76	21	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	26	14	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	20	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	15	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	60	33	7	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	15	3	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	20	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	68	23	3	0	8

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The parents are fulsome in their praise of the school and the levels of success achieved by their children. They particularly like the way in which the day and resident pupils mix together and the very good levels of personal development achieved by older pupils. There were only minor concerns which centred around a few parents not being absolutely sure about the process for, and the content of, their children's educational targets. Inspectors support the views of the parents that the pupils are well looked after, happy and learn in a positive and supportive environment.