

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST OAKS SPECIAL SCHOOL

Boston Spa

LEA area: Leeds

Unique reference number: 108113

Headteacher: Mr H McEwan

Reporting inspector: R B Thompson
10781

Dates of inspection: 22 – 23 May 2000

Inspection number: 188231

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Westwood Way Boston Spa Leeds
Postcode:	LS23 6DX
Telephone number:	01937 844772
Fax number:	01937 845122
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Tim Mallinson
Date of previous inspection:	May 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

West Oaks School is a large special school which caters for 123 pupils aged 2 to 19 years. All pupils have statements of special educational need. These relate to a wide spectrum of learning difficulties incorporating profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, and autistic associated complex needs and behavioural difficulties. Several pupils have additional sensory disabilities. There have been no exclusions from the school. The school takes pupils from the whole of the City of Leeds and three from North Yorkshire LEA. Three children are of Caribbean heritage, one Black African, three Indian and four of Pakistani heritage. No children have English as an additional language. 36 children (29.2%) are entitled to free school meals. One primary class is taught off site, based in a local primary school adjacent to the main school building. Several secondary pupils and many Post 16 students have some lessons off site. The pupil-teacher ratio is relatively high at one teacher to 7.3 pupils. The ratio of support staff is slightly above average for this type of school and income per pupil is slightly below average for a school of this type. Attendance is very good, with no unauthorised absences and an authorised absence of seven per cent which is below average for this type of school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

West Oaks School is a very good school. Excellent leadership, management and effectiveness of provision, ensures a very high standard of education for all pupils. The quality of teaching is consistently high and there is excellent team-work between teachers and non-teaching staff. As a result, despite a low base on entry pupils achieve well and make at least good progress. Input from the multi-disciplinary team on site also makes a significant impact on pupil progress. The school keeps each parent well informed about their child's progress, and tries hard to involve them in the work of the school. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and has the capacity to make further progress. Considering the excellent leadership and management, the very good teaching and achievement made by pupils, together with the unit cost per pupil, which is about average for this type of school, the school continues to provide very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and key staff provide excellent leadership for the school. The governing body is active and effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. All staff show a clear commitment to enable the school to improve further.
- The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. It is consistently very good and impacts positively on pupils' learning, attitudes, behaviour and personal development. Staff manage challenging behaviour extremely effectively.
- The school's work with parents is excellent.
- The effective use of information communications technology permeates, supports and enriches all areas of the curriculum.

What could be improved

- The quality and precision of targets in pupils' IEPs should consistently reflect the best practice in school.
- External accreditation should be developed for pupils at Key Stage 4 and extended for students at Post 16.
- The school should provide an area within the medical room which maintains pupils' privacy and dignity in the case of medical emergencies.

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 achieved Beacon Status in January 2000. The school has fully met all the OFSTED action plan points from the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved; and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. It is predominately very good, and occasionally excellent. The governing body now takes a more active role in the running of the school, particularly monitoring and evaluating decisions against outcomes, as well as observing and monitoring the quality of the curriculum through classroom observations. Significant appointments have been made, and training given, which have improved the quality of ICT, design and technology, religious education, music and behaviour support. There are now clear procedures in place to assess and monitor pupils' gains in learning. The school has successfully developed a bidding system to ensure income over and above its general school budget. The school achieved Investors in People Award and has recently collated and submitted a bid for Technology College status which is at present under consideration by the DfEE.

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 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key
Speaking and listening	A	A	A	A	very good A
Reading	A	A	A	A	good B
Writing	B	B	B	B	satisfactory C
Mathematics	A	A	A	A	unsatisfactory D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	A	A	poor E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

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

Pupils achieve very well throughout the school in literacy, ICT, numeracy and personal and social education. Pupils use their mathematical skills well in subjects such as physical education, food technology and music when counting or measuring. ICT skills are used well across the curriculum and enhance pupils' access to the full curriculum offered. Pupils' communication, speaking and listening skills develop very well as they progress through the school, and they use these skills effectively across the curriculum. Most pupils make good progress in meeting targets set in their IEPs.

PUPILS ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: Pupils are very positive about school. They listen to their teachers, concentrate well, and make wholehearted efforts in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: Despite there being pupils present in school with challenging behaviour the majority are attentive and polite. Within lessons they follow the instructions of their teachers and they are helpful, orderly and responsible outside the classrooms.

Personal development and relationships	Very good: They relate very positively to adults and show concern and consideration for each other. As they progress through the school they develop well and take on more personal responsibilities.
Attendance	Attendance at school is very good. Parents are committed to making sure that their children benefit from regular education and ensure that the school is informed promptly of reasons for any absence.

Pupils' attitudes to school and to work are very positive. They are eager to come to school and are generally only absent due to medical reasons. They enter classes ready to do their best, and this attitude continues through the day. Behaviour in and out of school is very good, reflecting the high quality teaching and expectations of all staff. Pupils develop their personal skills well. Older pupils often help younger pupils during lessons and at lunchtimes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very 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.

Overall the quality of teaching is very good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen. It was good or better in 92 per cent of lessons, very good or better in 63 per cent of lessons, and excellent in 12 per cent of lessons. Teaching was consistently good in science, and very good in English and mathematics, particularly in literacy and communications skills and the practical use of numeracy. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in history, physical education and music. A particular strength of teaching was the team-work between teaching and non-teaching staff, with excellent support from members of the multi-professional team, such as therapists and nurses. Many IEPs are further refined to meet individual needs with input from teachers, information technology experts and therapists.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum at all stages is effectively planned and structured. It is well supported by community and college links and extra-curricular activities including residential experiences abroad.
Provision for pupils personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils gain a good understanding of right and wrong and effectively manage their own behaviour. The school actively encourages pupil respect for the differences between people, values, beliefs and cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has clear, coherent procedures to ensure the welfare of the pupils, founded upon the staff's thorough understanding of individual pupils' needs and circumstances.

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. A strength of the curriculum is the way in which it provides challenge for all pupils. Communication skills are, appropriately, a high priority and a strength of the school. Signing, and objects of reference are used consistently well throughout the school. Provision for extra-curricular activities, such as residential experiences abroad, are used very effectively. There is a very high standard of care for all pupils. The school's personal and social

education programme is very good, and is successful in ensuring pupils take advantage of the opportunities offered to them. Teachers' and support staffs' involvement create a pleasant lunchtime for all pupils and extends the ambitious work experience programmes, educational visits and encourages independent skills tailored to individual pupils. The school makes use of the good relations the school nurse has established to include parents in the programme and to successfully cover many aspects of health and social education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school is excellent. The senior management team, inspirationally led by the headteacher, and very effectively supported by the deputy headteacher, provides management of the highest quality, and leads forward looking and effective teams.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The members of the governing body bring a wide range of valuable skills to their work. They form a committed, cohesive and exceptionally hard working and effective team.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management team and the governing body monitor and evaluate the school's performance very effectively.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources very effectively through a well-structured school development plan.

One of the main strengths of the school is the way in which senior management team operational responsibilities are organised and linked through the deputy headteacher to the headteacher. They rise to this challenge very successfully with great commitment and energy. The deputy headteacher was until recently successfully leading the school as acting headteacher.

PARENTS AND CARERS VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel comfortable approaching the school. • Parents feel their children are well taught. • Parents feel well informed about their children's progress. • Parents say their children like coming to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of work sent home.

A parents' meeting was held prior to the inspection and fourteen parents attended. Their views on the school were very positive and complementary to staff. Sixty-seven questionnaires were returned. The questionnaires were analysed and found to be very supportive of the school. The inspection team supports the very positive views of the parents. A small minority of parents had unspecified concerns regarding the amount of homework provided for their children. The inspectors found no evidence to support their concerns.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and key staff provide excellent leadership. The governing body is active and effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. All staff show a clear commitment to enable the school to improve further.

1. The leadership and management of the school is excellent. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior staff, provide management of the highest quality and lead forward looking and effective teams. Challenging school targets are set, and met, in specific areas such as management, quality of teaching, school standards, use of school data and staff development. The members of the governing body bring a wide range of valuable skills and expertise to their work and form a committed, cohesive and hard-working team. They have developed well their role in evaluating and monitoring the school's performance. Such as the way in which they monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in school through lesson observations, and the way they evaluate spending to ensure best value for money. Very good communication systems are in place throughout the school, reflecting the teamwork which is a positive feature of the school.
2. The school is very successful in securing extra funding, from a variety of sources, which has a positive effect on the school. The school uses its resources very effectively through a well-structured school development plan, to which all staff contribute.
3. Teachers, support staff, nurses and therapists, administrative staff, domestic and catering staff, site staff, and transport staff together with volunteers all fulfil their responsibilities with great commitment and energy. The school has recently achieved Beacon Status and is now being considered by the DfEE for Technology College Status. Everyone contributes to an overall team approach, which clearly shows the school's capacity to develop even further.
4. A specific example is the way in which the school creates opportunities is the way it has taken on the transport arrangements for pupils. This has had a beneficial effect on the way in which pupils arrive promptly at school with positive attitudes ready to commence work. Parents fully support this scheme as it has had benefits for them. Transport arrives punctually, and if there are any problems parents raise them with the escorts or the transport manager at school who deals with them efficiently.

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. It is consistently very good and impacts positively on pupils' learning, attitudes, behaviour and personal development. Staff manage challenging behaviour extremely effectively.

5. Overall the quality of teaching in school is very good. A strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers use questioning to check for learning and understanding and this enhances the progress that pupils make. There is a high degree of skill used by teachers when questioning pupils in the lowest attainment range, some of whom only respond by facial expression or eye contact. Objects of reference, signing and symbols, and a wide range of appropriate resources are used consistently and effectively. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) are all very skilled at interpreting pupils' responses. Pupils appreciate this, as it lessens their frustrations when they know they can be understood. Higher attaining pupils are challenged by questions testing their understanding of subjects, and given tasks to challenge their independent learning. For example, a Key Stage 3 class in their number work, when asked to carry out a number survey throughout the school, using their own initiative to find and record numerals on display boards, doors and registration numbers of cars in the car park. Pupils rise to the challenge and show their delight and sense of achievement when being stretched academically.
6. Expectations of both work and behaviour are very high, but realistic, and the aims and

objectives of lessons are set out clearly at the start of each lesson. Classroom management is very good and challenging behaviour is very well managed. With some profoundly handicapped pupils, teachers understand the need to position pupils correctly before teaching commences. This is done very efficiently to ensure no teaching time is lost in lessons. Pupils receive a high level of personal support and attention from teachers and LSAs. In most lessons pupils consolidate prior learning as well as acquiring new knowledge and skills. Relationships are very good and praise and encouragement are used well.

7. Lessons are planned very effectively. Great attention is paid to detail ensuring that work is matched to the needs of individual pupils through good use of IEPs which are used as working documents in the classroom. Teachers and LSAs have detailed knowledge of individual pupils and ensure that work is matched to individuals' abilities, such as in a Key Stage 4 music lesson with PMLD pupils, where the teacher ensured the type of instrument matched the physical ability of the pupil who played it. It was important that they could strum, beat or pluck to make the music. Through this expertise, pupils are successfully encouraged to make good progress and become independent learners. Pupils' achievement and progress are recorded and used well to inform future planning.
8. Pupils' attitudes, personal development and relationships are very good. Pupils follow the good example of the staff in treating one another with great courtesy, concern and respect. Pupils benefit from a wide range of carefully planned and well taught lessons and opportunities to participate in residential experiences, including trips to Germany, and in such as activities as horse riding and the youth club. Older pupils support younger pupils and are successfully encouraged to take responsibility. For example, during a Team Enterprise session with a visiting business adviser, Post 16 students displayed a mature responsible attitude when dealing with the complexities of profits and stock control, developing their ideas, and making clear suggestions to questions posed by both the teacher and the business adviser.
9. The management of challenging behaviour by both teaching and non-teaching staff is excellent. There are in school a number of pupils who, because of their complex behavioural and emotional difficulties and medical conditions, pose serious potential problems in and around the classrooms. Staff anticipate, and quickly defuse troublesome situations. Clear, consistent targets are set for behaviour throughout the school day, including breaks and lunchtime, and these targets are understood clearly by both staff and pupils and often managed by the pupils themselves. For example, within a group of mainly autistic pupils, one boy after taking his allotted 'time out' was very willing to return to his group and resume work. Very experienced staff handled this potentially delicate situation extremely well and this excellent handling of difficult situations is widespread throughout the school.

The school's work with parents is excellent.

10. The school makes an excellent partnership with parents, as shown in the replies contained in the questionnaire, comments received separately, and in the parents' meeting. Parents are confident of the high standards of care and education which the school provides. Very good use is made of the information passed from home to school and vice versa, and it is often referred to in the course of lessons to create a working bond between the home, families, pupils and teachers.
11. The school and parents are quick to take advantage of available aids. For example, the use of new technology to create a video link to pupils on a trip to Germany was greatly appreciated by parents who came into school to talk to and see their children benefiting from the experience abroad. High quality information is given to parents on their children's work and the school makes itself available to parents and families for support and guidance.

The effective use of information communications technology permeates, supports and enriches all areas of the curriculum.

12. Information communications technology (ICT) within West Oaks is a strength area and has clearly provided impetus for the Technology College Status application. ICT within the school is effectively co-ordinated and led across the curriculum, and is technically well developed by an ICT manager who is employed by the school. Ongoing staff development within this area is impressive and will be further enhanced by targeted New Opportunities Funding (NOF) training in Autumn 2000. The school is highly committed to developing this area of curriculum and has invested considerable resources in ICT equipment, including a dedicated ICT room with whiteboard technology, full access to a range of PCs within classrooms, digital cameras and some adaptive technology. Inspection witnessed an ICT video conference which linked parents in school with their sons and daughters on a residential experience in Germany. Technically impressive and emotionally trying for parents, but very well received and appreciated by parents and pupils. ICT supports all areas of the curriculum including accessing the Internet for résumés of musicals to support expressive arts, and menus in support of food technology.
13. Pupils are confident in their use of ICT. At Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils anticipate, attend and respond to a computer and activate cause and effect by exposure to relevant software. Pupils are observed in lessons visually tracking screen images; using a mouse or touch-screen to build or sequence an image on a monitor; and choosing activities or drinks by way of pressing a voice recorded message switch. Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4, and Post 16 students are learning and refining their skills of IT control and modelling. Students learn to communicate by a variety of means including video, telephone, and fax. Pupils and students across the school respond well to the effectively planned, stimulating and challenging activities that are age-appropriate and have clear function and purpose.
14. The school has recognised and highlights in its Technology College Status application the concerns currently held that a small minority pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) have limited means to access appropriate adaptive and augmentative technology. The inspection supports this assertion. In order for pupils with PMLD to access more effectively the curriculum the school would benefit from external advice and support in terms of assessment of communication need and procurement of provision. The school acknowledges the requirement for increased support and is seeking to actively network with other schools of national repute in this specialised field. The New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training in ICT, which is to commence at West Oaks in September 2000, will also serve to increase staff skills in this area of technology development. The school Technology College Status application details plans to refurbish the interactive light and sound areas and provide equal opportunities for all pupils in the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

The quality and precision of targets in pupils' IEPs should consistently reflect the best practice currently within the school.

15. The school has clear and coherent procedures in place to set targets for all pupils. However, in a small minority of cases, the quality and precision of targets does not always reflect the best practice within the school. On occasions, they are not written in terms that make it clear what pupils will learn. As a result, the effectiveness of these procedures for monitoring some pupils' academic progress, and personal and social development is sometimes difficult to assess accurately.

External accreditation should be developed for pupils at Key Stage 4 and extended for students at Post 16.

16. There are in place school-based schemes and modules, which together provide a broad, balanced and highly relevant curriculum for pupils of secondary age. It is clear that pupils benefit from the curriculum taught, particularly in the areas of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and sex education. The curriculum offered is of good quality but fails to take full advantage of the potential opportunities during the transition phase into post-school placement. Formally accredited courses are valued both by further education colleges and potential employers. Such courses, by providing external recognition, would serve also to further raise pupil self-esteem and sustain motivation. Although the school offers several NEAB courses at Post 16, for higher attaining students, the adoption of more accredited courses by an approved awarding body, which complements those offered by college links, would strengthen and streamline the curriculum at Key Stage 4.

The school should provide an area within the medical room which maintains pupils' privacy and dignity in the case of medical emergencies.

17. The school has difficulty maintaining pupils' dignity and privacy in the event of medical emergency. It is inappropriate that there is currently no bed in the medical room, with the result that pupils who are ill, or suffering the effects of medication, have to rest and recover in the classroom or in one of the communal areas, impinging upon their privacy and dignity.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

18. In order to further improve the high quality of education provided for pupils, the governing body, headteacher and SMT should:
- ensure that all targets in pupils' IEPs consistently reflect the best practice within the school and clearly identify what the pupil will learn; (paragraph 15)
 - further develop appropriate external accreditation for Key Stage 4 pupils and extend accreditation for students at Post 16; (paragraph 16)
 - provide appropriate facilities in the medical room to ensure that those pupils who need to can rest in quiet surroundings and recover with dignity. (paragraph 17)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12	51	29	8	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	123
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	36

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	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7	School data	0

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

EXTERNAL ACCREDITATION:

AQA/NEAB

	Module	Number of students	% pass rate
Summer 1999	Travel	4	100%
	Shopping	4	100%
	Handling money	4	100%
Summer 2000	Travel	4	100%
	Shopping	4	100%
	Handling money	4	100%

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	100
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	0	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: YR – Y 13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.3
Average class size	7.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YR – Y 13

Total number of education support staff	34
Total aggregate hours worked per week	917

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,240,056
Total expenditure	1,281,577
Expenditure per pupil	9,237
Balance brought forward from previous year	112,586
Balance carried forward to next year	71,065

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	125
Number of questionnaires returned	67

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	84	15	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	36	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	39	3	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	34	11	7	10
The teaching is good.	79	18	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	79	15	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	12	1	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	24	6	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	69	23	6	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	70	24	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	33	6	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	30	14	0	9