

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **MILL WATER SCHOOL**

Littletown, Honiton, Devon

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113635

Headteacher: Mrs. Sandie Leathlean

Reporting inspector: Ms. Sue Etheridge  
8810

Dates of inspection: 31<sup>st</sup> January 2000 – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2000

Inspection number: 188551

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Special – severe learning difficulties

School category: Community special

Age range of pupils: 3 - 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Honiton Bottom Road  
Littleton  
Honiton  
Devon

Postcode: EX14 2ER

Telephone number: 01404 43454

Fax number: 01404 43402

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. John Barlow

Date of previous inspection: June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

<b>Team members</b>	
Sue Etheridge	<i>Registered inspector</i>
Arthur Aldridge	<i>Lay inspector</i>
Anthony Hill	<i>Team inspector</i>
Gillian Lawson	<i>Team inspector</i>

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants  
Old Garden House  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane  
London  
SW11 3AD*

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>1</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>14</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Mill Water is a mixed, day, community special school, providing for 96 pupils aged from three to nineteen. Pupils all have statements of special educational need, and very few are from ethnic minorities. Over half the pupils have severe learning difficulties, roughly a quarter have autism, and the remaining pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties, or moderate learning difficulties. A very small number speak English as an additional language. Since the last inspection, numbers of pupils with autism have increased significantly.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Despite having too few staff, and unsuitable accommodation, the school provides a very good quality of education. The teaching, which is very good, enables all pupils to achieve high standards. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good, and ensures that the school is continually improving. The cost of educating pupils at Mill Water is very low when compared with similar schools nationally; it is low even when compared with all special schools nationally. The school therefore provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching is very good. Good relationships, teamwork, and flexibility of staff promote high standards, and contribute to a very positive ethos in the school.
- By the time they leave school, pupils make very good progress against their individual targets, and their personal development is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership
- An outstanding programme of residential, and lunchtime clubs, add great richness to the curriculum of secondary pupils.

#### **What could be improved**

- There are too few staff for the numbers and range of learning difficulties of the pupils.
- The accommodation does not meet the curricular needs of pupils. It compromises their health, safety and dignity, although staff work hard to compensate for this.
- Although governors are very supportive, they have yet to develop fully their role in holding the school to account.
- Monitoring of the curriculum rests with too few staff, and subject co-ordinators, who are willing and able, need to take their responsibility for this key task.

*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

There has been good improvement since the school was last inspected in June 1996. Good quality schemes of work have been developed, and assessment and recording have been streamlined. Financial planning is now clearly linked to the school development plan, and budget monitoring is clearly established. There is better staffing for administrative purposes. Registers are now marked correctly. Staff have successfully introduced the literacy and numeracy strategies. There has been very good improvement in provision for information technology, and standards in information technology have improved. In matters over which the school has less control there has been little improvement. Despite the school's best efforts, there has been a decrease in numbers of teaching and support staff. There has been modest improvement in the accommodation, but this remains unsuitable. Understaffing and the defects of the accommodation both adversely affect the school's capacity to improve further.

## STANDARDS

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

<b>Progress in:</b>	<b>by age 19</b>	<b>Key</b>	
speaking and listening	A	<i>very good</i>	A
reading	A	<i>good</i>	B
writing	A	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
mathematics	A	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D
personal, social and health education	A	<i>poor</i>	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A		

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

The school has set realistic targets for pupils' achievement by July 2000, and progress towards these is carefully monitored. Pupils now achieve high standards in information technology, and each pupil is set a target in this area on his or her individual educational plan.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils really enjoy school and approach lessons and extra-curricular clubs with the same enthusiasm for learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in class, around the school, and in the wider community. There have been no exclusions in the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Outstanding. During their school lives pupils grow in confidence, self-esteem, and independence. They care for one another, the staff, and the school environment. There is evident mutual respect.
Attendance	Good. There is no unauthorised absence. Pupils arrive punctually, and lessons start promptly.

Their attendance, very good attitudes and behaviour help pupils to achieve high standards. The quality of relationships in the school contributes strongly to its very positive learning environment.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Of the 40 lessons seen, over half (52.5 per cent) were very good or excellent, two lessons were satisfactory, and the rest were good. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are implementing the suitably modified literacy and numeracy strategies very effectively, and are now using electronic communication aids to support pupils who need these. The teaching of information technology has also improved since the school was last inspected, and computers are now used well to help pupils learn.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. For secondary pupils, opportunities are restricted by the accommodation, but the school provides an excellent range of learning experiences through community links, residentials, and extra-curricular clubs. Statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. There is no additional funding for this. The generally good use of signing helps pupils to learn English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Arrangements for developing pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are very good. Provision for cultural development is good. The curriculum does not promote awareness of Britain's many different cultures as strongly as other aspects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements for child protection are sound, and staff care very well for pupils. A number of minor health and safety concerns were brought to the attention of the headteacher. Most of these are related to the state of the accommodation, including lack of space and need for repairs.

All pupils receive certificates from the school for their achievements, and the school is developing externally recognised accreditation for older pupils. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of all pupils, and increasing numbers of pupils with autism are successfully catered for. There is a marked improvement in the setting of precise targets in the most recent individual education plans.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Leadership is characterised by clarity of purpose, high expectations, and collaborative working towards agreed priorities. Leadership by example is a strong feature.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are supportive and take a close interest in the school. They are well aware of its strengths. They are active in checking the success of their health and safety policy, but need to extend this to other areas of the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Pupils' progress is monitored very well, appraisal is in place, and the headteacher monitors teaching. All teachers have a target for developing their information technology skills. Monitoring by some co-ordinators is underdeveloped.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its limited staffing and accommodation. Excellent use is made of the wider community, locally, nationally, and internationally.

The lack of success criteria in the school development plan makes it difficult for the school to evaluate developments, or to help measure cost effectiveness. The school recognises that it does not yet apply all the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Seven parents attended the parents' meeting, and 47 returned questionnaires.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Children like school.</li> <li>• Most parents find the school approachable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few feel that their children do not get the right amount of homework.</li> <li>• A few feel that the school does not work closely with parents.</li> <li>• A few consider that the school does not have enough resources.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views of the school. The school has a reasonable homework policy, and this is implemented well. Parents have opportunities to be closely involved in the school's work. Inspectors find that the school does not have sufficient staff, and that the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Teaching is very good. Good relationships, teamwork and flexibility of staff promote high standards and contribute to a very positive ethos in the school.**

1. Teaching is very good or excellent in over half of lessons, and it is at least satisfactory, and mostly good, in the others. Teachers know their pupils very well. Thorough and accurate assessment, coupled with secure knowledge of the subjects they teach, enables teachers to plan suitable tasks for the wide range of pupils' levels of attainment. Planning developed since the last inspection has promoted a 'can do' philosophy, and encouraged teachers to focus on the outcomes they want pupils to achieve, as well as how best to promote these. Good relationships and effective teamwork allow for greater flexibility, which means that teachers can group pupils in a variety of ways, and this is very effective in supporting pupils' progress. These characteristics are evident in the organisation and teaching of literacy and numeracy across the school. Teaching, support staff, and therapists work very well together in classes. For example, in the multi-sensory area, support staff, speech therapists and physiotherapists work very well together to meet pupils' complex needs. Pupils in the multi-sensory area are taught mostly by support staff, although planning and detailed recording is undertaken jointly with teaching staff. This arrangement works very well. Support staff fulfil a very important role in leading small group work during literacy and numeracy sessions. On occasions when there are a number of teaching and support staff together, such as during the seniors' circle time, it is clear that all staff have a shared understanding of their roles, and are able to lead or support as the pupils' needs demand.

2. Staff are successfully implementing suitably modified versions of the literacy and numeracy strategies across the school. For example, in the class for the oldest pupils, there is a daily mental maths session, when pupils are put through their paces and encouraged to 'stretch' their brains. They are kept thinking throughout, as the questions are carefully framed to provide challenges for different levels of ability. Reinforcement of literacy, numeracy and information technology skills is carefully woven into other lessons. For example, pupils in food technology may need to 'double' quantities, and younger pupils are encouraged to count cups and biscuits at snack time. Opportunities for speaking and listening abound, and teachers are quick to encourage good habits. 'Can we look at P., then he will know we are listening', one suggested during group work. Subject-specific vocabulary is used very well, and this helps pupils to become familiar with, and to use, new words. The use of information technology to reinforce learning in other subjects occurs in many lessons, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection.

3. Staff have high expectations of work and behaviour. They are supportive, without encouraging over-dependence. When teaching pupils with complex needs, they skilfully withdraw physical prompts, enabling pupils to exercise independence. When pupils are trying hard to find an answer, staff will prompt, rather than tell, and pupils are given time to work things out themselves. Pupils are enabled to experience genuine success. Staff are quick to seize opportunities for reminding pupils about acceptable behaviour, such as

pointing out 'the polite way' of asking someone to move. Pupils' behaviour is managed skilfully. Staff are firm, patient, and rarely need to raise their voices. A few pupils have challenging behaviour, and these pupils have suitable behaviour management plans, which are implemented faithfully. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect, and contribute strongly to the positive ethos in the school.

4. Staff are particularly successful in engaging pupils, who appear to anticipate that they will enjoy lessons. Teaching is often lively and full of enthusiasm, which is contagious. In the best lessons, teachers are careful to explain the objectives to pupils, and consistently use signing to support pupils' understanding. They give good feedback to pupils, such as 'Good, you've remembered what I said last week!' Very effective use is made of plenary sessions, when pupils are able to review what they have learned, and how well they have done. For those pupils who find it difficult to leave an enjoyable task, signing helps them to accept that the task is 'finished'. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, often with several changes of activity, and thus pupils' motivation and interest is maintained throughout. Very occasionally, pupils are not as productively engaged as they might be, for example when teachers work with groups that are too large.

**By the time they leave school, pupils make very good progress against their individual targets, and their personal development is outstanding.**

5. The oldest pupils of all abilities make very good progress against their individual targets. Those that have more complex needs make very good gains in communication. They show more consistent levels of communication, and make their likes and dislikes known by using a range of sounds and gestures; some recognise and make Makaton signs, such as, *dinner* and *cup*. They respond to stories read aloud, some can turn the pages of a book, and others will eye-point to symbols, and reach for objects. Higher attaining pupils make gains in confidence, and in the extent of their speaking. They use a wider vocabulary and handle questions well, answering them fully. Many will engage in sensible conversation with adults they do not know well, enquiring about their jobs, families and preferences. They show genuine interest in what is said, and link answers to their subsequent questions. Pupils' reading skills develop very well in social contexts. Higher attaining pupils read social signs, simple instructions, and recipes. The highest attainers read avidly for pleasure, use a library with confidence, and select stories, poems and non-fiction. They read aloud clearly and with expression, and can find information from reference books. Pupils continue to develop their writing skills, and write for a wide range of social purposes. Their handwriting develops in formation and style, and they extend their ability to use computers for writing. Lower attaining pupils are supported in producing text with symbols on a computer, for example when they compile a booklet about themselves. Higher attaining pupils improve the accuracy of their spelling, using a dictionary to check it. They write accounts of their activities, keep a log of their work experience, and practise completing application forms, and writing letters and addresses. They go into print when they produce a newsletter about school activities.

6. Pupils make very good progress against their mathematical targets. Those with more complex difficulties make gains in development of spatial awareness. For example, they explore objects by using their senses, by becoming more aware of shapes and textures. They work with two- and three-dimensional shapes, some building towers using simple construction games. They develop a greater awareness of time and money as they visit shops in the community. Higher attaining pupils increase their skills in mental mathematics. Many count in twos, fives and tens. They explore and record number patterns, and make predictions. They make best progress in using mathematics, such as estimating, calculating change, accurate weighing, measuring, timing, and understanding mathematical vocabulary.

7. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. It is strongly supported by the well-planned programme of personal and social education, by individual targets set in individual educational plans, and by the rich opportunities for personal development provided through residential programmes and extra-curricular activities. Those with more complex difficulties begin to identify peers who are friends, by selecting them to dance with, for example. They become more independent in feeding, drinking and personal care. Some improve their mobility and make quite definite choices, such as manoeuvring themselves into a room and selecting a switch to activate a foot spa. They clearly understand cause and effect in these contexts, and are empowered to exercise control. As higher attaining pupils move through the school they take increasing responsibility and develop greater independence. They develop friendships and become more self-assured. Their self-esteem is powerfully supported by work experience, integration at a local community college, residential experiences, and the link course at a local agricultural college. Through their careers work, pupils develop a heightened self-awareness. They come to know their strengths and weaknesses, and what these mean in vocational contexts. Pupils are encouraged to attend their own annual reviews, and they develop an awareness of their own learning. Through the personal, social and health education programme, older pupils extend their interest in news to current affairs. They consider the moral implications of what they hear, and how they feel about world events. Pupils leave school as confident, competent young adults, many going on to further education.

**Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.**

8. Pupils behave very well in class, and around the school. Classes often combine and then divide into groups, and pupils are always sensible, moving quickly and quietly from one lesson to another. Despite the cramped accommodation, there is no damage to the fabric of the building or the wall displays. Pupils respect one another, and other adults, and are polite and friendly. Lunchtimes are pleasant and pupils are well mannered. There is family seating for younger pupils, and older ones collect their own food and sit with friends. Pupils with more complex needs join their peers, and are welcomed and supported as friends. Although some pupils have challenging behaviour, this is well managed, and there is very little disruption to lessons. In discussions, pupils said that there is no bullying at the school; they were quite clear about what constitutes bullying, and what they should do if they encountered it.

9. In lessons, pupils are keen to learn. Although they have to work very close to one another, they take this in their stride. They are considerate, and help one another. Pupils show interest in what others have to say, and give one another time to think, even though they are keen to answer questions themselves. They take care with resources, such as instruments, and share equitably. In many lessons, pupils work together, in pairs, groups, or teams, and they do this well. They take turns, support each other, and spontaneously applaud one another's success. As they get older, pupils show an increasing capacity to learn independently. For instance, in one lesson, pupils were using the Internet to search for pictures of Tiverton in Victorian times. Others find information from reference books. Pupils willingly help to clear away resources at the end of lessons.

**The headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership.**

10. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very effective, and has resulted in considerable improvement since the last inspection. Clear priorities have been set, and staff have been very well supported in acquiring new skills, and in carrying out the necessary work. The headteacher sets high standards, and has high expectations of staff. For example, in the development of schemes of work, the headteacher established a very efficient means of producing these by using information technology, and this has also provided a means of streamlining the planning and assessment process. External support was used to demonstrate the system and to train staff, who now have access to a networked system of computers for planning purposes. Good teamwork amongst staff supported the development process well. The quality of planning is very good. The identification of 'Can do' statements for assessment purposes has engendered a 'Can do' philosophy in the school. The headteacher monitors planning, and this is successful in ensuring that teachers plan activities that will support the intended outcomes. Target setting in pupils' individual educational plans is now much sharper and pupils' progress is now much clearer, and easier to monitor.

11. Since the last inspection, other whole school developments have been very well led by key staff. The school has successfully implemented modified versions of the literacy and numeracy strategies, and there has been very good improvement in the provision for information and communication technology. The part-time information and communication technology co-ordinator, appointed since the last inspection, has made a substantial impact on staff practice. Pupils now make very good progress against the targets set in their individual education programmes. Staff have information and communication technology targets to meet as well, and they are well supported in this. The skills and confidence of staff have increased. Pupils who need electronic communication aids have been supplied with them, and advice and expertise have been sought from the school's speech therapist, and outside agencies, to ensure that the most suitable aids have been provided.

**An outstanding programme of residentials, and lunchtime clubs, add great richness to the curriculum for secondary pupils.**

12. Despite the restrictions imposed by the accommodation, the school provides a good range of lunchtime clubs for older pupils. These include art, games, music and cards. During the inspection, pupils in the art group, led by two classroom assistants, were creating colourful clowns' faces denoting a happy mood, because that was how they felt that day. There was much awe and wonder, good social development, particularly for pupils with autism, and some exchange of ideas about why people do feel happy. The music club was a disciplined affair with some serious learning taking place. During one session pupils were learning the fingering for different notes on the recorder, and then playing them to match the notation and timing from sheet music. At the other session they were practising a piece of music called 'The Water Cycle', which they were to play in an audition to gain a place in the Youth Orchestra and play at the Albert Hall. Apart from the discipline and team work, there was a spiritual atmosphere as they translated the mood of the piece, which represented the changes in the weather. This was good science too, as they followed the rain through a storm, to be finally evaporated back to its place in the clouds by the heat of the sun.

13. From Year 7 onwards, the school has planned a six-year rolling programme for residential experiences in which all pupils participate. The programme is a particular strength of the school, and the school raises all the necessary funding for it. During the first two years pupils face the challenging experience of living on board, and sailing a tall ship. They are all given the opportunity to gain the Royal Yachting Association's competent crew certificate, and a number of them achieve this. This means that they are able to tie, and recognise the use of, sailors' knots; they learn the names of the sails, and how to hoist and stow them. Pupils also read nautical maps, helm the boat, and bring it home to port. The cramped living conditions test and refine their social skills; facing up to the elements, and the awesome power of the sea, makes heavy demands upon their courage.

14. Pupils also visit two different cities, examples being Cardiff and Bath, and investigate the cultural differences of each. This opens windows on the multicultural influences of city life, which are not immediately obvious in the rural surroundings in which they live. Older students prepare themselves for the Ten Tors challenge. This is another physical and mental endeavour which demands training throughout the year. The emphasis is on teamwork. Training culminates in a week's youth hostelling, and during the event pupils camp out on the moors. The army plans and runs this challenge, and all their disciplines apply. There is accreditation in the form of bronze, silver and gold medal awards. Year 10 ends with a week's residence in student accommodation at a local agricultural college which offers vocational experiences, and an opportunity to work alongside, and socialise with, pupils' mainstream peers.

15. The oldest students prepare for a rather special visit to France, to different places on different occasions. In one year the students visit the World War Two landing beaches of the Texas Rangers, and their cemetery at Omaha. They were very moved by this experience, and this was reflected in their drawings of the scene. At another time they visit the British landing site and make comparisons. There is a visit to Bayeux, to see the tapestry and learn what it represents, and then a visit to the cathedral to review its history and its links with kings and queens of England. Students greatly appreciated the peace and beauty of Monet's garden, and once more it was reflected in the colour drawings they produced, especially those

of the lily ponds. So that they could be a real part of an act of worship in the cathedral, students learned to say in French the Lord's Prayer, whilst non-verbal students were able to sign. Finally, students treated themselves. To conclude their trip there was a meal in a pavement cafe, which they paid for using funds they had raised in their enterprise activities. The schools' vision for this six-year programme is to enable all students, when they leave school, to walk as tall as the masts on the ships they have sailed, having experienced and conquered a series of extraordinary challenges. Most pupils say they will be back for a visit; not many do, and the school takes this as a compliment!

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **There are too few staff for the numbers and range of learning difficulties of the pupils.**

16. Staffing was identified as a key issue for action at the last inspection. Since then, pupil numbers have increased slightly, and the school has admitted far more pupils with autism, whose needs demand more favourable staffing levels than most other types of special educational need. When compared with severe learning difficulties (SLD) schools nationally, Mill Water has a very high pupil-teacher ratio, and this takes no account of the significant numbers of pupils with autism. When compared with severe learning difficulties schools, it also has low numbers of support staff. In real terms, staffing is worse than it was at the last inspection. Only the sheer professionalism and hard work of staff ensure that standards are not affected.

17. However, low staffing levels adversely affect the school's capacity for improvement. For example, at present, staff are very creative in ensuring that teachers have a small amount of non-contact time, but most key staff with whole school responsibilities do not have sufficient time to carry out all the management tasks that are necessary for continued improvement. National initiatives that have been accompanied by funding for releasing staff, such as the literacy strategy, have been successfully implemented. However, much other development has depended on the deep fund of goodwill that exists amongst staff.

18. Low numbers of teaching staff give the school little flexibility when there are staff absences. During the inspection, the deputy headteacher was on long-term sick leave, and the school had employed a part-time supply teacher. Unfortunately the local education authority insurance scheme does not cover all the costs of this, and the school is therefore out of pocket. Already the headteacher has to teach for two days each week, and jointly plans and records with support staff, who teach pupils in the multi-sensory area for the other three days. This takes the headteacher away from whole school management tasks, and reduces her capacity to monitor and evaluate the work of the school.



**The accommodation does not meet the curricular needs of pupils. It compromises their health, safety and dignity.**

19. There has been modest improvement in the accommodation since the last inspection, and some local education authority funding has matched the school's own funds to make this possible. Unfortunately, the creation of some specialist rooms has taken up space, and now there is simply not enough space in many base rooms for the numbers on roll, and some rooms are very overcrowded. In the early years class the situation is worst. The school has recently had to admit two more pupils to an already full class, and in one lesson seen, a pupil in a wheelchair could not fit into the room. Children do not have the space they need, and there is no grassed area for them to play on, as required. The lack of space restricts the teaching activities that can be undertaken.

20. The generally cluttered nature of the school, caused by an acute lack of storage space, means that staff need to be constantly vigilant about safety matters. Despite this there are occasions when safety is compromised, such as when stacked tables in the hall obstruct a fire exit. Other safety concerns were noted by inspectors, including an infant playground that floods, an uneven playground surface, uneven hall and corridor floors, and a fire door that is secured with an internal hook.

21. The accommodation also restricts the curriculum, particularly for secondary pupils. The hall, which is a thoroughfare, is not suitable as a gymnasium for older pupils, or pupils with more complex needs, because specialised equipment cannot be fitted or stored. The hall is a multi-purpose area, and its use for dining reduces the lunchtime club opportunities that can be offered. There are no changing rooms or showers, and pupils have to change in classrooms. The toilet in the class for the oldest pupils is used by both boys and girls, and this is against regulations. There are also too few toilets for female staff, and the staff room is too small.

**Although governors are supportive they have yet to fully develop their role in holding the school to account.**

22. Governors are very supportive and interested in the school. They have been supportive in liaison with the local education authority about admissions, for example. There are regular visits to the school by governors, to look at the progress of developments. For example, a governor recently reported to colleagues that grouping by ability for literacy sessions was working well. Governors carry out regular health and safety checks on the premises, and subsequently raise matters at full governors' meetings. A stress audit taken by one governor made staff feel supported and appreciated. In general, governors are well aware of the school's strengths.

23. However, at present governors are not sufficiently involved in holding the school to account, or identifying areas for improvement. For example, although they approve the school development plan, there is no system through which they can contribute to identifying areas for development. They also monitor the progress of the development plan, through regular reports from the headteacher, but the plan has no success criteria. Evaluation of developments, or their cost effectiveness, is consequently difficult. Although governors review the headteacher's annual salary, they do not set performance criteria themselves, and have recognised the need to undertake training in this skill. Governors, through the finance committee, monitor the budget closely, and consider ways of getting better value for money on essential contracts. Other principles of best value are not in place, and the school recognises this.

**Monitoring of the curriculum rests with too few staff, and all subject co-ordinators, who are willing and able, need to take responsibility for this key task.**

24. At present, monitoring of the curriculum rests with the headteacher and the two heads of department. There are nominated co-ordinators for all other subjects of the curriculum, and for groups of pupils with particular needs. However, no members of staff have sufficient time to carry out this monitoring. Where developments have been supported with external funds, and time created for the task, monitoring has proved an effective means of continuing improvements. This has been the case in the implementation of the literacy strategy.

25. The curriculum is organised in such a way that timetables vary from term to term, as there is a rolling modular programme. Checking that all subjects are allocated sufficient time over a year, and that planning is implemented faithfully, is a complex task, and is too much for three people, two of whom are full-time class teachers. The task needs to be delegated to all subject co-ordinators, and they need the time to carry this out.

**WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

26. The headteacher, governors and staff should:

- continue to liaise with the local education authority to increase numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff;
- continue to liaise with the local education authority to rectify the deficiencies in the accommodation identified in this commentary;
- ensure that governors continue to develop their role in holding the school to account;
- ensure that all subject co-ordinators play their part in curriculum monitoring.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	42.5	42.5	5	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*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	96
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	23

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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

### KEY STAGE 1 ASSESSMENT 1998/1999

10 boys

		W	L1	L2
English	Teacher assessment			
Speaking and listening		10	0	0
Reading		9	1	0
Writing		10	0	0
Maths	Teacher assessment	10	0	0
Science	Teacher assessment	10	0	0

### KEY STAGE 2 ASSESSMENT 1998/1999

2 girls, 3 boys

		W	L1	L2
English	Teacher assessment			
Speaking and listening		3	2	0
Reading		2	3	0
Writing		4	1	0
Maths	Teacher assessment	4	1	0
Science	Teacher assessment	3	2	0

### KEY STAGE 3 ASSESSMENT 1998/1999

2 girls, 3 boys

		W	L1	L2
English	Teacher assessment			
Speaking and listening		2	1	2
Reading		2	0	3
Writing		2	0	3
Maths	Teacher assessment	2	3	0
Science	Teacher assessment	2	3	0

**KEY STAGE 4 ASSESSMENT 1998/1999**

1 girl, 4 boys

		W	L1	L2
English	Teacher assessment			
Speaking and listening		1	3	1
Reading		3	1	1
Writing		3	1	1
Maths	Teacher assessment	3	2	0
Science	Teacher assessment	3	2	0

*Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	93
Any other minority ethnic group	3

*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– Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.2
Average class size	8.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Education support staff: YR– Y13**

Total number of education support staff	29
Total aggregate hours worked per week	595

*Financial information*

Financial year	1998/1999
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	692282.00
Total expenditure	698695.00
Expenditure per pupil	7279.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	5813.00
Balance carried forward to next year	-600.00

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	96
Number of questionnaires returned	47

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78.7	17	0	0	4.2
My child is making good progress in school.	70.2	28.8	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	66	34	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	53.6	26.8	12.1	2.4	4.9
The teaching is good.	87.2	12.8	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	82.6	13	4.3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84.8	10.9	4.3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80.9	19.1	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	70.2	21.3	8.5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	87.2	12.8	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74.5	25.5	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	73.3	20	0	0	6.7

### **Other issues raised by parents**

A few parents wrote to inspectors about their concern that the school is not sufficiently resourced. Several wrote to say that staff are exceptionally dedicated.