

INSPECTION REPORT

KISIMUL SCHOOL

Swinderby

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120740

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Shaw

Reporting inspector: Ian Naylor
20906

Dates of inspection: 14 - 15 February 2001

Inspection number: 188950

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Independent
School category:	Special
Age range of pupils:	10-19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Old Vicarage Swinderby Lincolnshire
Postcode:	LN6 9LU
Telephone number:	01522 868279
Appropriate authority:	N/A
Name of chair of governors:	N/A
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kisimul is an independent residential special school catering for pupils aged 10 to 19 years old, who have complex and severe learning difficulties, autism and challenging behaviour. The school has grown in size. There are currently 28 on roll, (21 boys and 7 girls). The school offers full residential and leisure programmes for up to 50 weeks of the year. Pupils at Post 16 have separate facilities. Pupils are referred from a variety of local authorities across the country. All 28 pupils have severe learning difficulties and 12 also have autism. Attainment on admission is very low. Recently, three pupils have been admitted on a day basis. There are two pupils from ethnic minorities. Accommodation is in a converted rectory with extensive grounds. There are five classes, and each has more than one key stage. One class has one pupil. Class 1 has all autistic pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school, in which very good teaching, supported by strong leadership and management, leads to good achievement and progress of pupils. Teachers, care workers, and classroom assistants are outstandingly successful in reducing pupils' challenging behaviours enabling them to work successfully across the subjects and develop self-esteem, confidence and a range of social and communication skills. The school represents very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good teaching. There is excellent teamwork by all staff, which enables them to manage pupils with challenging behaviours extremely well.
- Achievement of pupils is good and their attitude to school is excellent.
- Provision for pupils' personal- including spiritual, moral, social and cultural- development is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good, and there are very good opportunities created for staff development.
- Residential care is very good.

What could be improved

- The curriculum could be improved by the provision of clearer roles for subject leaders, and a more distinct curriculum at Post 16 that offers accreditation in English, mathematics and personal and social education.

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 was last inspected in April 1996. Since then it has made improvements on all fronts. All key issues have been successfully addressed. The school development plan lacked long term planning. A new strategic management and financial plan covering the next three years is now in place. There were inadequate learning resources, educational and care accommodation. Since the last inspection, there have been very good improvements made to the residential and classroom facilities, and there are further improvement plans, which include adding new buildings. Classroom resources have been improved and are now satisfactory. At the last inspection there was no formal monitoring or evaluation of the curriculum but procedures for evaluation of the curriculum are now good. Teaching was good at the last inspection and has improved further, particularly the management of challenging behaviour. The number of care and learning support staff has been significantly increased to provide the correct levels of adult support to match pupils' needs. Training needs of staff have been identified and are extremely well met by an extensive programme of professional development.

STANDARDS

The table below 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 19
Speaking and listening	B
Reading	C
Writing	C
Mathematics	B
Personal, social and health education	A
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs	A

Key	
<i>very good</i>	A
<i>good</i>	B
<i>satisfactory</i>	C
<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D
<i>poor</i>	E

The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge attainments against age-related national expectations or averages.

Pupils achieve well across a wide range of areas. In the sample of lessons seen, achievement was never less than satisfactory and was usually good. In some instances there was very good achievement by pupils. Progress over time is also good. Pupils make particularly good progress in communication, speaking and listening skills. Many also show a very big improvement in their behaviour.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils respond excellently to lessons and all aspects of school life. They enjoy being in school. They work hard and sustain concentration for significant periods.
Behaviour in and out of classrooms	Given the challenging nature of behavioural difficulties, the general behaviour of pupils is very good at all ages, and often excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have very good relationships with staff, and most learn to accept and tolerate other pupils and adults in a variety of situations. They grow in confidence and make good progress in personal confidence and social skills.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	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.

Teaching was very good in twelve of the twenty-two lessons observed, good in seven (i.e. 86 per cent were good or better) and satisfactory in three. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Learning and progress of pupils is enhanced by excellent staff team work and consistent support given to pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good; it is relevant and addresses pupils' needs well, particularly with regard to their emotional and behavioural needs. It presents suitable challenges and experiences. The sensory and communications curriculum for autistic pupils is newly introduced and is currently satisfactory, but is improving rapidly. Many pupils are able to achieve success across a range of subject areas, often for the first time. The curriculum for Post 16 pupils is satisfactory, but opportunities for national accreditation are not available.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils make very good progress in personal development. All these aspects are strongly underpinned by the school's ethos, and teachers exploit opportunities to incorporate them into their lessons.
Partnership with parents	Parents are extremely positive about the school and the beneficial effect it has on their children. Those who attended the meeting felt that the school has very high standards, catering for some of the most difficult children in the world. These are children who have been rejected by everybody else. Annual reviews give good information, but a few parents would appreciate report-type educational information more often.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a happy and relaxed atmosphere in both school and residential areas, and there is a safe and caring environment. Child protection and health and safety procedures are very good. There is excellent management of behaviour. There is very good assessment of pupils' educational and social needs. Individual education plans and care plans are very detailed and support lesson planning. Annual Review Reports give good information to parents about what pupils know, understand and can do. A wide range of professionals is available to support pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and other directors provide strong collaborative management. They have shown a very good capacity to manage change and have successfully built up a large staff team that is well matched to the needs of the pupils. There is a clear purpose about the educational focus of the school, which is to look at the potential of each pupil and not the severity of the learning difficulty. Behaviour is regarded as a feature of a condition, not the child. This permeates to all staff. There is efficient financial management and very good attention to training, induction and the deployment of staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are satisfactory formal and informal procedures for measuring the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum. The directors have a good understanding of the school's areas of strength, and its few weaknesses., with a determination to continue to improve in all areas.
The strategic use of resources	The resources of the school are very well used. Very good teaching, good progress of pupils, and the many improvements that have been made to facilities and provision indicate that best value principles have been well applied, and that the school provides very good value for money.

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 school is prepared to adapt to meet the learning and care needs of pupils. • Successful management of very challenging behaviours. • Flexibility of residential care arrangements to suit parents and carers' circumstances. • Warmth of relationships that all staff have with pupils. • Approachability of the directors and senior managers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about academic progress on a termly basis.

Inspectors agree with all the comments of parents. Information to parents about academic progress is given out in an appropriate way. The headteacher and staff are always available to discuss pupil's progress when requested by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Very good teaching. Staff demonstrate excellent teamwork, which enables them to manage pupils with challenging behaviours extremely well.

1. Teaching is very good. There is very good teaching in English, particularly for communication skills, and in mathematics. Teaching of personal and social skills is very good and sometimes excellent. Teaching was very good in twelve out of twenty-two lessons observed, good in seven (i.e. 86 per cent were good or better) and satisfactory in three. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.
2. Planning for teaching is good, drawing upon very good knowledge of pupils' needs and sound subject knowledge. Information from individual education plans and care plans is used effectively to set tasks that are appropriate. There are often five or six adults in a lesson supporting pupils, and teachers ensure that each knows what they are required to do. There are high expectations of involvement and participation by pupils. Recording of pupils' achievements is good, and this contributes well to the overall understanding of pupils' needs.
3. Lessons have an interesting variety of activities that make them enjoyable for pupils, whose learning is usually good and often very good. Some lessons are highly structured in order to ensure the best working situation for pupils who are easily distracted. In particular the '*Objectives*' sessions, which include basic literacy and numeracy skills, are very well organised. Pupils know what they have to do and they work individually with adult support to complete a range of tasks set specifically for them. There is skilful organisation by the teachers to ensure that the necessary resources are available and that staff have the information they need to supervise pupils. The sensory curriculum is taught particularly well in the class for very low attaining autistic pupils, using for example, the *Tac Pac* resources. Many lessons for all pupils feature highly relevant practical experiences, such as shopping and visits into the local community.
4. Learning and progress of pupils is enhanced by excellent staff team work and consistent support given to pupils by classroom assistants and care staff. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent and this gives a positive climate for learning. Staff use excellent communication skills with pupils. They are constantly talking, explaining, questioning, challenging and where appropriate using Makaton signing effectively to keep pupils involved and participating.
5. Management and control of behaviour is excellent, in particular the management of difficult or challenging behaviour. The high ratio of staff to pupils makes a significant contribution to the overall success of teaching. Staff are well trained in re-direction of unacceptable or challenging behaviour. They know how to anticipate, to calm and to intervene to prevent situations escalating. When pupils exhibit extreme behaviours, teachers deal with it appropriately, having regard for pupils' dignity and welfare. Staff respect pupils' entitlement to be included in every activity.

Achievement of pupils is good and their attitude to school is excellent.

6. Pupils achieve well across a wide range of areas. Evidence for this was drawn from analysis of pupils' work, individual education plans (IEPs), annual reviews, reports, teachers' records and lesson observations. In the sample of lessons seen, which included at least one lesson from every subject, achievement was never less than satisfactory, and was good overall.
7. In some instances achievement by pupils was very good. This was seen in the class for lower attaining autistic pupils, where pupils with very challenging patterns of behaviour responded well to very good teaching of a sensory curriculum. Pupils learned to lie calmly and relaxed for long periods on a carpet, listening to taped music. During this, they accepted communication by touch from staff using wooden spatulas and other objects, or through hand massage.
8. There was also very good achievement by 14 to 16 year olds in sessions on '*Objectives*' where low attaining pupils, for instance, recognised and named photographs of various parts of the school, or completed a jigsaw to show the sequence of numbers 1 to 5.
9. In a personal and social education lesson, pupils exchanged 'Hellos' with staff and each other, verbally or by gesture and signing. They chose the symbol cards for the class calendar, knew what the weather was like, and ordered the events of the day for their timetable.
10. In a music therapy lesson pupils made very good progress when they explored the rhythmic sounds produced by guitar and drum. More able pupils played a fast beating rhythm with verve and confidence, whilst lower attaining pupils concentrated hard and joined in the musical conversation.
11. In a lesson on geography, Post 16 pupils showed good achievement when they explored the topic of 'water,' and were able to list several ways to use water, such as for drinking, growing flowers and washing. They knew that rain and snow comes from clouds.
12. Progress is also good. Pupils make particularly good progress in communication, speaking and listening skills. By the age of 19, many have increased in self-confidence in their social relationships and are well prepared to move on to the next stage of education or training. One pupil attends a further education link course for two days per week and is having particular success in extending his social relationships. Several pupils are successful in sustaining work experience placements on site either in the school laundry or with the school gardener.
13. All pupils make very good progress and some make excellent progress in their relationships with staff and with one another; they have an excellent attitude to school and to lessons. They are keen to come into school, show pleasure during activities and become more socially acceptable. The majority of pupils have previously found school problematical, due to their challenging behaviour or learning needs, and arrive with a history of unsuccessful placements. This changes dramatically after they arrive at Kisimul school, where the favourable staffing ratios, very good care and teaching supports their needs. Pupils find that they are able to sustain learning, and gradually form relationships. Parents report that this is one of the most significant changes that the school offers to their children.

Provision for pupils' personal- including spiritual, moral, social and cultural- development is very good.

14. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. All these aspects are strongly underpinned by the school's ethos, and teachers exploit opportunities to incorporate them into their lessons. Opportunities for promoting pupils' spiritual development are good. Pupils visit local churches and Lincoln Cathedral. Religious education lessons teach pupils about Christianity and important festivals of others faiths, such as Hanukkah, Divali and Eid.

15. Arrangements to promote moral development are very good. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and have a strong sense of fairness. Moral themes are explored and reinforced in lessons. All staff take opportunities to remind pupils of the appropriateness of their actions and their consequences, particularly on the few occasions when this arises during the evening activities. All staff are excellent role models, both in their dealings with each other and in their treatment of the children in their care.

16. Provision for pupils' social development is also very good, and is very closely linked to the very good relationships within the school community. Pupils' personal care plans support a high quality programme for personal, social and health education, which permeates every aspect of the school and residence. Responsibilities and small jobs are given to pupils according to their ability to manage them. This increases pupils' sense of pride and self-worth. There is a constant but unobtrusive emphasis by staff on inculcating appropriate behaviour in pupils, taking turns and thinking of others' needs.

17. There are good opportunities to promote cultural awareness, in subjects such as English, art, music and religious education. Pupils visit the theatre and study the work of well-known artists on visits to the Usher Art Gallery. A wide variety of music, from different cultures and all corners of the world, is listened to in assemblies and in music lessons. In religious education, they are introduced to other faiths, such as Judaism and Hinduism. An extensive programme of trips and visits takes place throughout the year, which further extends pupils cultural and social experiences.

Leadership and management are very good and there are very good opportunities created for staff development.

18. The headteacher and other directors provide strong collaborative management. The four directors, who are the senior managers, provide expertise in teaching, care, finance and project management, and use this successfully to manage all aspects of the school. They have shown the capacity to manage change well and have successfully built up a large staff team that is matched to the needs of the pupils. The headteacher provides a clear focus about the educational purpose of the school, which is to look at the potential of each pupil and not the severity of the learning difficulty. This permeates to all staff and is clearly stated in the Prospectus and Strategic Plan. There is efficient deployment of staff, and roles and responsibilities are well defined and understood.

19. There is a clear distinction between the headteacher's responsibilities for teachers and classroom assistants, and those of head of care who is responsible for care assistants, but there is a lot of joint working and staff work harmoniously together. This is typified in the way that care staff work extremely successfully alongside teachers and classroom assistants in lessons. A key to this success, are the many opportunities provided by senior managers for regular staff meetings and hand-over meetings between teams of care staff and with teachers. This makes sure that vital information about pupils' needs and achievements are communicated. These meetings also provide a vehicle through which the aims and values of the school are transmitted. The curriculum is managed well by the headteacher, and has improved significantly since the last inspection, but constraints on her time and the lack of a deputy headteacher mean that continued future development is not assured.

20. An excellent feature of management is the attention to training and induction. A full-time training development officer is employed specifically to provide training for all staff in areas such as restraint and child protection. There are specific courses for care staff and classroom assistants, and the training officer arranges access to some courses for teachers. Each member of staff has a *Training Profile* in which training needs are identified, and courses arranged and courses completed are listed. New staff benefit from very good induction procedures.

21. Staff take part in a range of nationally accredited courses such as the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 in Care. Other courses include Basic Food Hygiene, Health and Safety Training, Makaton Signing, First Aid and Managing Violent Behaviour. Most of these courses are held on site during weekly training sessions. There is effective liaison and collaboration with a local college of further education, which provides the franchise for certain courses along with validation and moderation. The effect of this training is evident in the high quality of care that is offered to pupils, and also in the unifying effect it has upon staff morale and attitudes. This area represents a significant improvement in provision since the last inspection.

22. There is very efficient financial management, and the finance manager, supported by the bursar, have very good procedures which were endorsed in the last financial audit (April 2000). Financial controls are very good. Careful planning since the last inspection has made possible substantial improvements to staffing ratios, premises and training provision, and a Strategic Plan has been successfully introduced. This gives a useful platform for identifying current and future planning, resources and staffing.

23. There are satisfactory formal and informal procedures for measuring the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum. These include regular lesson observations by the headteacher, and a variety of departmental meetings to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teachers planning on learning outcomes and to adjust pupils' individual education and care plans. The directors, by encouraging a very open consultation process between themselves and all staff, and have a good understanding of the school's areas of strength and weaknesses, in curriculum, teaching and care, They have created a strong school ethos of seeking to achieve excellence.

24. The resources of the school are very well used. The very good teaching and good progress of pupils, and the many improvements that have been made to facilities and provision, indicate that best value principles have been well applied. For example, some of the care and maintenance of

premises is now undertaken by in-house teams under the supervision of the director responsible for projects. These include routine maintenance, painting and decorating, minor building works, laundry and gardening.

Residential care is very good.

25. Residential provision is very good. It gives pupils an extremely caring, very stable, supportive and safe environment. A variety of well-planned evening activities help to extend and promote their experiences, interests, self-esteem and self-confidence. These foster positive behaviour and help to promote the quality and standard of education provided by the school. Behaviour in the residential area is of a very high standard, building on that which exists in the school setting. Relationships between pupils and care staff are very good. After a short induction period, during which a baseline assessment is made, a personal care plan is written for each pupil. This care plan is in addition to and complements, the individual education plan operating within the school setting; both may have behavioural or physical goals.

26. Care staff contribute extremely well to preparing reports as part of the pupils' annual reviews. Records of daily life and small incidents are very well maintained, which supplements the exchange of verbal informal information about pupils between care and teaching staff at the beginning and end of the school day. Similar opportunities are timetabled for the transfer of information between morning and evening duty care staff, and the waking night staff. Staff have extensive knowledge of child protection procedures and practices.

27. Residential accommodation is good. Pupils have good personal space and many pupils have individual bedrooms. Bedroom areas have been personalised by some pupils. There are opportunities for independent study or homework. Lounge areas have television and video, but information technology facilities could be improved. There is a telephone accessible to the pupils and calls in and out may be made with reasonable privacy.

28. The Head of Care is a very effective and enthusiastic, with a very clear direction for this aspect of the school. The progress that pupils make, both academically and in their personal development, is enhanced by the guidance, opportunities and experiences of the very good residential provision.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The curriculum would be enhanced by a clearer role for subject leaders, and a more distinct curriculum at Post 16 that offers accreditation in English, mathematics and personal and social education.

29. A weaker area of the management of the curriculum is that subject leaders do not have a particularly clear role in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, or reviewing curriculum documentation across the school. These tasks have been largely accomplished by the headteacher in consultation with teachers, as there is no separate curriculum co-ordinator. As the school has

grown in size, so the headteacher is finding it difficult to give time to this role, and recognises the need for the appointment of a deputy to whom these duties could be delegated. Some additional funding has been allocated recently to enable the release of teachers from the classroom for short periods during the week so that they can carry out a wider role. This is an improvement since the previous inspection but one that needs further attention.

30. There is no separation of the curriculum for Post 16 students and so they have approximately the same curriculum as the rest of the school. Although some additional elements, such as work experience and college link courses, work successfully, further opportunities are not yet taken to provide specific programmes that are based on life, leisure skills and vocational work. Nor is there a co-ordinated link between the classroom curriculum and the 24-hour curriculum, which means that the progression of skills for students is not as consistently supported as it could be. Current arrangements also do not give those students who could achieve them, opportunities to gain external accreditation in literacy, numeracy and personal social education.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve further, the school should:

- Clarify the role of subject leader and support this through the appointment of a curriculum co-ordinator.
- Provide a distinct Post 16 curriculum that is based around national accreditation.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	55	31	14	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	28
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A

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	0

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	3	School data	0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	26
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	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: Y8 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	3.6
Average class size	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

Total number of education support staff	87
Total aggregate hours worked per week	3163

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1,924,404.00
Total expenditure	1,940,548.00
Expenditure per pupil	68,287.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	8,888.00
Balance carried forward to next year	-7,256.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	28
Number of questionnaires returned	13

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	17	0	0	8
My child is making good progress in school.	42	33	0	0	25
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	42	0	0	25
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	8	8	0	0	83
The teaching is good.	58	33	0	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	25	25	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	17	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	17	25	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	75	25	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	42	0	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	75	25	0	0	0