

INSPECTION REPORT

Overley Hall School

Telford

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique Reference Number: 123621

Headteacher: Mr W O'Hagan

Reporting inspector: Mr J Currie
15289

Dates of inspection: 27 - 30 September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708524

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
Type of control:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	9 – 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Mr P Brown (Proprietor)
Date of previous inspection:	23 – 26 September 1996

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Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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Norman Shelley, Lay Inspector		Attendance Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Partnership with parents and the community Equal opportunities
Rosalyn Blunt	English Religious Education Geography History	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Curriculum and assessment Post-16 Special educational needs
Eric Nash	Mathematics Design and technology Information technology Physical education	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Residential provision Leadership and management The efficiency of the school

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Teaching is good overall, particularly of the school's own curriculum.
- Promotes very good attitudes, relationships and personal development.
- _____ The quality of support staff in the classroom is very high and this helps pupils to learn.
- Pupils make good progress towards their individual targets.
 - The quality of the residential provision is good.
 - Attendance in class is very good.
 - The ethos of the school is very positive and this supports the pupils very well.
 - The school provides very well for the pupils' moral and social development.

Where the school has weaknesses

- There is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching and curriculum.
- There is no written school development plan to support the work of the school.
- Financial planning does not adequately support educational developments.
- Assessment of pupils' progress in some subjects is not used well enough to make sure that they achieve their best.
- The school does not make effective use of information technology to support learning.

The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The proprietor's action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection will be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and there are now more strengths in teaching than before. The weaknesses in both English and mathematics have been addressed. The teaching accommodation has been improved. The quality of the pupils' individual education plans is better and they provide a clear focus for teachers' planning. The management of pupils' behaviour has improved considerably because appropriate training has been provided. Resources for information technology have been improved but the subject is still not well developed. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' particular special educational needs has improved and is now satisfactory. However, insufficient progress has been made with regard to school development planning, monitoring, evaluation and financial planning and these aspects of the school's work are still weak. Consequently the school's capacity for further improvement is unsatisfactory.

Whether pupils are making enough progress

Progress in:	By 16	By 19
Targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B
English:		
listening and speaking	C	B
reading	B	B
writing	C	B
Mathematics	C	C
Science	D	n/a
Personal, social and health education (PSHE)	B	B

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

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

Best progress takes place in:

English: most pupils improve their capacity to listen and take part in conversations; they develop an interest in books and some make good progress in writing;

music: pupils make good progress in using their voices and appreciating the different qualities of instruments;

physical education: most pupils make good progress in co-ordination, working with a partner and extending their range of activities;

personal, social and health education: the majority of pupils make good progress in looking after themselves, building positive relationships with other people and being aware of the effect their behaviour may have on others;

cognitive skills: the majority of pupils make good progress in these skills because of the detailed level of planning.

Not enough progress takes place in:

science: higher attaining pupils are not stretched and not all pupils between the ages of 14-16 have the opportunity to continue with the subject;

information technology: most pupils do not make sufficient progress in extending their understanding of information technology.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
11 – 16 years	good	English, music, physical education, PSHE, cognitive skills.	Information technology, science at Key Stage 4.
Post-16	good	English, physical education, PSHE, cognitive skills.	
English	good		
Mathematics	satisfactory		
Personal, social and health education (PSHE)	good		

Teaching is very good or better in 20% of lessons. It is good or better in just over 50% of lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The teaching of English and mathematics has improved. The very effective management of pupils and the high quality of classroom support staff are significant factors. Where teaching is based on the schools' own curriculum, planning is generally effective and this promotes good progress. Where there is a subject specialism, for example in music and physical education, the quality of teaching is good. There are some weaknesses in a few lessons because of unsatisfactory planning and a poor use of time. The teaching of information technology is not well planned.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good; most pupils do their very best to control their behaviour and are generally considerate to others.
Attendance	Very good; pupils arrive on time and lessons usually start on time.
Ethos*	Very good; the quality of relationships is very good indeed and this helps the pupils to develop very good attitudes to learning; all staff are committed to ensuring that pupils make the best progress possible in respect of their special educational needs.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory; there is good support for staff and the headteacher is effective in promoting a positive approach to learning; school development planning, subject co-ordination and formal monitoring of teaching and curriculum are weak.
Curriculum	Satisfactory; the school's own curriculum is effective but assessment is not used sufficiently to ensure that the most able pupils achieve their best in some subjects.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good overall; particularly strong in developing the pupils' understanding of right and wrong and in promoting their social development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory overall; support staff are very good; planning for staff development and induction is weak.
Value for money	Good; financial planning is weak but the school is successful in addressing the special educational needs of the pupils.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

Only four questionnaires were returned. No parents attended the meeting with the Registered Inspector. It is inappropriate, therefore, to itemise the views expressed by the parents. However, no issues were raised which have not been addressed by the inspection. Overall, the views expressed indicated that parents are generally satisfied with the work of the school.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The proprietors, co-principal and headteacher should:

ensure that there are effective management structures and procedures in place which will:

identify the educational developments needed to raise standards;
produce a development plan which sets out how these will be achieved;
clearly identify and link financial planning to these developments;
establish the criteria by which success will be measured and set out how progress will be monitored;
ensure that development of all subjects of the curriculum is co-ordinated.

(paragraphs 82, 83, 84, 99)

improve the use of assessment so that:

the needs of the higher attaining pupils who are capable of accessing a curriculum which is outside the school's own developmental curriculum are properly addressed; and,
the curriculum is developed and improved so that it is able to meet the needs of the higher attaining pupils.

(paragraphs 127, 44, 48, 49, 50, 120, 132, 137)

improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum in order to:

ensure that the needs of all staff are identified and addressed through appropriate training, induction and appraisal;
ensure that the curriculum of the school makes the most effective use of the subjects of the National Curriculum so as to raise standards overall;
ensure that the weaknesses in teaching identified in the report are remedied.

(paragraphs 39, 87, 90)

improve the use of information technology in order to support learning across the curriculum.

(paragraphs 18, 89, 116, 125, 126, 127)

In drawing up its action plan, the school may also wish to consider the following concerns identified in the report:

resources for science and physical education; *(paragraphs 93, 122, 153)*

use of time in lessons and use of teaching staff; *(paragraph 96)*

the effect of the regular turnover of care staff. *(paragraphs 71, 97)*

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

Overley Hall is an independent residential special school for boys and girls between the ages of 9 and 19. The school provides for 52 weeks residence and is registered to cater for up to 38 pupils. There are currently 15 pupils on roll, of whom 4 are girls. All the pupils and students have statements of special educational needs. The pupils have severe and complex special educational needs often associated with autism. They display challenging and on occasions, aggressive behaviour and many have very short attention spans and present ritualistic and obsessional behaviours. The attainment of the pupils on entry to the school is well below national expectations or averages. The pupils are placed at the school by local education authorities and the catchment area of the school is nation-wide. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Three of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The numbers on roll have fallen from 20 to 15 since the last inspection.

The main aims of the school are to:

- recognise the worth of the individual, to develop self-esteem and the potential of each pupil,
- reduce the dependency on adults and encourage a realistic degree of self-determination and autonomy.
- provide for the development of skills and experience which give breadth and stimulation throughout the school day.
- open up the world to pupils and help them make sense of and learn from the world around them.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3

All the pupils have statements of special educational need. It is inappropriate to report on their attainment as measured against national standards or expectations.

Attainment at Key Stage 4

All the pupils have statements of special educational need. It is inappropriate to report on their attainment as measured against national standards or expectations.

Attainment in the Sixth Form

All the pupils have statements of special educational need. It is inappropriate to report on their attainment as measured against national standards or expectations.

Attendance*

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	0
	National comparative data	n/a
Unauthorised Absence	School	0
	National comparative data	n/a

* The school is a residential school. Registers are taken. For the term immediately preceding the inspection attendance in lessons was very high indeed at around 97%. There are no national comparative data for independent residential special schools.

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	20
Satisfactory or better	90.1
Less than satisfactory	9.9

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

It is inappropriate to judge the attainment of pupils for whom this special school caters against national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do. Judgements about progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements of special educational need, annual reviews and individual education plans.

There are three classes with an average of 5 pupils in each class. *The progress made by individual pupils is not directly related to their age and therefore judging progress by the end of a key stage is not always appropriate.* Where possible, however, these judgements are made. It was not possible to make judgements about pupils' progress in geography or history because of a lack of sufficient evidence and in religious education and a modern foreign language because the school does not offer these subjects.

Characteristically progress is slow. Gains in knowledge, the development of understanding and the acquisition of new skills are all very difficult for the pupils.

Overall, pupils make good progress towards the targets set in their annual reviews and individual education plans. This good progress is supported by a well set out developmental curriculum which helps teachers to plan effectively for these specific needs. The individual education plans cover key aspects of pupils' learning and in particular their personal and social development. The good progress, and for some pupils, very good progress, made towards their targets is because teachers and support workers are very effective in implementing agreed and appropriate strategies which enable the pupils to spend more time learning and less time being affected by unwanted behaviours. Over time, the vast majority of pupils make good progress in their personal development and in particular the management of their own behaviour. This is very important for the pupils as it enables them to increase the amount of time spent in learning and in positive interaction with adults. This good progress is because of the very good quality of one-to-one teaching in the classroom and the very positive and encouraging attitude of the teachers and support staff. Progress is also enhanced by the continuation of such approaches in the residential provision.

In those subjects of the curriculum which fall outside of the school's developmental curriculum, pupils' progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall. However, progress in science at Key Stage 4 and in information technology at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in English at Key Stage 3. They improve their use of signing to help them communicate, extend the length of time they listen, develop an interest in books and some can make intentional marks on paper. Progress continues to be satisfactory at Key Stage 4 with pupils improving their skills of taking turns in conversations, learning letter names, using books and in developing their writing skills by tracing and copying letters. Post-16 pupils make good progress in all aspects of English, extending their speaking and listening skills in lessons, using books well and copy writing sentences. This good progress is because of some very good teaching which provides the students with appropriate opportunities to use and apply their basic literacy skills.

In mathematics, pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 3, 4 and post-16. Pupils are taught mathematics on an individual basis as part of their cognitive skills sessions. During the inspection it was possible to observe only three of these sessions. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 are able to recognise and match shapes by colour and one pupil was able to count to six. At post-16, pupils make satisfactory progress in using their number skills and the higher attaining pupils can, for example, recognise large numbers on a calendar.

In science, pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. Most pupils extend their awareness of themselves and the world around them through practical experiences. For example, pupils learn about the different senses and body parts. Most pupils can name the major parts of their body, for example, head, feet and

arms. The highest attainers can label and identify these and point to them on a simple diagram. Some pupils are able to describe the main factors which affect the growth of a plant; the higher attaining pupils isolate some of these factors and describe the effect that each one, for example, lack of water or light, will have on the plant. The progress of the higher attaining pupils is, however, unsatisfactory, as teaching does not take such understanding into account when lessons are planned. Science is not taught to all pupils at Key Stage 4 and progress is therefore unsatisfactory for those pupils who would benefit from the experience.

Only a very limited amount of information technology was observed and there are no records of pupils' progress in the subject. Some pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to use a computer but progress is unsatisfactory as it is hampered by the lack of a well planned curriculum.

In the other subjects of the curriculum progress is generally satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in art, gradually improving their skills of handling pencils and brushes and using colour to create some bright prints. In design and technology, pupils improve their skills of using tools, for example, a hammer and a saw to make bird boxes. In music, most pupils become increasingly more confident and assured in using their voices and in recognising the different sounds made by instruments. This progress is aided by some adept teaching and a range of interesting activities.

Progress is good overall in physical education. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their skills across a range of different activities, for example, swimming, dance and games. The good progress is because lessons are taught by a specialist who expects all pupils to take part and to improve their ability in the subject.

Overall, there has been an improvement in the progress pupils make in learning since the last inspection. This is because teaching has improved and the quality of planning for individual needs has improved.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils are a strength of the school and make an important contribution to their capacity to learn and make progress.

Judgements in this area have been made in the knowledge that pupils have a wide range of learning disabilities and often display challenging behaviours. In addition, many pupils need medication which may at times change their mood, concentration or behaviour.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. In many lessons they show interest in their work and enjoy the activities and tasks they are asked to do. For example, they enjoy working with their teachers and support workers for extended periods of time and respond very positively to the support provided. There are many examples of this: in physical education, groups of pupils work for nearly an hour on developing and improving their movement, dance and co-ordination skills; in music, three pupils show considerable interest and enjoyment when working with instruments and, in the cognitive skills sessions, the pupils concentrate very well on tasks and activities which are well matched to their needs and abilities. These positive attitudes help them to make progress in learning. Although pupils often need adult help some are beginning to undertake tasks independently.

Within their capabilities, the pupils behave well in and around the school. Outbursts of challenging and potentially violent behaviour are beyond their control and much of the anti-social behaviour is not intentional. When such incidents occur many of the pupils show an awareness of the effect of their behaviour on the people around them and some apologise for what they have done. During the week of the inspection no incidents of bullying or other forms of such behaviour were observed. At breaktimes, lunchtimes and after school, the pupils tended to play by themselves although there were a few occasions when two pupils played a game with each other. When out of school the pupils try hard to control their behaviour; many are successful in achieving this. They are provided with good levels of support and positive role models by the adults around them both in the school and home situations. Although some pupils have behavioural difficulties which include, for example, shredding and tearing, they all show respect for the displays in and around their classrooms and very little damage is seen. The school does not exclude pupils.

Pupils are developing their inter-personal skills very well. They greet each other, staff and visitors in a friendly way. During the inspection it was noticeable how some of the pupils modified the way they greeted visitors as they responded to the feedback provided by staff. This demonstrates very clearly the trust which the pupils have in the staff and the supportive nature of the relationships between staff and pupils. Although some pupils find building relationships difficult there are clearly very good relationships between some pupils who take turns and listen to their peers. For example, in assembly, they spontaneously applaud friends who celebrate birthdays or achievements. There are very good relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils trust and respect the adults who work with them; they respond well to the positive management of challenging behaviour usually returning very quickly to acceptable behaviours. Pupils begin to recognise the needs and feelings of others. They will share equipment and offer help or encouragement. Some older pupils are beginning to take appropriate initiative. For example, they walk sensibly through shops and other public places with very little direct adult intervention and are aware of the need to remain safe.

Although it is difficult for many pupils to take responsibility, where this is possible it is fostered and developed. This is especially so with post-sixteen pupils who may be responsible for helping to clear up after activities or remembering to feed classroom pets.

All pupils are encouraged to take their place in the local community and this helps them in their personal development. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for the pupils to spend time outside of school. Pupils use local facilities such as the swimming pool, local shops in towns, hold open and sports days and take part in a wide range of local events.

This aspect of the school has improved since the last inspection. This is because staff are now ensuring that pupils learn from their interactions with other people, a weakness identified in the last report.

Attendance

The standard of attendance is very good. This is an improvement compared to the previous inspection. Pupils are only allowed to remain in the residential part of the premises, under supervision, when they are genuinely ill. Punctuality is also very good. Pupils, with their helpers, arrive promptly for the start of the school day. Lessons almost always start on time. Attendance has improved since the last inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and is good at Key Stage 4 and at post-16. Characteristically, good and better teaching involves the very good management of individual pupils by teachers and support staff. In the very best examples, the quality of teamwork is very high. The adults in the class know the individual pupils very well. This enables them to respond promptly and effectively to changes in behaviour which would normally lead to violent outbursts or obsessive behaviours. In all lessons, teachers and support workers use appropriate strategies to manage the pupils and organise the class in order to minimise opportunities for pupils to be distracted. The consistent application of these methods and strategies enables many of the pupils to attend for increasing periods of time in lessons. This promotes satisfactory or better progress, particularly towards the targets set in their individual education plans.

In English, teaching is never less than satisfactory and is good or better in the majority of lessons. Where teaching is satisfactory, although subject knowledge, planning and methods used are all sound, there is insufficient use made of day-to-day assessment to improve the rates of progress. In the best teaching, assessment is used effectively to set clear objectives in reading, writing and speaking and listening and the tasks and activities planned are interesting. This combination of factors promotes good attention from pupils. Characteristically, the teachers and support staff respond very well to pupils' responses and the pace of both teaching and learning ensures that little time is lost and that pupils work effectively for long periods of time.

Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory and there are some strengths although it was only possible to observe the subject being taught on three occasions during the inspection. Much of the teaching is at an individual level. Planning is sound and based on the school's developmental and cognitive curriculum. Work is pitched at an appropriate level and staff are used effectively to work with individual pupils. This focused work promotes progress in pre-number skills which are very important for the majority of the pupils. In the best examples, staff expect pupils to take part and manage them effectively thus enabling pupils to focus on their work.

Only one science lesson was observed. It is inappropriate to draw too many conclusions from this limited evidence base but a strength of the teaching was the way in which adults worked closely with the individual pupils, praised them effectively and managed them well. A weakness in the teaching which limits progress is the lack of detailed learning outcomes for each pupil.

Only one short session of information technology was observed. There is insufficient evidence upon which to make a judgement.

In art, teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Teaching makes good use of the school's curriculum and ensures that pupils make at least satisfactory progress in the skills of using a range of tools and materials. Pupils are encouraged to try new things, for example, clay, and adults are very positive and supportive when the pupils find the new experiences difficult to cope with. Assessment during lessons is linked to the skills acquired and this limits progress over the broader range of the subject. In design and technology, the teacher has a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and this contributes to the overall satisfactory progress made by the pupils. Some of the activities, however, do not last long enough and this leads to time being wasted and progress being very limited.

The teaching of music and physical education are both good. Both are taught by subject specialists and this has a positive effect on planning and the range of activities presented to the pupils. In music, the best teaching is characterised by a brisk pace and interesting, engaging and stimulating activities. These ensure that the pupils remain on task, enjoy their work and make good progress during lessons. In physical education lessons, the planning ensures that the tasks are well matched to the pupils' capabilities but also contain an element of challenge. The pace is very brisk and the pupils respond well to the teacher's clear instructions and the positive management of the support staff.

Teaching has improved since the last inspection. The percentage of lessons judged to be unsatisfactory has decreased and the percentage of lessons judged to be good or better has increased. Improvements have been made in the quality of the management of individual pupils. Communication between adults and pupils is now more effective. The quality of planning for individual pupils and students has improved and good use is made of the school's developmental curriculum which informs much of the teaching in English, mathematics, art and physical education. All these improvements have had a positive impact in the classroom. Some of them have come about because of staff training, for example, in behaviour management.

There are still, however, some areas where teaching does not adequately promote progress. The use of day-to-day assessment in subjects and areas of learning which are not part of the school's developmental curriculum is weak and results in the higher attaining pupils making less progress than they are capable of. A substantial amount of teaching time each week is spent on visits out of school. This involves travelling to and from a variety of different places and can take up to fifty minutes each way. This use of time is not satisfactory when the kinds of activities undertaken could have been carried out closer to the school. This is a waste of valuable teaching time and reduces the potential for progress during these lessons. In a minority of lessons the activities are not planned in sufficient detail and progress in these lessons is unsatisfactory because staff are not sure what the pupils are supposed to learn and time is lost waiting for decisions to be made.

The curriculum and assessment

Overall the curriculum offered by the school is satisfactory for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and is good at post-16. All pupils of statutory school age have statements of special educational need which clearly state the

need for a developmental curriculum which is designed to meet their specific learning and behavioural needs and leads to access to the National Curriculum as appropriate. The National Curriculum assessment arrangements do not apply. The school's developmental curriculum is relevant to pupils throughout the school and meets their needs. The school's curriculum is generally well matched to the provision as outlined in the pupils' statements of special educational need. The school provides opportunities for accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4 and for post-16 pupils through the National Proficiency Training Certificate in Life Skills and Construction Skills.

The school's developmental curriculum provides a good basis for developing the pupils' communication skills and their physical, personal and social development. It successfully enables pupils to make good progress in these areas. The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 draws heavily on this framework and also makes extensive use of visits and walks outside the school. Subjects not included in the school's developmental curriculum are taught through a topic approach. However, insufficient use is made of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in the planning of the topics and little use is made of some subjects, for example, geography and history, to support the visits out of school. Other subjects, for example, science, art, information technology and design and technology, are not supported by detailed schemes of work. There is no curriculum document to help teachers plan elements of National Curriculum subjects into their lessons. The school was not able to calculate the amount of time spent on the different subjects. The result is that the opportunity to expand pupils' knowledge of subjects even at an appropriate level is often lost and results in the progress of the higher attaining pupils being restricted.

The framework for the post-sixteen curriculum is good. It is relevant, broad and balanced and includes an appropriate focus on health and self-care and social and work related skills. There are good links with a local college of further education and some of the post-16 pupils join in lessons at the college. This effectively prepares pupils for the next stage in their career.

Pupils generally have equality of access to the curriculum although the current arrangement of classes and the fact that teachers plan their own subjects means that not all pupils at Key Stage 4, for example, have the opportunity to be taught science.

There is no effective system of whole school curriculum planning apart from the established developmental curriculum. In most subjects teachers plan for their own classes. There are few guidance documents and schemes of work. Only where a teacher teaches a subject to all the pupils, for example in design and technology, music and physical education, is there evidence of planning which ensures that the work pupils will undertake across the key stages will build on previous experiences.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities including social, leisure and sporting activities and plans well for these to be carried out both during the school term and holiday periods. There are visits to local leisure centres, shops and cafes, museums and places of historic interest.

The provision of guidance and help in planning and preparing placements after school is good. There are opportunities for older pupils to go to local further education colleges and experience working with adults. Careful transition plans are made and carried out especially for those pupils for whom it is planned will move into adult accommodation nearby when they leave school.

The school has not made sufficient progress since the last inspection in respect of curriculum planning. There is still a need to develop some subjects, for example, geography and history. Insufficient use is made of the National Curriculum to provide appropriate learning opportunities particularly for the higher attaining pupils.

Assessment

Overall assessment is satisfactory although there are weaknesses in how it is used to inform the planning of pupils' progress in some subjects. Assessment based on pupils' individual education plans is regular and ongoing. This helps teachers to plan effectively and promotes good progress towards the targets set in them. Assessment of pupils' progress within the developmental curriculum is based on a detailed checklist of skills and knowledge and is usually thorough. It enables the teacher to plan effectively for the next stage of learning. However, the recording of pupils' progress in teachers' records or plans

sometimes describes the activities undertaken rather than achievements.

Assessment also includes the participation of the pupils or the way in which a pupil responds to a task and the level of adult support, direction or supervision required. Although this information is very important to inform how the pupils are managed in class it does detract from the need to assess the progress pupils make in acquiring new knowledge, skills or in deepening their understanding. This weakness affects the planning of visits and walks and some aspects of topic work where the lack of appropriate assessment information means that it is not clear enough what the pupils are meant to learn. Equally, the lack of appropriate assessment information affects the quality of curriculum planning and means that the academic needs some of the higher attaining pupils are not being adequately addressed.

Assessment is still not used to inform curriculum planning in a range of subjects. The school has improved the assessment of individual need as recommended in the last report and this has led to an improvement in the quality of individual education plans and the quality of teaching. Progress in this area since the last inspection is satisfactory overall.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. The provision for the pupils' moral and social development is particularly good and is a significant strength of the school.

The school provides some good opportunities which promote spiritual development but there is very little evidence of these being included in planning. The development of pupils' spiritual awareness is well supported by the many opportunities to reflect on their own behaviour and its effects on others. These enable the pupils to enhance their own knowledge and understanding about themselves as individuals. For example, adults provide the pupils with some very good feedback on behaviour and learning and this helps the pupils to appreciate their own achievements and to develop a sense of self. The school holds an assembly once a week and these are used to promote a sense of belonging to a community. There are prayers and pupils can take the time to reflect on special events. Further opportunities for spiritual development are afforded by visits to the parish church, and the vicar, who comes into the school to speak with the pupils.

There are opportunities for the pupils to relax, be calm and to think quietly at the start and end of day. This is particularly important for them as it provides time for them to prepare for the day and also time to think about what they have done during the day. Such opportunities promote personal reflection and this is important for the pupils' spiritual development because of their need to think about how their actions affect themselves and others.

Moral education is very good and thoroughly implicit in the management of pupils by all members of staff. The knowledge and awareness of what is and what is not acceptable is very well promoted with individual pupils. The high expectations and application of discipline and guidance is consistently and very effectively applied by all staff, often in the face of extremely challenging behaviour. Staff provide very good examples of how to behave appropriately and this contributes considerably to pupils' understanding and awareness of what is expected of them.

Provision for the development of pupils' social awareness and education is very good and reflects their individual needs well. Pupils are encouraged to listen to and watch others, applaud others' efforts, be tolerant and support their fellow pupils. Respect of others, their space and rights is also promoted well. Pupils are encouraged to observe the rules of society, for example, awaiting their turn patiently, and to respect the property of others and be careful about litter.

Many opportunities are provided for pupils to integrate into the community and be aware of their social environment. They join with pupils from other schools, some of whom have special educational needs and make regular visits to, for example, supermarkets and the local swimming pool. Educational experiences such as gardening in groups and leisure outings to parks contribute to their social development.

Pupils are positively encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and personal hygiene. They are

expected, for example, to carry out routine tasks, setting out kitchen utensils and putting them away, clearing away dishes and taking them to the kitchen and moving classroom furniture.

Although it is not specifically included in the planning for subjects, pupils' cultural education is good. The topic theme for the term during which the inspection took place was festivals. Pupils celebrate Christian festivals and those of other religions. Some parents have requested that their child participates in designated religious observances from time to time and arrangements are made in each case for the child to attend relevant places of worship. Awareness of other cultures also grows through discussion and preparation of foods which relate to different parts of the world.

Visits to a nearby museum, which features the industrial history of the area and includes many artefacts and working models, help pupils realise something of their local heritage. The numerous outings into the community and natural environment develop pupils' awareness of present lifestyles.

Visitors to the school include health and safety organisations and the local policeman who talks to the pupils. A theatre company entertains the pupils and focuses on working life outside school. The range of visitors which might contribute to pupils' cultural development is, however, underdeveloped.

Overall, the school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection. The good practice identified in that report has been built on and makes a positive and significant contribution to the quality of the lives of the pupils.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The support and guidance given to pupils is good; there are some very good features. Pupils, many of whom have complex needs, are well cared for at all times.

The school monitors the academic progress of the pupils satisfactorily. There are detailed records maintained in respect of the pupils' development in key skills and this helps the school to plan for their individual needs effectively. For example, the daily diaries, the detailed assessment of pupils' behaviour and the risk assessments carried out for all pupils, all contribute to a safe and secure environment which in turn helps the pupils to make good progress in those areas. The provision for the pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils are well supported and advised on their behaviour and shown what is right and wrong. They are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own behaviour in school and on outings, for example, to the pool or the park. This monitoring and support is a very effective part of the discipline procedures of the school.

The staff are very good role models. They firmly, quietly and fairly advise and correct pupils when necessary and this helps to eliminate much oppressive behaviour. When incidents of aggressive behaviour were observed these were dealt with effectively and efficiently. Staff provide pupils with good levels of guidance both in school and in residence. The quality of guidance and support provided is enhanced by the very effective use of diaries which are maintained by day and residential staff. These illustrate the positive support given to pupils and enable such care and support to be consistent throughout the day.

The welfare of the pupils is well managed. Staff are sensitive to individual needs and habits and ensure that pupils are afforded appropriate privacy, dignity and respect. The health and safety of the pupils is assured through appropriate practice and the individual risk assessments carried out for each pupil.

Child protection procedures are sound. All staff know exactly what to do should they have a concern about a child and all school documentation is completed appropriately. The procedures for child protection and health and safety are contained in the staff handbook and all staff are aware of them but there are no planned opportunities for new staff to talk about the procedures or to have them explained to them by a senior member of staff.

Overall the quality of support and guidance has remained good.

Residential

The residential provision is good. The school has recently improved the quality of the residential accommodation.

The furnishings and décor are of a good standard and many bedrooms are enhanced by pupils' personal belongings and photographs. Bedrooms are of a good size and the living spaces are generally pleasant and welcoming. Some of the bedrooms are sparsely furnished and decorated because some of the pupils are likely to tear down and destroy fittings and pictures.

The staff have a high regard for the privacy and dignity of the pupils, whilst offering a good standard of care.

Every pupil has a good care plan and these are regularly reviewed. The communication of individual pupils' targets between home and school staff is good and ensures a consistent approach across the school which promotes good progress in the pupils' personal and social development. Pupils have access to an independent listener.

Many of the care staff are involved in National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) training and all established staff have attended courses on Food & Hygiene, Health & Safety and 'Team Teach'. Some have had First Aid training. The staff offer a wide variety of activities whilst allowing some element of choice for the pupils.

There is a significant turnover of staff in the house and this necessitates a continual induction programme.

Although the quality of care observed during the inspection was good, the high turnover means that it is difficult for the school to provide long-term stability in care and this needs to be addressed. Whilst staffing levels are adequate, stability is lacking and the staff rota system means staff work long hours at the weekends. There is no current head of care but the school hopes to appoint a replacement in the near future.

The residential aspect of the school has been inspected by Social Services and received a very positive report. It remains a strength of the school as reported in the last inspection.

Partnership with parents and the community

The schools' partnership with its parents and the community is good and makes a positive contribution to standards achieved and pupils' personal development. The previous inspection report recorded similar findings but suggested that links with visiting specialists should be tightened. Present arrangements with visiting specialists reflects an improvement and meets the needs of the pupils.

It is not possible to report parent's views of the school because only four questionnaires were completed and returned and parents did not attend the meeting with the registered inspector. Parents and guardians of pupils reside in various parts of the country— some at a considerable distance from the school. As the school boards all its pupils, parents are not involved with pupils' work at home.

Parents are well informed about the life and work of the school. During the admissions process they learn about the school's aims, programmes and facilities. They receive a copy of the well prepared prospectus.

Parents and guardians receive several reports each year about their pupil's progress and are invited to comment on them. Most comments express satisfaction with the quality of care and progress made by pupils. Parents either attend the school for an annual review or the headteacher visits them to discuss progress. A termly newsletter describes activities of interest and most parents attend the annual open day. Parents may visit at any time and they are encouraged to make telephone contact.

The school makes good use of the local community to promote pupils' personal development, learning and integration. Lessons such as gardening, horse riding, environmental appreciation and drama are conducted outside the school either in the grounds or at other sites, for example, a college of further education with which there is close co-operation. Pupils visit a variety of places of interest, for example, a museum which features the industrial heritage of the area. The visits support learning and enable pupils to experience life outside of school.

The school receives some support from businesses in the area. Health and safety organisations visit the school

and the local policeman gives talks to the pupils. Other visitors include a theatre company which entertains the pupils and contributes to their awareness of the outside world.

Overall the school has maintained good standards in this area of its work. Links with the community have been maintained and in some subjects have been improved. The school continues to do its best to overcome the difficulties of distance between itself and the pupils' families.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

Overall the leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The school is managed by the proprietor, a co-principal and the headteacher. Much of the day-to-day work is carried out by the co-principal and headteacher. The leadership and management of the education provided is the responsibility of the headteacher. Although there are some important weaknesses in the management of the school, the headteacher ensures that the school is well led. The aims and values of the school are successfully implemented and the ethos of the school is very good. These successful aspects of leadership contribute very positively to the good progress made by the pupils in respect of their special educational needs.

There is a clear educational direction for the work of the school which is centred on a developmental curriculum and the promotion of pupils' personal development. This work is strongly based on the aims and core principles of the school. The headteacher provides leadership through example. He plays an important part in the day-to-day life of the staff and the pupils, is respected by the staff and provides effective support for teachers and classroom support staff.

Teachers plan satisfactorily for their own classes. However there are no co-ordinators for subjects. The headteacher provides support for staff but there is no formal, structured monitoring of teaching. This means that improvements in teaching are not necessarily the result of a detailed analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher looks at all planning and provides teachers with feedback. There is, however, very little structured whole school evaluation of the curriculum and how it can be improved and developed. These aspects of management are unsatisfactory. The improvements in teaching made since the last inspection cannot be directly attributed to the effect of monitoring and therefore continued improvements cannot be regarded as secure or certain.

The school operates as two distinct parts, school and residential. There is effective communication between education and care through diaries hand-overs. However the specific roles of the co-principal and headteacher in respect of education and care are not clear. This issue was raised at the last inspection. The school instituted a forum for senior management in order to help clarify the management of the school but the forum deals with more functional and operational issues rather than tackling developmental matters. Although this is a step forward it has not fully addressed the issues raised by the last inspection.

There is no current school development plan. The last plan covered the years 1996-98. The school did produce and implement an action plan following the last inspection. Most of the key issues raised by the last inspection have been addressed but the issues relating to management have not been satisfactorily resolved. The lack of a school development plan means that developments are not discussed by the whole school. The headteacher and staff have identified educational priorities, for example, the need to improve the equipment for physical education, the need to develop accommodation for art and the potential for music to add to the breadth of the curriculum, but these are not formally recorded. The school is therefore unable to monitor or evaluate the progress it has made since the last inspection and has not set targets for school improvement. This aspect of the work of the school is poor and means that the capacity for improvement is unsatisfactory.

These important weaknesses in management mean that the identified strengths of the school, for example, the very positive ethos of the school which enables the pupils to make good progress and promotes good standards of care and personal development needs, are dependent on the hard work and commitment of individuals rather than rooted in a clear plan which supports such hard work.

All relevant statutory requirements are met.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

There is a sufficient number of teachers on the staff. The headteacher has appropriate experience and qualifications in special education and associated disciplines. Two of the teaching staff have joined the school recently and are relatively inexperienced in this field although they have non-teaching experience of children with special educational needs. No member of the teaching staff has a specific qualification in special educational needs. Recent staff training in the management of challenging behaviour has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

There are sufficient classroom support staff. Many are experienced in working with pupils with special educational needs and all have received training in the management of challenging behaviour. Some are working towards a NVQ in special education. The overall quality of support staff is very good and they make an invaluable contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved by the school.

The number of residential care staff is adequate and appropriate and relevant staff development opportunities are provided for them. However, there are times during the week because of illness when the number of staff available for duty is less than needed and day staff are asked to step in at short notice. Although this has yet to result in understaffing it is an issue which the school needs to address.

There are no formal arrangements for the induction of new staff. There is a staff handbook which contains relevant information about school procedures but the lack of a structured induction process means that, for example, some support staff are not fully aware of all health and safety procedures and others have not received training on child protection procedures. All staff, however, follow the procedures for child protection and these arrangements are satisfactory. There is also no formal staff development programme. The school has ensured that all staff receive training in key areas, for example, behaviour management, but there is less staff development on curriculum and subject based matters. The lack of a formal induction process for teachers means that newly qualified teachers do not have a mentor and their staff development needs are not adequately planned for. Appraisal is still not operating effectively for all staff as reported in the last inspection.

The quality of accommodation has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The classrooms have been enlarged and the bedrooms and residential accommodation have been refurbished. All classrooms are now of an adequate size and there is a life-skills room, a small library and a small room used for information technology. Physical education and design and technology are still taught in accommodation which is situated some distance away from the main building although this does not prevent them from being used. There is no specialist room for art or music. There is a medical room and a very secure room for the storage of medicine. The hydro-therapy pool, which is situated in the cellar of the house, was out of action awaiting repair during the inspection.

The administrative accommodation is of a good size but there is no separate office for the headteacher which makes planning confidential meetings difficult.

Overall the learning resources are now adequate for the curriculum offered by the school. In English and mathematics there is a sufficient range of books, materials, equipment and games to provide a broad range of activities for the pupils. In science, resources are adequate for what is taught but there is no practical equipment for the higher attaining pupils to use in order to broaden their experience. There are enough computers and a reasonable range of software which is being gradually extended. In music there is a small range of percussion and un-tuned instruments but a limited range of recorded music for listening. Resources for physical education are unsatisfactory. There is a very limited range of equipment and the curriculum is restricted as a consequence.

Overall, the accommodation has improved and the levels of resources have improved since the last inspection. The school does, however, need to improve the induction process for new staff and improve the arrangements for staff development and appraisal.

The efficiency of the school

The efficiency of the school is satisfactory although there are weaknesses in the financial planning and the links between school development planning and budget planning. The day-to-day administration and the efficiency of financial control is good. The administrative staff are very good in ensuring that systems are operated properly. The accounts are externally audited each year. There is no balance brought forward from one year to the next.

Teaching staff are deployed in the main to teach their own class. There is a high percentage of contact time which is 97%. There is some subject specialist teaching in design and technology, music and physical education. This deployment is effective in promoting good progress in music and physical education. However, the deployment of staff in terms of the time spent undertaking visits out of school means that too much valuable teaching time is lost each week in travelling. There were examples of this during the inspection when activities could have been carried out closer to the school. This is not an efficient use of staff although the school argues that the personal and social development of the pupils is promoted by such visits. The inspection does not fully support this view as there are opportunities for such visits to take place as part of the residential provision.

The deployment of classroom support staff is very efficient and most effective. There is a rota which ensures that support staff work with all pupils in their care over a period of time. During lessons support staff work with individual pupils or small groups; they are very proficient and know what is expected of them. They make an extremely valuable contribution to the work of the school. Care staff are deployed efficiently although there are times, because of sickness, when the number available has to be supplemented by day staff who work overtime.

The school makes good use of the resources, the accommodation and the grounds. Teachers use the material, equipment and games to good effect in the developmental curriculum and make good use of a limited range of equipment in, for example, design and technology, music and physical education. The school uses the main building, out-buildings and grounds well to provide a good range of activities which include gardening.

There is no formal budget planning process although the school regularly reviews its financial forecasts during the year. The school is able to fund improvements and developments annually, dependent on the income. The school argues that long-term financial planning is very difficult because it is not possible to predict referrals to the school and the number of pupils on roll. However, whilst the way in which the school is funded is dependent on pupil numbers it does not preclude some form of budget allocation each year which can be used to support educational developments which are identified through a school development planning process.

Overall the school provides good value for money. The school provides well for the residential needs of the pupils and the overall quality of care is good. Despite the identified weaknesses in management and in aspects of financial planning, the pupils make good progress in the key areas identified in their statements of special educational need. The quality of teaching is good and the school provides very well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils develop more positive attitudes to learning and the school makes a positive contribution to their overall personal and social development.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

English is taught as part of the cognitive skills element of the school's developmental curriculum and also as part of the communication section of the post-sixteen curriculum.

Progress in English is satisfactory over time and in almost three quarters of lessons seen during the inspection it is good.

Pupils at Key stage 3 make satisfactory progress in communicating. They use a variety of means including speaking, signing and gesture. Over long periods of time they improve their capacity to communicate their ideas and feelings and also improve their listening skills. This is because of the good quality of one-to-one interaction with teachers and support staff. Pupils make good progress in reading and develop their skills through carefully structured pre-reading tasks. Most can look at books, turn pages and show good levels of attention to pictures. This good progress in reading is mainly because of the detailed individual work which is based on the developmental curriculum. In pre-writing activities pupils can make intentional marks on paper with some prompts from staff.

Pupils at Key stage 4 make satisfactory progress across the subject. They improve their capacity to take turns in conversations, recall events and listen to each other's comments. They continue to make good progress in reading and complete pre-reading tasks including matching picture cards and naming objects in pictures. Higher attaining pupils make sufficient progress to be able to trace and copy letters and free write some individual letters. Much of the progress made is because the individual objectives set by the teachers reflect the needs of the pupils and are well supported by good quality interaction between pupils and staff.

Post-sixteen pupils make good progress. They make good progress in their speaking skills and in pre-reading, using books well, turning pages and describing pictures in sequence. They recognise letters and make good progress in formation and recognition. Higher attaining pupils can copy simple sentences independently and accurately. This good progress is because staff plan activities well and ensure that they interest and motivate the pupils.

Pupils' response to the teaching of English is always satisfactory and is often good or very good. At Key Stage 3 pupils attend to their work for long periods of time, interact well with staff, give good eye contact and respond with pleasure to known routines. At Key Stage 4, the pupils' attitudes are good and sometimes very good. They concentrate and work hard, communicate well with staff and are able to control their challenging behaviour. Post-sixteen pupils always respond very well to the teaching of English. They work hard and respond very positively to the staff. They are keen to take part in lessons, maintaining very good levels of interest in tasks even when they find them challenging. Their positive approach makes a significant contribution to the good progress made.

The teaching in English is always satisfactory and in almost three quarters of lessons is good or very good.

Teaching is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Teaching is based on a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and the needs of their pupils. Planning is sound and the methods used are suitable. Praise is used well, but little ongoing use of assessment is seen and this restricts the potential progress of the higher attaining pupils. There is good and some very good teaching in Key Stage 4 and post-sixteen. Where teaching is good, teachers characteristically set clear objectives and manage the class and support staff well. There is a clear sense of purpose and tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers use an effective range of strategies to engage their pupils and maintain interest. When teaching is very good there is very good management of pupils and behaviour. This enables the pupils to develop concentration and spend more time on learning. Teachers understand and respond to pupil needs very well. There is a very high expectation that pupils will complete tasks successfully and good ongoing feedback is offered. Time is used well and a good pace is maintained throughout the lessons.

There is no subject co-ordinator for English and there is very little monitoring or evaluation of the subject. With the exception of the post-sixteen curriculum little development work has been undertaken.

The resources available in classrooms are adequate. There is a sufficient range of books, games and resources specifically designed for pupils with communication difficulties. However, library facility is unsatisfactory, with few books, some of which are in poor condition and haphazardly displayed. There are few high quality picture books or big books and little attention has been given to providing age appropriate materials at a suitable developmental level.

Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the overall quality of teaching and progress is better. Better use is made of visiting specialists and resources have been extended. Information technology is beginning to be used to support teaching and learning. All of these have contributed to the improvements. However, the lack of a co-ordinator means that developments in the subject are dependent on individuals and further improvements and developments are not assured.

Mathematics

In mathematics the progress of pupils throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16 is satisfactory. The curriculum is based on the cognitive skills elements of the school's developmental curriculum. This provides for a step-by-step programme of individual activities designed to develop key skills in pre-number, early number and spatial development. As such the mathematics lessons observed were sessions where pupils worked on individual programmes. No whole class or group teaching was observed. Characteristically, pupils make very slow progress over time and during lessons, progress is mostly barely discernible. During the inspection each class was observed.

Pupils in Key Stage 3 make satisfactory progress. Many can identify simple shapes, for example, a square, and the higher attaining pupils can draw 'square pictures' to demonstrate their understanding. A few pupils make good progress in numbers, in counting and writing the numerals. In Key Stage 4, pupils can recognise and match colour and shape. For example, one pupil could select from a choice of three and this represents good progress for that pupil. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in matching numerals to the correct number of objects in a picture. Post-sixteen pupils continue to develop their skills and knowledge in number. They also make satisfactory progress in using their knowledge appropriately, for example, in telling the time to the half-hour by recognising the number '30' and in counting the number of pupils in the room and matching this to the correct number of glasses needed for drinks. Another described 'walking round' as forming a circle, whilst a third could count the number of people in the room. This satisfactory progress is mainly the result of one-to-one work over a long period of time, based on individual objectives which develop the skills of number. Where there is better than satisfactory progress for some pupils this is because they have the opportunity to use and apply their knowledge and skills in a real-life context.

Pupils' responses and attitudes are good. In the lessons seen the pupils tried hard to concentrate and to remain on task. Behaviour was usually good. Some pupils begin to anticipate the tasks and show an obvious enthusiasm for them.

Teaching in the lessons observed was always satisfactory and on occasion very good. Where it was very good the lesson was well planned, staff were well deployed and expectations were high. Progress in these kinds of lesson is good because the work is focused, adults use praise very effectively to motivate the pupils and the pace of teaching and learning is such that the pupils have little time to be off-task. Overall, the management of pupils is good and activities are well chosen. The use of shopping trips and other real life experiences, are successful and create good interests for the pupils and promote good progress. For example, it gives the higher attaining pupils the opportunity to count the number of packets of crisps required for lunch. Games and puzzles also help the pupils to enjoy the lessons.

The accommodation is satisfactory and whilst resources are adequate, insufficient use is made of information technology to support teaching and learning.

Each teacher is responsible for planning work for their own class and this is satisfactory. There is no co-ordinator

for the subject. There is very little formal or structures monitoring or evaluation of teaching and the subject. The school is small and good communication exists between staff, but there are no formal meetings to discuss the subject. There is no planned curriculum development in the subject

There have been some improvements since the last inspection. Progress has improved and the quality of teaching has improved. The weaknesses in teaching have been resolved. The lack of the use of information technology is still a weakness.

Science

Science is taught to only one of the three classes. During the week of the inspection it was not possible to observe science being taught. However, one lesson, an environmental outing for pupils in Keys Stages 3 and 4, did have a distinctive element of science in the planning. Another lesson for post-16 students, taught by an adult tutor, focused on gardening and made a contribution to science teaching.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in science at Key Stage 3. From the teachers' records, most pupils are aware of, and can identify, different parts of the body and know about the five different senses and how to use them. Many of the pupils make this progress with considerable support from the teacher and support staff. Because of this they extend the amount of time they are able to spend on task and improve their capacity to concentrate. The highest attainers make sufficient progress to be able to predict which objects will sink and which will float. However, this progress is not built on. For example, the work on plant growth is insufficiently challenging to ensure that the highest attainers are offered opportunities to extend their knowledge and deepen their understanding. Not all pupils at Key Stage 4 are taught science. The progress made by the end of Key Stage 3 is not built on and overall progress at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. The lack of planned teaching time prevents pupils from adding to their knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the subject. At post-16, the students illustrated how much they had remembered about life processes and were able to demonstrate a sound understanding of seeds, planting and growth.

It is not possible to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching because of the limited number of lessons observed. However there are some important aspects of teaching which can be reported. Overall planning is satisfactory. It includes references to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and incorporates activities which are practical, appropriate and of interest to the pupils. For example, past work has included making kites and powered balloons as part of a topic on forces. Current work is practical and enables pupils to plant seeds and observe them as they grow. The teacher has a secure knowledge of these aspects of the subject. In the lesson observed the management of the pupils was very good. All adults worked together as a team to ensure that the pupils behaved well, focused on the tasks and spent as much time as possible learning. They encouraged the pupils in a very positive way. This is a strength of the teaching and helps the pupils to use their knowledge of the subject appropriately. The use of day-to-day assessment is weak and is not adequately incorporated into planning. The lack of detail on what the pupils are expected to learn during a lesson means that individual progress is dependent on the participation of the pupils rather than on a clear set of anticipated outcomes. Time is well used during lessons although the use of resources to help the pupils remember previous learning and prompt understanding is not well planned for.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. All pupils at Key Stage 3 receive a curriculum which is matched to their needs and interests and includes a sound range of experiences drawn from the National Curriculum. However, not all pupils at Key Stage 4 are taught science and this affects their capacity to make progress once they move to a different class. Assessment is unsatisfactory overall. Much of the assessment is concerned with the pupils' capacity to participate and the level of adult support required. Although this information is important and informs the personal and social development of the pupils, it does not provide sufficient information on the progress made by the pupils in science. As a consequence, the progress of the highest attaining pupils is adversely affected as the curriculum does not stretch them enough.

There is no co-ordinator for science and this is a weakness. There is no subject development plan. The subject has much to offer the pupils and this is reflected in the interest shown by the pupils in class and the students at post-16. The lack of co-ordination and a subject development plan means that the future development of the subject cannot be regarded as secure and this is a weakness.

Since the last inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement. Planning has improved and there is some assessment information. However, it is still not taught to all pupils at Key Stage 4 and resources are still very limited.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Information technology

Overall, the school provides insufficient opportunities for pupils in information technology. Because of this they make unsatisfactory progress in the subject.

During the inspection it was only possible to observe pupils using information technology on one occasion and only for a very short period of time. There is too little evidence upon which to base a judgement on progress and there are no records of pupils' progress. Pupils have access to computers during the week. The school now has a small room where the computers are stored and used. The school has improved the range of computers since the last inspection but there is still much work to be done to ensure that information technology is used effectively to support learning across the curriculum.

There is no planned curriculum for the subject and no co-ordinator. There is a curriculum framework for post-16 pupils, but no schemes of work. Overall, there has been little improvement since the last inspection.

Religious education

The school does not plan to teach religious education except as peripheral aspects of some topics. There are no curriculum documents to support this aspect of the school's work. There is some very limited evidence of topic planning at Key Stage 3 which includes reference to religious education. The need to provide religious education is not specified in the pupils' statements of special educational need.

Art

Pupils at both Key Stages 3 and 4 make satisfactory progress in developing and improving their skills in art. Art is taught as part of the school's developmental curriculum and is essentially skills based. Over time, pupils make satisfactory progress in holding and using a range of equipment, such as pencils, crayons and brushes. They improve their control, for example, in colouring in shapes and drawing round the outside of templates. This progress is supported by clearly defined objectives for the pupils drawn from the school's developmental curriculum, which are then taught specifically to each individual. During lessons it is very difficult to observe discernible progress. However, in one lesson, pupils improved their use of scissors and became more successful in cutting out shapes and painting around objects; in another lesson they increased their tolerance of new experiences when working with clay. They made good progress in shaping the clay and handling the clay without putting it in their mouths. The positive and sensitive support of the adults in the class is a major factor in helping the pupils to gain in confidence and become more secure in dealing with new materials. Around the classrooms there are some examples of the pupils' work which illustrate the progress that most pupils have made in using paint and other materials to produce colourful and interesting pieces of work. These are usually linked to the topic planned for that term.

Pupils generally enjoy art. They show an interest and obvious enjoyment in what they produce and show pleasure in their own achievements. Most pupils respond well to adult support and guidance. This helps them to persevere with difficult tasks, for example, when cutting out shapes. They use the materials and tools provided with care. For some of the pupils it is a challenge to do anything new or different. In one lesson, when presented with clay, many found the texture itself a personal challenge, but with the help of the adults they felt the clay and overcame their understandable misgivings about the activity.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. The curriculum is finely structured and this helps the teachers to plan effectively. Lessons have clear objectives for individual pupils and the adults work effectively to support them. Characteristically, the adults know pupils very well. They predict unwanted behaviours and take

appropriate action to defuse or reduce the impact of such behaviours on the class and the individual. This generally increases the amount of time that pupils spend learning and makes a positive contribution to the progress they make. At Key Stage 3 the teachers have high expectations of the pupils. This is demonstrated through the attention paid to the work of individuals and the degree of encouragement provided to ensure that they participate in the activity and complete it. The use of day-to-day assessment is limited to the skills acquired and is insufficiently broad to include the artistic quality of the work produced.

The curriculum is based on the schools' developmental curriculum and is satisfactory overall. It is primarily based on the acquisition of skills and the development of a widening range of skills in different contexts. In this respect it meets the needs of the pupils very well. However, it is limited in terms of making appropriate and relevant use of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Assessment overall is unsatisfactory. Although, there is insufficient assessment and recording of the pupils' development of knowledge and understanding in art. This is particularly important and relevant for the higher attaining pupils. Consequently, the curriculum has not been developed in a way that reflects the actual performance of these pupils.

The development of the subject is restricted by the lack of a subject co-ordinator, the absence of a subject development plan and the limited accommodation. There is not a specialist art teacher and staff development in the subject is unsatisfactory. The strength of the subject is the contribution it makes to the pupils' personal and social development.

Since the last inspection teaching has improved and there is now no poor teaching. Work is now generally well matched to the abilities of the pupils. There is now three-dimensional work using clay. The accommodation and the restrictions identified in the last report remain unchanged.

Design and technology

Progress overall is satisfactory. Pupils are involved in assembling bird boxes, cooking and a variety of small craft activities, for example, tie/dye and small sewing activities and making stuffed toys. Pupils make satisfactory progress in using simple and basic tools. Most are able to use a hammer to hit a nail and some of the more capable pupils can use a saw (in a safety jig and supervised). Pupils can mix ingredients to make scones. In sewing those with better developed fine motor skills can push a needle through holes to make a picture. The progress made is limited to basic skills. The pupils find it very difficult to plan or to evaluate what they have done, although they do express pleasure in what they have made. Where less than satisfactory progress is made during lessons this is because the activities planned do not engage the pupils for long enough.

Pupils' responses and attitudes are always satisfactory. Their concentration varies with the task and organisation of the lesson. Generally, however, their behaviour is satisfactory in lessons.

Teaching varies from unsatisfactory to good. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and pupils' needs are satisfactory, but the planning and use of time and resources is on occasions unsatisfactory. This leads to lesson time being lost and results in unsatisfactory progress. Assessment is lacking in rigour and often related to the behaviour of the pupils rather than the progress made in skills or knowledge. The curriculum offered covers wood, cookery and small craftwork. There is no use made of other materials.

The subject is lead by a co-ordinator who is very experienced in technology. The accommodation is still generally appropriate and is still housed in a separate converted building. Resources are adequate for what is taught but are insufficient to provide the pupils with a broader range of experiences. The co-ordinator does not hold a budget to support the development of the subject. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory.

Geography and history

The school does not plan to teach either geography or history as separate subjects. However, some elements of both subjects are taught as part of topics at Key Stage 3. There are no curriculum documents to support

these subjects. There is no evidence of pupil work or evaluations and no elements of these subjects were observed. There is therefore insufficient evidence on which to base a judgement.

The requirements of the National Curriculum have been lifted for all pupils at Key Stage 3 through their statements of special educational need.

The subjects have not been developed since the last inspection and there are no written plans to indicate that they will be developed in the near future.

Modern foreign languages

The school does not teach a modern foreign language. The requirements of the National Curriculum have been lifted for all pupils at Key Stage 3 through their statements of special educational need.

Music

Pupils make good progress in learning during lessons seen. However, it is very difficult to make secure judgements about the progress pupils make over time because there is very little recorded evidence. Although only two lessons were observed, pupils make gains in knowledge, understanding and experience. In a Key Stage 3 lesson observed, pupils made good progress in their understanding of and response to high and low sounds. They all could indicate through signing, gesture or through making a high or low sound that they understood the difference. This good progress was because of some very good teaching which made good use of reinforcing the concept of high and low with a practical activity; the pupils placed a teddy bear in a high or low position before making the corresponding sound. The pupils enjoyed this game. The higher attaining pupils went on to make good progress in identifying the physical features of different instruments and most were able to predict which size of instrument would make the higher or lower sound. In another lesson for post-16 students, progress was also good. Some students successfully mimicked to actions of the teacher and another gained in confidence during the lesson to take part. Most made sufficient progress to be able to sing high and low notes.

In both lessons, pupils responded well to music. They showed an interest in their own voices and the instruments used. Pupils at Key Stage 3 handled the instruments with care and showed a respect for them.

The majority of pupils and students responded well to adult direction and behaved well. In group activities they waited for their turn and were generally appreciative of the contributions of others in the class.

Teaching is very good and has many strengths. The teacher has a very secure knowledge of the subject and uses this well to plan lessons which interest the pupils and challenge them. The lessons are sufficiently interesting to engage the pupils and maintain their interest for extended periods of time. Characteristically the pace is good and one task follows on from another ensuring that there is little opportunity for pupils to lose interest and focus. The teacher is confident and this is transmitted to the pupils who grow in confidence during lessons and overcome their anxiety about singing and making noises on their own. The management of individual pupils and students is positive, reassuring and sensitive. The team approach is successful in minimising the time lost during lessons.

The curriculum is in its very early stages of development. There are very limited records of pupils' progress in music. There is no specialist room for music. Resources are adequate although there is a limited source of recorded music for listening to. Although there is no co-ordinator for music, the recently appointed specialist teacher has some good ideas for the development of the subject.

Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching has been sustained.

Physical education

Pupils make good progress in physical education in all key stages and at post-16. All pupils develop and improve their co-ordination because of a well planned curriculum which leads to the improvements in, for example, running, hopping, dancing, swimming and playing games. During the inspection pupils in Key

Stage 4 and post-16 made some very good progress in learning, improving and refining their dance skills. They extended the range of movements they were able to perform and increased their confidence in working with an adult partner. This progress is because of some excellent teaching based in clear objectives, very good coaching and some excellent support work from support staff. In swimming, pupils make good progress. For example, a pupil who needed confidence building in the pool had, over a period of weeks, a programme which moved him from armbands to swimming unaided and then swimming a recognised stroke. In games a pupil who could not hit a moving ball, learned to hit one on a raised stand as a first step.

Pupils' responses and behaviour are always very good. They maintain interest, concentrate on the task and behave very well. The attitudes to lessons are very good. The use of outside instruction, for example horse riding, promotes positive responses.

Teaching is never less than good, and on occasions is very good and excellent. Lessons are well planned and methods of organisation are very good. The management of pupils is always very good or excellent. The specialist teacher has very high expectations of the pupils. This is demonstrated clearly in the dance lesson where the pace was brisk. Feedback to individual pupils was always encouraging and led to improvements. The behaviour of some of the pupils which had the potential to disrupt the lesson were not allowed to develop. Pupils are provided with realistic and positive feedback and this very good use of day-to-day assessment promotes self-confidence and good progress.

Curriculum planning is very good. There is a curriculum leader in the school who is a physical education specialist. His knowledge both of the subject and the pupils' needs is very good. Assessment informs this planning and good pupil record files are kept. The curriculum document is well thought out and coherent.

Support staff are used efficiently and are very effectively. They are committed to ensuring a high standard of education in lessons. They are well deployed and take an enthusiastic participant role with the pupil. A great deal of trust is evident especially in the swimming pool.

The accommodation is adequate, but the changing facilities are poor. Resources for all areas to be covered in the subject are unsatisfactory. The subject teacher has plans and has identified priorities. However, there is no budget allocation to the subject and he cannot make financial plans.

The subject has made immense progress under his leadership and is now a strength of the school. This strength is witnessed during lessons where the pupils demonstrate their capacity to work hard, to co-operate with adults and to overcome their difficulties.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

All teachers were interviewed; class teachers were interviewed about their pupils and their classroom and subject responsibilities; the headteacher was interviewed by each member of the inspection team; all classroom support workers were interviewed; a sample of care staff were interviewed; administration staff were interviewed; the proprietor was interviewed very briefly as he was only available for a short period of time; all teachers received feedback on teaching.

Because of the severe communication and challenging behaviours of the pupils and students, conventional interviews were not possible or appropriate; however a small minority of pupils are able to communicate their ideas and knowledge, limited understanding and feelings; opportunities were taken to talk with the pupils and students during sessions, breaks, lunchtimes, residential and on visits out of school.

The records of each pupil and student in the school were scrutinised for assessment information on progress; annual reviews, care reports, school reports and teachers' records were scrutinised; the amount of work available for direct scrutiny in any subject was very small indeed and was limited to a few sentences of copied writing, handwriting sheets, pictures, wooden products; most of the evidence for scrutiny was from teachers' assessments and records; work on display and photographs were looked at.

Daily diaries maintained by teachers, care and support workers were analysed; statements of pupils were read in order to ascertain legal provision; all files were read covering every pupil and student; financial information and accounts were read; a range of school documentation was read; care plans and IEPs were read; visits out of school were inspected; the residential provision was inspected by three of the team and included the hand-over at the end of the day, activities after school; evening residential provision; arrangements for bed; morning arrangements and morning hand-over; one assembly was observed and lunchtimes and breaks; inspectors ate a lunchtime meal with the pupils; medical information and the administration of medicines and drugs were inspected.

33 lessons were inspected; 3 of these were taught by staff not on the roll of the school, therefore only 30 lessons are used to calculate the teaching figures; there were only three classes in school and four inspectors; the observation schedule took this into consideration so as not to over-observe a single teacher during the day and observations tended to be in the region of 40 minutes with some around 60 minutes; this was done to reduce the impact of unnecessary interruptions to lessons; each class had a leisure outing during the inspection; this involved travelling time; inspectors' time had to be spent in travelling and this is not included in the observation time.

There were a number of subjects which were not able to be observed during the inspection; the curriculum of the school is a developmental curriculum and as an independent school it does not have to teach the National Curriculum; only two pupils in Years 7-11 have 'a developmental curriculum leading to access to the NC in an appropriate way' as part of the educational provision; therefore the requirement to provide the NC and RE for all subjects to all pupils does not apply. Science is only taught once per week to Class 2; during the week of the inspection science was taught outside of the days in school; during the inspection no RE, HI, GG, MFL was observed; there are no records for RE, MFL, HI, GG on which to base a judgement on progress.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 - Y13	15	15	15	n/a

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7-13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):

4

Number of pupils per qualified teacher:

3.75

Education support staff (Y7-13)

Total number of education support staff:

11

Total aggregate hours worked each week:

343.75

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:

97

Average group size

KS3

5

KS4

6

Financial data

Financial year:

1998/99

	£
Total Income	1,356,990
Total Expenditure	1,297,157
Expenditure per pupil	76,303
Balance brought forward from previous year	0*
Balance carried forward to next year	0*

The accounts for each year are closed and do not include a balance to be carried forward into the next financial year.

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

15

Number of questionnaires returned:

4

Other issues raised by parents

No parents were able to attend the meeting with the Registered Inspector. No letters were received from parents.

Summary of responses

The small number of questionnaires returned make it inappropriate to regard the views expressed as representative of all the parents. However, generally, the views expressed are positive and reflect a positive picture of most parents' views of the school. There were no concerns raised by parents which were not addressed by the inspection.