

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BRIER SCHOOL

Brierley Hill, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103878

Headteacher: Mr David Postlethwaite

Reporting inspector: Mr John Currie
15289

Dates of inspection: 28 - 29 February 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Roger Timmins
Date of previous inspection:	1-5 July 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Brier School is a community special school for pupils between the ages of 5 and 16. There are 133 pupils on the roll of the school and all have Statements of Special Educational Need. Three quarters of pupils have moderate learning difficulties and about a quarter have complex communication difficulties. The attainment of the pupils on entry to school is well below the national average. The vast majority of pupils are white and there are some pupils from Indian, Pakistani and Chinese backgrounds. There are 12 pupils for whom English is an additional language of whom 8 are in the early stages of language development. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. At the time of the inspection there were four pupils in their reception year who were taught in three different classes.

Since the last inspection the number on roll has increased from 116 to 133. An additional class for pupils with complex communication difficulties has been created.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Brier School is a very good school. There is a very high proportion of very good teaching. Pupils achieve very well across the school and make very good progress in those areas of learning which are particularly important to them. The provision for pupils with complex communication difficulties is a strength of the school. There is very good achievement in English, mathematics and personal and social and health education by pupils aged 5 to 11 and very good achievement in speaking and listening and personal and social and health education by pupils aged 11 to 16. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are a significant strength of the school. The school is well led by the headteacher and senior staff. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils aged 5 to 11 make very good progress in learning and achieve very well.
- Pupils aged 11 to 16 make very good progress in speaking and listening and good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from a good range of accredited courses and links with the local colleges.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is excellent.
- Teaching is very good overall; it is particularly good for pupils aged 5 to 11 and for those with complex communication difficulties.
- The contribution of the nursery nurses and classroom assistants is commendable.
- The parents are very supportive of the school.
- The school is very successful in promoting very good values, personal development, independence and a sense of community.

What could be improved

- The subject co-ordinators do not have sufficient time or a clear role in monitoring teaching in their subjects.
- The school development plan does not look far enough ahead and does not take into consideration the impact on standards of the action suggested in it.
- Pupils could be more involved in their annual review.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in July 1996. Since then the quality of teaching has improved and there is a higher proportion of good and very good teaching. As a result, standards have risen. The range of accredited courses on offer to pupils aged 14 to 16 has been broadened and improved. The quality of display in the classes of pupils aged 11 to 16 has improved and enhances the environment. The accommodation for information and communications technology has improved considerably, with a new room being created from existing accommodation. The range of writing undertaken by the older pupils has improved, pupils across the school now do more data handling in mathematics and in other subjects and the provision for speech and language work for pupils with complex communication difficulties has improved. The governors are now more actively involved in school development planning. However, little progress has been made in extending the role of the subject co-ordinators in

monitoring teaching and the school development still does not look further ahead than one year and does not provide a long-term strategic plan for the development of the school. The school has been unable to resolve some of the accommodation issues and there are still problems with the transport arrangements because of the site and location of the school. Overall, the school has made good improvement since the previous inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	Key	
speaking and listening	A	A	A	very good	A
reading	A	A	C	good	B
writing	A	A	C	satisfactory	C
mathematics	A	A	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A		

During the inspection some very good work was seen in English and mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2 and in the classes for pupils with complex communication difficulties. Pupils aged 11 to 16 make very good progress in speaking and listening and good progress in mathematics. A strength of the school is the overall very good progress made by the pupils towards the targets set in their IEPs and those set at the annual reviews. These targets support the work carried out across most subjects and make an important contribution to the pupils' progress. The achievement of the pupils by age 16 in reading and writing, although satisfactory, does not build on the success achieved by age 11.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils have very positive attitudes to school and to learning. In class they concentrate and work very hard. They try new things and are confident to answer questions.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. The pupils behave extremely well both in classes and around the school. They are very polite. They try very hard to improve their behaviour where this has been identified as a personal target for improvement.
Personal development and relationships	These are excellent. The pupils get on very well with one another. During the inspection there were numerous examples of pupils helping each other. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and enable the pupils to feel secure and confident.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. There is very little unauthorised absence and lessons start on time.

The attitudes of the pupils to learning help them to achieve and make such good progress. The concentration of the pupils in lessons is extremely good. They behave exceptionally well in class and around the school and are a credit to themselves. The quality of relationships is outstanding and a significant factor in the quality of education provided and contributes greatly towards the standards achieved by the pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching in English is very good and good in mathematics. Science is taught well. There were very few opportunities to observe the teaching of personal, social and health education as a discrete subject. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good and all teachers are very good in ensuring that pupils develop and improve their communication skills. The teaching of pupils with complex communication difficulties is very good and a strength of the school. The school meets the needs of its pupils very well indeed. Pupils use and develop their learning skills very well and become increasingly independent and responsible for their own learning as they move through the school. Just over 37 per cent of teaching is very good. A significant majority of teaching, 88.4 per cent, is good or better.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good range of subjects and courses for the older pupils. The curriculum, including the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies is very good for the pupils aged 5 to 11.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Although the level of external support is limited pupils make good progress because of the support provided within the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good indeed. The school helps the pupils to appreciate one another, work as a team, develop a sense of personal responsibility, recognise and respect different cultures and develop a sense of being an individual.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is safe and secure and manages the problem of the transport arrangements well.

Parents, who generally have a very positive view of the school and appreciate the work of the school very much, are very supportive of the school. The school assesses the progress of the pupils very well. The school has very good procedures for child protection.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior staff provide good leadership. There is, however, insufficient rigour in the monitoring of teaching across the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. They take an active role in the school development plan and are very supportive indeed of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does not make sufficient use of the information available to it in evaluating how well it is doing or to set targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes effective use of the funds provided and efficient use of the limited accommodation for older pupils.

The strength of management is the commitment by all staff to high standards and the degree of teamwork across the school. Monitoring of teaching and the school development plan are still weak. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school. • The behaviour is very good. • The teaching is good. • They feel comfortable when approaching the school with any problems. • The school expects the children to work hard and do their best. • The school helps the children to develop and mature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework set. • The way the school informs them about how their child is getting on. • The way in which the school works with them.

The inspection confirms all the points raised by the parents in respect of what pleases them. The inspection generally does not agree with the points raised for improvement, although the school might wish to ensure that practice is consistent across the school in respect of homework and that it provides parents with a clearer view of how it proposes to work with them as partners.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils aged 5 to 11 make very good progress and achieve very well

1. Pupils in the primary part of the school achieve very well indeed in English and mathematics and make very good progress in all areas of these subjects by age 11.
2. In English, they make very good progress in speaking and listening. By 11, higher attaining pupils offer their opinions and justify what they are saying and thinking. In discussions, they are willing to listen to other points of view and are persuaded by the arguments put forward by other pupils. In reading most pupils are very confident and read a good range of literature. They have been taught to use a wide range of strategies to help them read. They enjoy reading as an activity. For example, they break words down into sounds and can then put the word back together and read it accurately. Their fluency in reading is helped by a good sight vocabulary, which means that they are able to approach most books with a sound bank of words that they know they can read. In writing, most pupils spell basic words correctly and their writing becomes more interesting as they develop the skill of writing a story with a beginning, middle and an end.
3. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, for example, develop their interest in writing through making their own books. They are enthused by the prospect and build up their story through pictures. This activity also helps them with their reading as they link their own book to the one read to the whole class. By age 11, the pupils have improved their skills in reading after being supported by teaching that makes very effective use of the national literacy strategy. Teachers are very secure in their understanding of the teaching of reading and this helps the pupils become independent readers, tackling books and words with confidence and a good level of accuracy.
4. Pupils' capacity to write is enhanced by the careful and methodical approach to writing and spelling. All the pupils know that they should 'Look, listen, think and check'. They use this routine very effectively and by 11 the vast majority of pupils can spell words accurately. For example, Year 6 pupils use the routines quite naturally and can spell simple consonant-vowel-consonant words. Higher attaining pupils spell more complex words by spelling them out using the sounds of the letters or the sounds of the blends of letters. This is most effective and ensures that their spelling is accurate. Some of the pupils are also able to use the letter names when they spell and understand the difference between letter sounds and names.
5. In mathematics, by age 11, the higher attaining pupils have a sound grasp of numbers. For example, they know the twos, fives and ten times tables, subtract two digit numbers and solve simple problems using money. All pupils make very good progress across all areas of the subject. Apart from consolidating their numeracy skills, they know about different two and three-dimensional shapes, measure using centimetres and carry out simple investigations. For example, pupils in Year 6 in a mental maths session knew the odd numbers between 15 and 20, picked out the even numbers between 80 and one hundred and show a good understanding of 'ten more than' and ten less than'. Higher attaining pupils, in one lesson, use number squares to calculate 86 multiplied by 8, know about place value and understand what the different signs mean when writing out the sum.
6. This very good achievement is built up over time. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, for example, learn their numbers through very well structured and interesting number sessions. They are secure in counting to ten from zero and many can count backwards to zero from ten. Higher attaining pupils know which numbers come before or after other numbers to ten and can place them in the right order on a number line. By age 7, most pupils are very confident, for example in using money. They know how many different coins are needed to make up a particular sum. They know that they can change five one-penny coins for different coins and still make up 5p.
7. In science, pupils make good progress although it was not possible to observe science being taught during the inspection. From records and the work they have produced, by age 11 they have covered a wide range of topics including work on forces and motion, different types of rocks and the earth and beyond. There is evidence of some good investigative work.

8. Overall, the pupils make very good progress and achieve very high standards of work by age 11. The few children who are under five, two of whom arrived in school only at the start of the term, make very good progress in all areas of learning. They are taught alongside pupils in three different classes according to need. Their work is well matched to their needs and the curriculum is appropriate for their needs. The classrooms are testament to the work they have done in other subjects, for example, geography, history and art. The pupils' records and annual reviews provide ample evidence of progress and achievement across all the subjects taught. Pupils also make very good progress towards the targets set in their annual reviews and as set out in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills very well and also make substantial progress in communication through improving their speaking and listening.

Pupils aged 11 to 16 make very good progress in speaking and listening and good progress in mathematics

9. By 16, the majority of pupils make very good progress towards the targets set in their annual review and towards those in their IEPs. Pupils make significant progress in their personal and social development. This is enhanced and supported by the work of the teachers and the ethos of the school that is very much about developing the pupils' independence and personal autonomy.
10. A notable feature of this progress is the continued development of the pupils' skills in speaking and listening. Many of the pupils experienced difficulties in expressing their ideas when they were younger. By 16 the vast majority are confident to hold a conversation and listen appropriately when other people are speaking. This is witnessed in lessons across all subjects and when the pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at the local colleges.
11. Pupils make good progress in mathematics. This represents an improvement since the last inspection and has been brought about largely by the development of the subject over the last few years and the introduction of new courses for Years 10 and 11. It was not possible to observe mathematics being taught in Years 10 and 11 however, from the work presented, pupils cover a wide range of challenging work and achieve good standards. For example, the higher attaining pupils subtract four digit numbers using decomposition and have a secure understanding of place value. They use their numeracy skills and knowledge in other subjects, for example, their GNVQ work on Health and Social Care. Pupils present their work using information and communications technology and since the last inspection there has been an improvement in their use and presenting of data. By age 16, lower attaining pupils work hard to improve their presentation and make good progress in addition and use a calculator to carry out work on numbers to one thousand.
12. This good progress builds on the work carried out in Key Stage 3. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils enjoy and respond well to a brisk and challenging exercise on numbers involving division by three. In another lesson they work on fractions and decimals and carry out interesting and stimulating practical tasks involving probability. This enhances the pupils understanding of numbers and also how fractions and ratios can also be used to express a probability. Overall, the progress pupils now make in mathematics is an improvement since the last inspection.

Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from a good range of accredited courses and links with the local colleges

13. One of the strengths of the provision for pupils aged 14-16 is the school's very good links with two local colleges and the broadening range of accredited courses it offers to all the pupils.
14. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 spend two mornings each week attending a range of vocational courses at two local colleges. For many of the pupils this provides an excellent opportunity to develop and improve their independence skills and supports the very good progress made in their personal and social development. For example, some make their own way to the colleges from home and this represents significant personal development and social confidence.

15. In college, for example, the pupils follow a course in painting and decorating and bricklaying. They work very hard and concentrate well on the tasks. Relationships between the pupils and the college staff are very good indeed and help the pupils acquire, develop and improve their skills. For example, they are asked to calculate the number of bricks required to complete a 'corner'. This, for some, is quite challenging but allows them to use their knowledge of number in a real situation and also understand the importance and relevance of right angles. They focus very well on the task and produce a good quality corner of bricks. In painting and decorating they listen attentively to the tutor and show a very good understanding of health and safety issues.
16. In school, the pupils have the opportunity to follow a wide range of accredited courses in most subjects. This is a major factor in maintaining pupils' interest in learning and secures their motivation. The careers service provides appropriate support to the school and the pupils' transition plans are used to ensure that the courses are appropriate to their interests and needs. The range of accreditation covers English, mathematics, physical education, drama and theatre, canoe handling, food technology, pottery and ceramics, brickwork, painting and decorating, health and social care and art. The accreditation includes GCSE, Profile of Mathematical Achievement, GNVQ and the National Skills Profile. It is an impressive list that has been modified, developed and improved since the last inspection.
17. The pupils in Year 11 talk very positively about their life in school. They enjoy the wide range of opportunities provided for them. They recall the residential trips, the range of in-school activities all of which have provided a rich education. They are all pleased that they came to the school and feel that they have benefited enormously from being there.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and learning and their behaviour is excellent

18. Without doubt, the pupils themselves are a significant strength of the school. In the morning they arrive ready to learn and are pleased to be in school. For example, they enjoy the singing sessions arranged for them before they go into class. There is no misbehaviour and they talk to one another and staff quite easily and confidently.
19. In lessons pupils have extremely positive attitudes to work. From reception children to Year 11 they concentrate on their work. The mornings usually start with individual work or whole class sessions. In these the older pupils know the routines and get on with their work. They are very well behaved. During the inspection there were hardly any instances of unsatisfactory behaviour in any of the lessons. The younger pupils respond very well to the adult support and guidance. They enjoy the activities. A major feature of the primary classrooms that contributes to the pupils' very positive approach to learning is the excellent display. Each primary classroom displays the work of the pupils very well indeed. There are differences in the types of display that reflect the ages of the pupils. The classrooms are presented as exciting places. This undoubtedly has a very positive effect on the pupils who look after their work, look after their classrooms and show considerable respect for one another.
20. One of the main reasons why the pupils behave so well is because the adults are very good role models for them. They talk with the pupils about their work and how they are getting on. They know the pupils very well and this helps the pupils to feel secure and safe whilst in school. In turn, this has a positive effect on their behaviour and their attitudes to school. The quality of relationships between the staff and the pupils is excellent. The overall impression of the school is one of a caring and supportive environment within which the pupils are enabled to develop as individuals and learn to appreciate and understand the value of learning, good behaviour and respect for others.

Teaching is very good overall; it is particularly good for pupils aged 5 to 11 and for those with complex communication difficulties

21. The quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection, in very nearly nine out of every ten lessons teaching was good or better. In nearly four out of every ten it was very good. Teaching is very good for pupils aged 5 to 11 and very good for pupils with complex communication difficulties. Teaching is good for pupils aged 11 to 16. The teaching of English is very good and teaching in mathematics and science is good.

22. There are many strengths to teaching across the school. Teachers know the needs of the pupils very well and make very good use of their IEPs as a basis for planning learning. This ensures that teachers focus on particular aspects of the pupils' special educational needs, review the progress being made and ensure that their teaching reflects the changing needs of the pupils. For example, most pupils have targets that relate to language development, literacy, numeracy, behaviour or personal and social development. The very good progress seen in these areas is a reflection of the teachers' knowledge of pupils' needs and how to address them.
23. Teachers of pupils aged 5 to 11 have a very secure knowledge of English, language development and mathematics. This enables them to plan lessons that are interesting, challenging, focused and directly related to the individual needs of the pupils. For example, in English, the teachers implement the national literacy strategy (NLS) very effectively. The activities and tasks are based on the NLS and well matched to the levels of achievement of the pupils. Very good use is made of whole class, group and individual sessions. For example, in one lesson, pupils followed up a whole class session by creating their own group poem. The teacher encourages them to use their own ideas. They are challenged to spell the words they use and all show how confident they are in attempting to spell words, for example, 'Tuesday' and 'Wednesday'. They also demonstrate an appreciation of the rhythm in the lines of poetry. In the same lesson, another group was working on words related to the whole class session and show an understanding of words that rhyme and look the same.
24. In mathematics, the teachers are implementing the national numeracy strategy to good effect. Pupils are encouraged to work things out in their own heads and this helps them to make good progress in remembering basic number facts. For example, older pupils know simple number bonds and are confident when tackling addition and subtraction sums. This is all based on well-structured lessons that make good use of whole class sessions where all the pupils have the opportunity to participate. For example, teachers in Key Stage 1 make good use of half-hour sessions to promote the development of number. For example, they provide pupils with opportunities to count forward and backward to ten using a variety of ways. They support this with interesting activities such as predicting a number by gradually revealing the shape of the number from behind a piece of card. In this way the pupils' knowledge and understanding of number is reinforced. They are able to relate the shape of a numeral to the number itself and also to use their knowledge of how different numbers have similar shapes in predicting which number it could be.
25. The teaching of the pupils with complex communication disorders is very good. The teachers are knowledgeable and skilled in developing pupils' language and communication. An outcome of this successful teaching is that a number of the pupils move back into mainstream once their communication needs have been addressed. Many of the pupils in these classes have the capacity to achieve very well and the teaching ensures that they are able to do so. The classes are bright, stimulating places in which to learn. They are language rich environments. Teachers work intensively, supported by very good advice and tuition from speech therapists, and make best use of all activities to promote language development. For example, in mathematics, there are opportunities for the pupils to develop and improve their numeracy skills alongside ensuring that the language element of mathematics is reinforced. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their learning and to explain what they are thinking.
26. There are examples of very good teaching in other subjects. For example, in a Year 6 religious education lesson, the teacher used role-play to enable the pupils to experience and grasp the concepts of authority and leadership. They were provided with examples of how and why leaders give instructions and the pupils make good progress in understanding quite a difficult idea. In a Year 5 physical education lesson the teaching was very good. The activities, which centred on hand-eye co-ordination, were very well structured in that the activities promoted the development of skills in different situations for example, standing still and moving.
27. For pupils aged 11 to 16, teaching is good. Because of the timetable, it was not possible to observe either English or mathematics being taught to Year 10 or 11 pupils. However, in science, teaching is very effective in putting over quite difficult subject matter. In Year 11 class, the teacher provides very good activities to promote the understanding of different states of matter. The pupils are actively involved as different states of matter and this enable them to learn through first hand experience. This type of teaching captures the interest of the pupils and ensures that they are learning and involved. In music, Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils are provided with

opportunities to compose and create their own music. The project is linked across a number of subjects including information technology. In music the pupils show great enthusiasm for listening to their own music and the teacher provides some good individual teaching so that the pupils become more proficient in using different instruments and in composing. The teaching also encourages the pupils to be independent in their learning and this is quite successful.

28. In information technology, teaching makes good use of the new room that is very well equipped. The teaching is proficient and the pupils are taught how to import pictures into their work, set out posters and manipulate text frames. In another lesson, the teaching is good and effective and successfully introduces to the pupils the use of databases and how to create graphs. This is an improvement since the last inspection and has resulted in standards being raised in information technology.
29. Some good teaching was observed in geography where some well-matched worksheets supported the pupils in learning about the different types of jobs involved in making potato crisps. In art the teaching is based on very good subject knowledge. The pupils are encouraged to make their own decisions and as a result, despite inadequate accommodation, produce some good work.

The contribution of the nursery nurses and classroom assistants is commendable

30. The work of the nursery nurses and the classroom support assistants is of a very high quality. In lessons they work very productively with the pupils, either with small groups or individuals. They know what they are doing and manage the learning of the pupils very well. For example, they understand how to support the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy in the primary classes.
31. They manage the pupils very well and ensure that they remain on task. Some of the assistants work with particular pupils, supporting them in lessons. In these cases, they know the pupils very well, monitor the progress of the pupils and are an integral part of the overall specialist provision.

The parents are very supportive of the school

32. Overall, the parents are very supportive of the school. There was considerable support for the school shown by the parents who attended the meeting with the Registered Inspector. Many felt that their children had made tremendous progress since joining the school. Parents of children who have complex communication difficulties speak very highly of the work the school carries out. The school ensures that the needs of this particular group of pupils is addressed effectively and the parents appreciate this a great deal.
33. It is notable that very nearly 75 per cent of parents completed and returned a questionnaire. Many parents expressed through the questionnaire satisfaction with the progress their children are making and the vast majority think that the teaching is good. The inspection supports these views.

The school is very successful in promoting very good values, personal development, independence and a sense of community

34. The school works very hard to ensure that the pupils develop independence and self-confidence. In these respects it is very successful. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to do things for themselves in lessons, to make decisions and to be positive. This encouragement and support enables the older pupils to be confident learners in different situations, for example, the local colleges. Younger pupils are supported in integration into mainstream primary schools and the school has been successful in re-integrating a number of pupils over the years.
35. There is a great sense of community in the school. The staff and pupils work together as a team to create a very positive environment in which to learn and develop. This is exemplified in assemblies where the whole school gathers together to share in singing. The quality of the singing is exceptional. The pupils and staff join in with tremendous enthusiasm; they know the

songs and sing with a degree of passion. There is a sense of unity when this happens which points strongly towards a school that nurtures its pupils and provides ample opportunity for them to develop as individuals within a community. The values that the school promotes are evident, for example, in the way in which the Year 11 pupils talk so positively about their experience in school. They are also evident in the many examples of pupils helping one another in lessons and in the way in which they value the contributions their friends make in class and around the school. In these many ways the school is very successful in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the school. As a result, the pupils live and learn in an environment which is safe and secure and which is free from oppressive behaviour.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The subject co-ordinators do not have sufficient time or a clear role in monitoring teaching in their subjects

36. The last inspection raised as a key issue the role of the subject co-ordinators in monitoring teaching and learning across the school. There has been little progress made in addressing this issue. The last report also raised the fact that the co-ordinators did not have job descriptions that set out what their role was. This issue has not been resolved. As a consequence, the co-ordinators of English, mathematics and science do not have a clear role or the time set aside to look at teaching in their subjects across the school. There has been progress in the monitoring of pupils' learning because the headteacher looks at pupils' work and teachers regularly monitor the pupils' progress.
37. Co-ordinators do not have sufficient first hand knowledge of the issues in their subject. For example, the very good progress made by the pupils in reading and writing by age 11 slows down to only satisfactory by age 16. The co-ordinator for English is not currently in a position to address this because she is not able to see how reading and writing are taught to pupils aged 11-16 and therefore is not in a strong position to influence practice. Similarly, the co-ordinators for mathematics, one is responsible for 5 to 11, the other 11 to 16, are not able to observe practice in other classes. This limits their capacity to ensure that the learning that takes place lower down the school is built on when they move into the secondary classes.
38. In discussion, the co-ordinators see the value of monitoring teaching across the school. There is a need to ensure that the purpose of monitoring is shared and agreed across the school and that it is seen as *one* means of supporting good practice and challenging areas where further development is needed. This role would also be enhanced by clear job descriptions that set out the expectations of co-ordinators.
39. Despite the lack of formal monitoring of teaching, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is now more very good teaching and a higher proportion of good or better teaching. This improvement is largely down to the professionalism of individual teachers. The school does support staff development very well and individual teachers are well qualified and experienced in what they do. They are well motivated to improve and there is a clear commitment to raising standards. However, the absence of formal monitoring of teaching and adequate job descriptions means that the long-term security of high quality teaching is largely dependent on the teamwork of the current staff and the commitment of each individual teacher to improve. Also, there is no systematic way by which the school can identify what impact teaching has on pupils' learning and how, if necessary, this can be improved. The introduction of clear job descriptions that set out the expectations of co-ordinators in respect of monitoring supported by a whole school commitment to a formalised approach to monitoring would serve to enhance the current position and strengthen the long-term prospects of further and continued improvement.

The school development plan does not look far enough ahead and does not take into consideration the impact on standards of the action suggested in it

40. The last inspection recommended that the school development plan be extended so that looked further ahead than one year and therefore could provide a focus for the long-term strategic development of the school. This position has not changed.

41. The school site is the subject of potential re-development and there are plans for the school to move to a new site. This has resulted in most of the accommodation issues raised by the last inspection not being resolved. The present site is very restricted and it would be very difficult to upgrade the accommodation for pupils aged 11 to 16. This situation, however, does not prevent the school from looking further ahead than one year in terms of other developments.
42. The curriculum development plans are very short-term and the school improvement plan focuses on immediate issues. The actions set out in the curriculum development plans are, in the main, related to resources or equipment. The success criteria are expressed in terms of securing additional or new resources or reflect the initial objectives. The school, through its plan, does not show how its action will affect standards.
43. The school has decided that it is inappropriate to set targets for school improvement in the absence of any national data on the relevance of targets for special schools. The school has, however, a range of information available to it that provides it with a reasonable bank of information about its own performance in relation to other schools in the area. The headteacher also monitors pupils' reading ages twice a year. The school does not make the best use of this information in respect of analysing pupil performance over time and comparing the performance of their pupils with those from other schools.

At the time of the annual review of their Statements, the school does not ensure that the views of all the pupils are taken into consideration or that they have the opportunity to attend the review

44. Analysis of the annual reviews reveals that the school does not ensure that all the pupils have the opportunity to contribute or that they are able to attend the review meeting. Given the emphasis placed on developing the pupils' independence and responsibility for their own learning, this represents a missed opportunity.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. In order to maintain the high standards and quality of education, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
 - Implement a system of monitoring teaching that enables senior staff and subject coordinators to identify best practice and to support all teachers in ensuring that standards are as high as they could be.
 - Improve the school development plan so that it identifies the impact of proposed developments on pupils' standards of achievement and ensure that there is a long-term view of development to improve the quality of provision. In addition make better use of information available in order that standards are as high as they could be.
 - Enable all pupils to be involved in the annual review of Statements in a way that is appropriate and secures their entitlement to express their views.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	37.2	51.2	11.6	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	133
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	47

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.7

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	8
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	121
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.9
Average class size	11.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YR – Y11

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	475.5

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	769,145
Total expenditure	799,196
Expenditure per pupil	6,100
Balance brought forward from previous year	98,421
Balance carried forward to next year	68,370

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	133
Number of questionnaires returned	98

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	30	2	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	60	27	8	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	47	2	0	14
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	39	18	7	6
The teaching is good.	57	36	1	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	33	10	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	29	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	33	3	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	49	32	13	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	57	29	4	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	38	0	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	35	5	2	18