

INSPECTION REPORT

PORTLAND SCHOOL

Portland Road, Sunderland

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108884

Headteacher: Mrs Jennifer Chart

Reporting inspector: Mr Johnny Morris
23696

Dates of inspection: 12th - 15th June 2000

Inspection number: 191423

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	13 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Portland Road Plains Farm Sunderland Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	SR3 1SS
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Dorothy Elliott
Date of previous inspection:	9 th - 13 th December 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Portland School is a maintained special school for pupils and students aged 13 to 19. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are 100 pupils on roll comprising 65 boys and 35 girls. Approximately three-quarters of the pupils have severe learning difficulties, and the rest have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Fifty pupils are entitled to free school meals and four have English as an additional language. Pupils join the school from one of three other special schools in the local education authority, which provide for pupils up to the age of 13. The nature of the pupils' learning difficulties is such that their attainment on entry is very low and that it will remain so whatever progress they make at the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with some outstanding features. All pupils and students make good progress. The teaching is very good and leadership excellent. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership provided by the headteacher, governors and teachers with key responsibilities and the school's ethos are outstanding.
- The teaching is very good overall and never less than satisfactory. The support staff make a substantial contribution to the teaching and learning.
- The pupils and students make good progress overall and often very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans. The students over 16 make very good progress in their course work.
- The pupils' attitudes to school and their personal development are very good. Behaviour is good.
- The school offers a good quality and range of learning opportunities to all pupils. The provision for personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

What could be improved

- In some lessons and activities a small number of pupils are not involved sufficiently.
- There are major inconsistencies in the marking of registers.
- The accommodation remains inadequate in spite of the school's exemplary efforts to make the best of what it has.

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

From a very strong position when the school was last inspected in December 1996, there has been very good improvement. The report stated that the quality of education was good, the climate for learning was very good and the management and efficiency were very good. There were four key issues for action. There have been significant improvements in the monitoring and implementation of curriculum planning, assessment and teaching. Statutory requirements not met in 1996 were addressed rapidly. The school has also made improvements to security, the provision for students over 16 and staff development and these are now very good. Although improvements have been made to the accommodation it remains inadequate. There is no sense of complacency. The school is constantly looking at itself and trying to get better at everything it does.

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 16	by age 19	Key	
Speaking and listening	A	A	Very good	A
Reading	B	B	Good	B
Writing	B	B	Satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	B	Unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	Poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A		

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

All pupils make very good progress in relation to their learning difficulties in speaking and listening and towards personal targets. All pupils, who are able to, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school is particularly successful in promoting the pupils' and students' personal and social development. By the ages of 16 and 19, pupils and students develop good social and communication skills.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils and students are happy to come to school. They look forward to their work and seeing their friends.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils who are able to behave very well do so. Those who sometimes behave inappropriately are managed and supported very well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils care for each other and adults and things such as plants and computers. They become more confident in expressing their needs, wishes and opinions as they get older.
Attendance	Rates of attendance are satisfactory overall. Many students achieve a very good rate of attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 13-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good

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

Thirty-four lessons were seen during the inspection. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and, therefore, all lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better. Of these, 79 per cent were good or better and 26 per cent were very good or better. There were no significant variations for different age groups.

There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils throughout the school. There are high expectations of work and behaviour. The key skills of communication for these pupils are taught very well. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and resources are used very well. Support staff make a significant contribution to the quality of the teaching and the progress that the pupils make. In a small number of lessons, a small number of pupils are not sufficiently involved in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a worthwhile range of learning opportunities to all pupils. There are very good opportunities for students over 16 to succeed in nationally and locally recognised courses.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school meets the needs of these pupils well. The small number of pupils in this category has been assessed to confirm that they have no specific needs in English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school places a great emphasis on the personal development of individual pupils and students and is very successful in developing their ideas of right and wrong, respect for others' feelings and values and ability to participate meaningfully in different situations.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There are very high standards of care for pupils with severe physical difficulties and medical conditions. There are high expectations that the more able pupils and students will develop into mature and responsible adults.

The school has very good procedures for inclusion. Pupils and students who are able to do so participate in activities at other schools and colleges and take part in work experience placements. Others participate in activities within the school but outside their class group and base. The arrangements to assess what pupils and students know, understand and can do are very good and the resulting information is used very well to plan the next steps in learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and other senior staff provide very strong leadership and a very clear educational direction to the work of the school. The school has an excellent ethos.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. The governing body is very active in its involvement in school improvement and in supporting the staff and pupils in their work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school is constantly looking for new ways to monitor its own performance and set targets that can be measured.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Specific grants are used effectively for the stated purposes and the school makes very good use of the available staff and learning resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teaching is good• The school is approachable• The school works closely with them• The school is well led and managed• Their children like school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The accommodation and resources• Dissatisfaction with or uncertainty about homework

The inspection team agrees with the parents' very positive views of the school. The school has a very good partnership with the parents. In expressing their concerns about the accommodation and resources, the parents acknowledge the improvements that have been made and the considerable efforts made by the staff to maximise the quality of the learning environment. The school does not provide homework in the way that a mainstream school does. However, there are good arrangements to involve the parents in their children's learning, particularly with regard to improving difficult behaviours and continuing individual programmes such as feeding or physiotherapy at home.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The leadership provided by the headteacher, governors and teachers with key responsibilities and the school's ethos are outstanding.

1. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership to the work of the school and she has the full support of the governors and teachers with key responsibilities. All members of staff are highly committed to the school and work very hard as an effective team. The school's aims, clearly summarised in the mission statement "To value, to respect, to promote optimum learning", are evident in daily practice and fully achieved. The school is a very welcoming community with an excellent ethos characterised by this leadership and staff commitment and very high levels of pupil and parent satisfaction. There is a systematic approach to improvement in the work of this school because the key people are always evaluating how things are done and looking for ways to do them better. There is no sense of complacency.
2. The school has a three-year development plan, an interim development plan resulting from the delay in the provision of new accommodation and an Action Plan relating to its involvement in the Investor in People initiative. Together these documents provide an effective tool for managing change. The creation of these documents involves consultations with the governors and all members of staff and consideration of the views of parents and pupils. They correctly identify the school's current priorities and long-term targets, give careful consideration to how these objectives will be met and how success will be measured. Individuals responsible for specific developments are identified and training needs and resource implications are identified and carefully costed.
3. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very effective and fully implemented system for the monitoring of the quality of the work carried out by teachers, classroom support staff and other members of the school staff. Observations of all classroom staff and priorities in the school development plan inform the very good programme of staff training. Subject co-ordinators have clearly defined roles and effectively lead developments in their subjects. For example, in information technology, some very high quality curriculum guidance materials and an extensive school Internet website were near completion at the time of the inspection. Co-ordinators monitor practice and outcomes through discussions with colleagues and examination of teachers' plans and records and pupils' work. The opportunities for co-ordinators to observe or work alongside colleagues teaching their subject are rather limited and this is largely due to the lack of available funding for staff release during school time.
4. The headteacher, senior management team, school governors and administrative staff together provide very effective financial planning, management and use of the available funding, staffing and resources and ensure smooth running of the school. The school has successfully eliminated a considerable deficit since the previous inspection. Specific grants such as the Standards Fund are used well in accordance with their prescribed purposes. The school sets itself specific measurable targets. These are frequently reviewed and often met or exceeded within the specified time. For example, the governors set a target for the rate of attendance of parents at the pupils' annual reviews and this has been surpassed.
5. The school's income and expenditure are well below the national average for a school of this type. Taking into account the progress the pupils make, the quality of

teaching and management and the low costs, the school provides excellent value for money.

The teaching is very good overall and never less than satisfactory. The support staff make a substantial contribution to the teaching and learning.

6. During the inspection 34 lessons were observed. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Seventy-nine per cent of the lessons seen were good or better and 26 per cent were very good or better. All classes were seen and all teachers, except one who was absent, were seen at least once. There were no significant variations between different age groups or groupings of pupils by ability. The judgement that teaching is very good overall is further supported by the examination of pupils' and students' work and teachers' plans and records.
7. Throughout the school there are very good relationships between staff and pupils and this provides a very good climate for learning. There are high expectations that all pupils will make progress in their work and behave very well. It is very clear, particularly in some lessons in the post-16 department, that teachers believe in, and carefully plan, for challenging the students' thinking and extending their ideas about rights and responsibilities. In a class for pupils with profound difficulties, the staff are always very careful to tell pupils who do not speak or sign exactly what is happening. Pupils who have great difficulty controlling their own behaviour and who can at times disrupt the lesson are managed extremely well. In a small number of lessons a very small number of pupils are not sufficiently involved in their learning and very occasionally staff do not take sufficient action to try to involve them more.
8. Teachers plan very well to meet the needs of classes, groups and individuals. In most lessons there are very clear learning objectives which effectively meet the needs of the whole class, contribute to individual pupil's progress and are directly related to the targets in the pupils' individual education plans. Very occasionally the planning is too focused on the activities and content of the lesson and the learning objectives are not sufficiently well defined.
9. In the best lessons, the teaching features very high quality instruction and questioning to promote new learning and check current understanding. At such times, for example English and mathematics lessons in Year 9, the different needs of individual pupils within a wide ability range in the same class are very effectively met.
10. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and very good use is made of additional adults and available learning resources. For example, cards with pictures, symbols and words, which can be attached to a board using Velcro, are used to enable pupils, with little or no clear speech and very limited writing skills, to construct a simple sentence. Standing frames, specialised seating and mobility aids are used to good effect to maximise access to learning experiences of pupils with severe physical disabilities.
11. Teachers have very good knowledge of individual pupil's needs and levels of understanding through the very good assessment procedures that are in place. Teachers generally have very good knowledge of the school's own developmental curriculum and the National Curriculum Programmes of Study at the level at which most pupils can access them. There is some evidence from one or two lessons and the examination of pupils' work, of minor shortcomings in teachers' knowledge of specific subjects, for example an investigation into the properties of yeast in science.

12. Throughout the school there is a very strong sense of teamwork (within each class and beyond) and the support staff make a very significant contribution to the quality of the teaching and the pupils' learning. In the classes for pupils with profound learning difficulties, support staff work very well with individuals on their individual programmes. In other classes, support staff help the teachers to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with the most severe communication or behavioural difficulties. All pupils benefit, at some time during the school year, from the highly skilled individual support provided in the information technology room because these activities effectively reinforce and extend the good learning that takes place in the classrooms.

The pupils and students make good progress overall and often very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans. The students over 16 make very good progress in their course work.

13. The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple difficulties. It is not appropriate to compare or measure the pupils' achievements against national averages in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 or in public examinations such as GCSE or A-levels. However, pupils throughout the school make good progress overall.
14. Progress in speaking and listening is very good as pupils move from year to year and many students develop good communication skills by the time they leave school. For example, individual students spoke in a very mature way to inspectors and explained clearly about their work in information technology, experiences at other schools and colleges and hopes for the future. In English, very few pupils and students achieve a mature fluency in reading and writing. Individuals, however, make steady progress in these basic skills so that they can complete an application form, write a simple letter, read a simple recipe or list of television programmes. In discussion, two students recognise the difficulties they have with reading and writing and how this might affect their options in adult life.
15. In mathematics, work is very much based in the basic number skills and real life applications of mathematics such as money, time and measurement. Most pupils make good progress in relation to their learning difficulties. The most able pupils and students learn how to read a train timetable and how to convert times from a digital to an analogue form. Pupils make good progress in information technology and this work both reinforces and extends their basic literacy and numeracy skills. The most able students over 16 are developing some higher order skills, such as using a scanner and a combination of different computer programs to create a birthday chart with text and photographs, which they have altered.
16. Many pupils and students make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans, which arise from the Annual Education Reviews required by the national Code of Practice for pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Teacher records, Annual Education Review reports, written parental comments and reports from outside agencies, such as speech and language therapists and Quest (a local service for people with severe learning difficulties and severely challenging behaviours), all illustrate this progress. Several examples were seen which showed very good progress in essential language and social skills, such as a non-speaking pupil learning to use a communication board and different clothes fastenings. A student with profound learning difficulties has made very good progress in his feeding programme over the past year.

17. The students over the age of 16 make very good progress in the units of work, which they follow as part of a nationally recognised and accredited course for such students, 'Towards Independence'. The school offers several units, notably in Meal Preparation, Using Computers, Out in the Community and Yogacise. In 1999, eight students successfully completed at least one unit and 13 units were completed in total. At the time of the inspection, seven students had already completed 10 units this year.
18. Students also achieve genuine success in the Sunderland 'Mayor's Award' and this year the results are considerably better than last year. Each year students are successful in receiving a range of swimming awards, from a very basic level of water skills to swimming 200 metres and developing survival skills. A few students have successfully achieved recognition in athletics and drama activities. In 1999 and 2000, a very small number of students participated in the 'Millennium Volunteers' community project for 100 hours. Two students with profound difficulties successfully achieved accreditation in Yogacise during the inspection. Scrutiny of the students' work and teachers' records shows that a key factor in the students' very good progress is the high level of involvement they have in their own learning. As well as the teachers' detailed records, all of these achievements and smaller steps in learning recognised by the school are collected in the students' Record of Achievements folders, in a form which is understood and highly valued by the students and their families.

The pupils' attitudes to school and their personal development are very good. Behaviour is good.

19. The pupils and students have very positive attitudes to school. They are enthusiastic on arrival and are happy to see their teachers and friends. They are interested in their work and try hard to complete set tasks. Many pupils demonstrate remarkable concentration and perseverance in relation to their learning difficulties. These personal qualities clearly contribute to the progress they make at school.
20. Most of the pupils can and do behave very well. They have a strong sense of right from wrong, appropriate and inappropriate social behaviour and they try to be at their best at all times. Pupils care about each other, the staff and the many visitors to the school. Many pupils show concern for others who are upset or hurt and are tolerant of others who do not always behave as well as they do themselves. By the time they leave school, the most able pupils and students are very good at explaining their needs, wishes and opinions.

The school offers a good quality and range of learning opportunities to all pupils. The provision for personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

21. The school provides a good quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils from admission to age 16 and the specific provision made for students over 16 is very good. The school chooses to modify the curriculum for all pupils and disapply National Curriculum testing at the end of Key Stage 3. Learning opportunities are offered on the basis of the individual pupil's needs identified by the very good assessment arrangements. Extremely detailed assessments are used to carefully identify each pupil's knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the school's own developmental curriculum and the National Curriculum levels.
22. The school provides a good range of opportunities from age 13 to 16. A strong emphasis is placed on English, mathematics and personal and social education. Pupils with severe learning difficulties receive a broad curriculum beyond these

areas, which draws from the appropriate National Curriculum Programmes of Study at an appropriate level, based on their assessed ability and interests. The school has its own development curriculum for pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties, which places great emphasis on communication, personal development and physical development.

23. The school makes very good, distinct provision for students over 16 and they all know that moving into 'Tertiary' is a new phase of their lives. There is a great emphasis developing the key skills of English and mathematics and personal skills in real life situations. The nationally recognised course 'Towards Independence' is very much at the heart of the school's work with these students. Various other opportunities are provided to give students an opportunity to gain outside recognition of their achievements. Students participate in the Sunderland 'Mayor's Award'. Some students are involved in an exciting and successful Performing Arts Course (GNVQ Foundation Level). A group of students are involved in a mini-enterprise project making and selling sandwiches to staff and visitors. There are very good arrangements for Careers Education, including a 'Moving on Day' at the school where various agencies are available for students and parents. The school seeks out opportunities for work experience for students with great determination paying close attention to travel and health and safety issues. These vary from year to year and are currently rather limited compared to other years.
24. There is a very good policy for inclusion and a wide range of opportunities throughout the school. Currently, a group of Year 9 pupils visit a mainstream secondary school every week for activities in design and technology and physical education for example. There are extensive two-way links with other special schools, particularly one for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. There are links with colleges and several students participate in taster courses whilst still at school and go on to full-time courses when they leave. There are extensive arrangements within the school itself for pupils and students with profound difficulties to experience, and as far as possible participate in, activities alongside more able peers.
25. The school has very good arrangements for carrying out the pupils' Annual Education Reviews including involving parents and the pupils themselves whenever possible. All pupils have an individual education plan, which range from satisfactory to very good and are reviewed formally at least twice a year. They all have a small number of achievable targets, relevant to the individual's needs. At best these targets are small steps in learning that can easily be measured. However, there is some variation between teachers and at times, particularly in areas such as behaviour and personal skill development, the targets are not specific enough.
26. There are currently four pupils at the school for whom English is an additional language and their needs are met well. The school has made very good use of tests and interpreters to assess the pupils' ability in both languages, for example a pupil who is fluent in both Greek and English. There is very good involvement of the parents and siblings of these pupils in deciding what provision the school makes and in which language this should be communicated to the families. Currently, this process has resulted in no pupils having any particular need in English and all communications with the home are in English with parental agreement.
27. The school makes very good provision for all pupils' and students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school gives great emphasis to this important area of its work in lessons and displays around the building. The school's mission statement is prominently displayed in the hall. A classroom 'thought for the day', promoting respect for the feelings and values of others, encouraging working together and caring for each other are all

seen on a day-to-day basis. In religious education, pupils are taught about different beliefs such as Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. Prayers are said before lunch and pupils write prayers and wishes as part of a theme on the new Millennium. These show considerable sensitivity and understanding. A display featuring plants, rocks, logs and running water brings the natural world into a class for pupils with profound learning difficulties and contributes to their spiritual and cultural development. Learning some French is part of the curriculum to age 16 and there have been visits to Paris and Spain. The school is developing an extensive range of international links including Ireland, Hong Kong, Albania and Guatemala. Some of these only involve staff at present but they clearly have a positive impact on the school's ethos and pupils' understanding of the world at large.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

In some lessons and activities a small number of pupils are not involved sufficiently.

28. In a small number of lessons, which are nevertheless satisfactory overall, it is a weakness that a small number of pupils are not involved sufficiently in learning activities. For example, in one food technology lesson one pupil spent very little time actually involved in the main activity. However, teacher records and written comments from the parents, show that in the past this pupil would not stay in the cookery area at all. He now stays in the area and on previous occasions he has been more involved than he was during the inspection. In the classes for pupils with profound learning and physical difficulties pupils receive a good amount of individual attention and staff generally move from pupil to pupil frequently. However, in a few instances, individual pupils are left on their own for too long and are not given tasks which they can carry out individually or appropriate learning materials to stimulate and maintain their interest.
29. In all classes, apart from those with pupils with profound difficulties, there is only one subject or learning activity timetabled in the afternoon. In many cases, this is very effective because teachers plan very well to meet individual needs and to work in a sustained way on specific knowledge and skills. However, for some pupils this is not always appropriate and the nature of their difficulties is such that they do not benefit from this common theme to learning over such a long period.
30. On Wednesday afternoons, the school provides a range of learning opportunities under the title of Recreation, Health and Leisure. This is effective overall. It involves mixed ability groups from different classes participating in a wide range of worthwhile activities. Good use is made of the particular interests and skills of teachers and support staff. Several groups go out of school to participate in activities such as horse riding and tenpin bowling. These often involve using community facilities, such as a gymnasium alongside members of the public. Within the school, groups are involved in activities which contribute well to most of the pupils' learning in science, art, music and physical education, for example. All of these activities contribute significantly to the very good progress which pupils make in communication skills and their personal development. However, there are some pupils who are not able to maintain their interest and concentration in one activity for such a sustained period and the overall organisation of the afternoon makes it very difficult for the staff to meet these pupils' needs fully.

There are major inconsistencies in the marking of registers.

31. Attendance is broadly in line with national averages overall and many pupils and students achieve very good rates of attendance. All absences are authorised on the grounds of illness, medical appointments or holidays taken during school time,

approved in accordance with current recommendations and regulations.

32. Registers are taken at the start of morning and afternoon sessions. There are good arrangements for recording the considerable comings and goings of individual pupils and groups during the school day. However, there are some serious inconsistencies in the marking of registers and the recording of lateness and absence. In some cases, there is a failure to complete registration and close the registers in accordance with accepted good practice and widely available guidance. In some circumstances, particularly an evacuation due to fire or other emergency, this could cause confusion about the numbers in school and is, therefore, highly unsatisfactory.

The accommodation remains inadequate in spite of the school's exemplary efforts to make the best of what it has.

33. The last inspection found the accommodation to be inadequate in a number of ways. Many of the classrooms were too small and this created organisational problems for teachers and caused additional problems for those pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. There were no specialist facilities for science, design and technology and art and this restricted the opportunities for pupils to develop practical skills. The toilets and changing facilities for pupils with profound learning difficulties and physical disabilities were inadequate. Outside facilities were inadequate.
34. Since the previous inspection, the governors have been relentless in their campaign for new accommodation and there have been considerable improvements to the current accommodation. A good quality specialist room has been provided for sensory activities for pupils with profound difficulties. Additional temporary accommodation and the re-organisation of some areas in the main building have resulted in additional classrooms for students over 16 and for pupils with profound difficulties, including additional toileting facilities. A room previously used as a parents' room remains available to parents at times but is now primarily used as a library and study area. This is used by pupils, staff and parents and the resources include a computer with access to the Internet. There is a very good overhead hoist on a tracking system in one of the classrooms for pupils with severe physical disabilities. Outside the school, seating and playground markings have been added and a good quality security fence installed. The school budget or the school fund has paid for a considerable proportion of these improvements.
35. The only serious concern expressed by the parents at their meeting with the registered inspector was the accommodation and limited specialist facilities for some subjects. In expressing these concerns, the parents acknowledge the considerable efforts made by the staff to make best use of what they have and to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment. Both the previous inspection and this inspection endorse these views. Very good use is made of the accommodation including the specialist facilities the school does have such as the sensory room, the information technology room and the cookery room for food studies. The staff successfully overcome some of the difficulties and inadequacies, through the efficient management of equipment and resources and use of attractive displays, which celebrate pupils' achievements and promote their learning. Those pupils who go to a nearby mainstream secondary school for some sessions use a design and technology workshop and indoor sports hall.
36. Proposals for a move to new accommodation in September 2000 have not come to fruition due to the local education authority's proposed re-organisation of its special education provision not being approved by the Department for Education and

Employment. However, the local authority is going ahead with its plans to re-organise its secondary special school provision and the school will be moving to new accommodation in September 2001. Additional temporary accommodation is being installed at the current site this summer.

37. Nevertheless, the accommodation remains inadequate in that there are still no specialist facilities for art, science and design and technology other than food technology. Some of the classrooms are too small, particularly the class for pupils who have profound difficulties but are physically mobile and those groups that include pupils who have considerable difficulties in managing their own behaviour and working in close physical proximity to others. The staff continue to manage these situations extremely well so that potential negative effects on the learning of all pupils and students are minimised. The potential for further improvement on the existing site is extremely limited.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

38. The headteacher, staff and governors should now:
- (1) Improve the level of involvement in lessons of those pupils who have very severe physical, communication or behaviour difficulties by:
 - reviewing the timetables, particularly in the afternoon, to increase the variety of learning activities provided;
 - addressing the minor weaknesses in the teaching;
 - increasing the level of challenge or support.
 - (2) Make sure that registers are correctly marked at all times indicating the reason for absence and complying with the requirement to formally close registers and record lateness. Take effective action on this issue immediately.
 - (3) Make full preparations for the planned move to new accommodation in September 2001, considering all the implications for the staff, pupils and resources *

* this is contained in the School Development Plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	26	53	21	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	100
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	50

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	11.1	School data	0

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

Accreditation

The school disapples pupils from the National Curriculum tests and tasks at the end of Key Stage 3. The school has not entered any pupils or students for GCSE or GCE A-level examinations.

However, all the following were achieved by post-16 students in 1999:

- ASDAN Towards Independence – 8 students successfully completed a total of 13 course units
- Sunderland Mayors' Award – 2 students passed Stage 1
- Millennium Volunteers – 2 students completed 100 hours
- Dance & Drama Performing Arts '99 (East Durham & Houghall College) – 4 students
- CCPR National Pentathlete Bronze Award – 5 students
- ASA Water Skills Award – 4 students
ASA Rainbow Swimming Award 5m – 2 students
ASA Rainbow Swimming Award 10m – 1 student
ASA Rainbow Swimming Award 25m – 2 students
ASA Rainbow Swimming Award 200m - 1 student
ASA Personal Survival Award – 2 students

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	97
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.7
Average class size	8.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	650

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	791,984
Total expenditure	802,228
Expenditure per pupil	8,271
Balance brought forward from previous year	35,144
Balance carried forward to next year	24,900

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	100
Number of questionnaires returned	61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	20	2	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	57	30	5	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	34	2	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	20	16	8	41
The teaching is good.	85	13	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	80	16	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	8	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	13	2	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	75	20	3	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	85	11	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	15	2	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	23	3	2	15

Other issues raised by parents

The only aspect of the school which the parents expressed dissatisfaction with or concern about at their meeting was the accommodation and resources.