

INSPECTION REPORT

NANCEALVERNE SCHOOL

Penzance

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112087

Headteacher: Mrs F J Cock

Reporting inspector: Ms P Potheary
21765

Dates of inspection: 4th – 5th April 2000

Inspection number: 191510

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special
School category: Community Special
Age range of pupils: 2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Madron Road
Penzance
Cornwall
Postcode: TR20 8TP
Telephone number: 01736 365039
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr S W Brown

Date of previous inspection: 20 May 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Nancealverne is a community special school for 81 pupils, boys and girls aged 2 to 19 years. All pupils have statements for severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, 20 percent of these have autism. Forty seven percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school includes a nursery and assessment unit for 20 part time pupils, many of whom enter mainstream primary school at five. All but one of the pupils are of white UK ethnic origin, are drawn from a wide area of Cornwall and are transported to school by the Local Education Authority. Pupils' attainment on entry is well below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Nancealverne is a good school which is highly valued by pupils, parents and the community. The calm purposeful ethos of the school helps the majority of pupils to make at least steady and usually good progress in their academic and personal development. The overall quality of teaching is consistently high, leading to pupils achieving standards at least appropriate to their abilities and often better. Leadership and management is very good resulting in improving provision and a rising level of pupil achievement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching, including teaching of pupils under five, is good in over 80 per cent of lessons and sometimes very good, ensuring that pupils learn effectively.
- Pupils, including those under five, are very well cared for in almost every aspect of their life at school and so grow in confidence, becoming very positive in their attitudes to their work and relationships.
- The school is very well led within a climate of self-evaluation and strong teamwork which leads to constant improvement.

What could be improved

- Provision and progress for pupils post sixteen, through a more balanced curriculum, lesson planning linked to assessment of progress and access to external accreditation.
- The balance of activity and breadth of experience provided for some of the pupils in Class 1, to help them make even better progress in recognising and relating to their peers and the normal school environment.

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 May 1996 and has fully addressed all the key issues. There have been very good improvements in the range, content and balance of the curriculum at Key Stages 1 to 4. The role and effectiveness of subject co-ordinators is now well developed. There have also been good improvements in provision for cultural development and very good improvements in provision for spiritual development and in child protection procedures. Other improvements include even better teaching, increased subject resources and better opportunities for parental involvement.

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	by age 19	Key
speaking and listening	B	B	B	B	very good A
reading	B	B	B	C	good B
writing	C	C	C	D	satisfactory C
mathematics	B	B	B	D	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	8	

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

In the nursery pupils make good progress and achieve well in all aspects of the early learning curriculum, but particularly in developing their numeracy, literacy and social skills. At Key Stages 1 to 4 pupils also make at least steady but usually good progress over time and standards are at least appropriate to their abilities. The majority of pupils are working towards National Curriculum Level 1 and the highest attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 are working at National Curriculum Levels 2 to 3 in mathematics, English and science. Achievement in religious education and other subjects of the National Curriculum is also good. At post-sixteen, pupils make good progress in social skills, but do not make satisfactory progress in mathematics and written work because their curriculum is not sufficiently planned or linked to their previous performance. All pupils' skills in information and communication technology are developing well since the equipment was upgraded.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very good, they come happily to school, are pleased to meet visitors and show their work and are interested and involved in lessons, answering questions enthusiastically.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The very good behaviour is evident in classrooms, when pupils are at play, in the community and on arrival. Pupils show consideration to others and conduct themselves with dignity.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is also very good. The oldest pupils confidently notice what needs to be done and offer help, forming constructive relationships with each other and with staff.
Attendance	Attendance is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	good	good	good	satisfactory

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

Teaching is at least good in 82 per cent of lessons throughout the school, of these 18 per cent are very good, particularly in pottery. Fifteen per cent of lessons are satisfactory and 3 per cent are unsatisfactory. The good and very good teaching is characterised by carefully planned learning objectives, linked to excellent assessment of individual achievement and seamless teamwork between teaching and support staff. In these lessons pupils work hard and make good progress. In a few lessons weak planning and organisation or inadequate use of assessment procedures lead to some pupils becoming restless and losing concentration. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and religious education is consistently good, except at post sixteen. Here planning and assessment of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are insufficient to ensure that individual pupils progress steadily from their previous attainment levels. The school takes particular care to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in all subjects and places appropriate focus on developing pupils' communication skills. As a result pupils generally show good progress in these core skills. The school staff also takes good care to enable all pupils to experience success and to contribute in lessons. They achieve this effectively by planning deliberately to meet individual needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The good curriculum includes all statutory elements plus a range of therapies, visits and sporting events, giving all pupils the opportunity to achieve. The good nursery curriculum helps many pupils transfer successfully to the mainstream school at five years old. Curriculum opportunities are limited however by a lack of balance for some pupils in Class 1 and at post-sixteen, by the absence of a modern foreign language, by there being too few extra-curricular activities and in the absence of a library, science laboratory or design and technology room. All of these limit learning opportunities and impede progress for some pupils. However work towards including pupils in mainstream schools is strong and those who are able, transfer to their local school or college successfully.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for social, moral and cultural development is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are helped well to take responsibility, particularly at post-sixteen which enables them to grow in confidence and maturity. The school pays very good attention to spiritual growth, through prayer, celebration and opportunities to reflect upon events.

How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for all its pupils, particularly by excellent assessment to help plan progress in all subjects. However, involvement of pupils in their own learning goals is inconsistent preventing even better attainment for some pupils. Health, safety and child protection procedures are good and ensure that pupils are safe, secure and happy.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff is very good, inspiring commitment to continuous improvement and hard work from the whole school community, who work closely as a team.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The relatively new governing body is also committed to raising standards and their capable involvement enables them to support the headteacher in steering the school very effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school sets realistic objectives which are carefully prioritised and their subsequent evaluation is a strength of the school's work. The good improvements since the last inspection are a result of this process.
The strategic use of resources	The school is fully committed to spending money wisely, evident for example in the decreasing costs but high quality of caretaking and cleaning. The budget is very well managed by the headteacher and her deputy. Spending decisions are monitored to evaluate their benefit to pupils. However the lack of specialised facilities, particularly a library, limits the range of opportunities offered for developing pupil skills even further.

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 quality of care • The high standard of pupil behaviour • The approachability of the school • The leadership of the headteacher • The quality of teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The limited speech therapy to support communication development • Extra-curricular provision • The amount of homework for some pupils

The inspection team's findings coincide with the opinion of parents in all respects, except regarding the system for homework which has sufficiently improved very recently. The school is aware of the shortcomings regarding extra-curricular provision and is working to address these. The provision of more speech therapy is being urgently sought but is outside of the school's control.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Teaching overall is good and often very good, ensuring that pupils learn effectively.

1. The high standard of teaching, including teaching for children under five, is a strength of the school and has improved even further since the last inspection. Teaching is good or better in 82 per cent of lessons throughout the school. Of these, 18 per cent in the nursery, in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in post sixteen are very good. The teaching of pottery is consistently very good and contributes significantly to the success and pleasure experienced by pupils. Music, science and history are very well taught and good use is made of computers to help pupils develop historical concepts. The good and very good teaching includes carefully planned, clear learning objectives, based upon excellent assessment of individual achievement and is linked closely to individual education plans. In these good lessons pupils work hard and make good progress. The well developed, strong team approach between all staff and the high quality work of learning support staff is a key factor in this progress.
2. Teaching in fifteen per cent of lessons is satisfactory and in three per cent is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 2 and at post-sixteen the shortcomings in teaching are as a result of poor organisation or ineffective planning. These lessons usually lead to pupils becoming restless and losing concentration which impedes progress. However the school is working hard to address these weaknesses in teaching which is evident in the improved percentage of good teaching since the last inspection.
3. Teaching is consistently good in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and religious education, except in post-sixteen lessons. Here planning and assessment of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are insufficient to ensure that individual pupils progress steadily from their previous attainment levels.
4. The staff takes particular care to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in all subjects where this is appropriate, and this contributes significantly to the good progress made. Constant attention to teaching communication is a key feature of the work of the staff. For example, some very good work takes place with the Picture Exchange Communication System for pupils with autism, as well as the use of objects of reference for those at earlier stages of their development. This supports some very good communication development, although overall rates of progress vary, due mainly to a lack of sufficient speech therapy support. However, the inconsistent use of sign language in lessons also adversely effects the speed at which a few pupils develop their communication skills.
5. The staff work hard to enable all pupils to make a contribution and experience success, by planning deliberately to meet individual needs in every lesson. This is evident for example in Class 1, where the very high standard of teaching for pupils with profound and additional special needs helps them to make sense of the world around them.

Pupils are very well cared for in almost every aspect of their life at school and so grow in confidence, becoming very positive in their attitudes to their work and relationships.

6. The level of care is exceptionally good and is highly regarded by parents and the school community.
7. There is very good monitoring of pupils' work which is collected in files, dated and annotated. In addition there is very detailed assessment of pupils developing skills and knowledge, measured against a carefully graded, nationally recognised system, leading into National Curriculum levels. This allows teachers and management to monitor the progress of each pupil in every subject and ensures that the curriculum is constantly adapted to suit the skills, knowledge and understanding of each pupil.
8. Individual education plans are of high quality, detailing objectives so that teachers are able to plan lessons which effectively help every pupil make progress. Goals are appropriate, including those for personal, social and behavioural development, thus building pupils' skills step by step. Assessment opportunities are built into lessons to support this system. However, these procedures are not extended to pupils post-sixteen and as a result they make slower progress in their learning, particularly in basic skills. The headteacher and staff are aware of this and are planning to improve assessment procedures for pupils post-sixteen.
9. There is limited involvement of pupils in setting their own learning goals which adversely affects their motivation to achieve. Pupils are helped to discuss their goals and progress, but this is not consistent practice or planned policy. Where pupils are fully involved in the process, they become more highly motivated which has a positive impact on the progress they make. The staff of the school have also begun to involve parents more closely in this process and improvement is underway.
10. Health and safety issues are effectively managed keeping pupils safe. Child protection procedures are very good and greatly improved since the last inspection when they did not meet statutory requirements. The headteacher and deputy are both suitably trained, staff are clear about procedures, new staff are well inducted and responsibilities well defined. There is no evidence of bullying, the behaviour policy and support for staff from the deputy headteacher, ensures that the most difficult behaviour is effectively managed and most pupils behave very well. This is particularly effective for pupils who have autism, where consistent predictable routines help them to remain calm, focus on the lesson and make good progress.
11. The quality of care for the pupils in Class 1 who have additional health care needs and severe communication difficulties is exceptionally good, keeping them comfortable, at ease and ready to learn where appropriate. This is highly valued by parents. The school staff's efforts to monitor the additional needs of all pupils and to secure the most appropriate therapies and medical support, adds considerably to the ability of pupils to attend to their lessons and take advantage of the learning opportunities provided.

The school is very well led within a climate of self-evaluation and strong teamwork which leads to constant improvement.

12. Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff is very good. There is a climate of constant evaluation of all aspects of school life, which supports planned, prioritised development and a continual striving towards improvement. This is evident in the very good progress made since the last inspection. The senior managers and governors have also identified some of the areas for development outlined in this current inspection, such as the need for even closer involvement of parents and pupils in their learning and is already establishing systems to address them. The very effective leadership style of the headteacher has enabled all staff to work closely as a team, collaborating in several initiatives and striving towards common goals and improved practice. This results in all staff, including non-education support staff, working very hard to improve conditions for the pupils and so raise standards of achievement.
13. The relatively new governing body are supporting the headteacher very well in guiding the school appropriately and monitoring performance. Governors have received some training and each take responsibility for different aspects of the work of the school. Those who are able, are familiar figures within the school looking after pupils' interests effectively. Their involvement results in the good quality of education provided.
14. The role of co-ordinators has been improved since the last inspection which has given clearer subject focus and a very good system for monitoring the quality of work. Teaching is regularly monitored and support for staff development is given. The progress that pupils make is therefore improved since the last inspection and is now good. However, this monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not systematic in the post-sixteen unit, which has resulted in slower progress for these pupils in some areas.
15. The financial management of the school is a particular strength. The deputy headteacher oversees very good control and auditing of finances and resources. The budget shows very good planning in order to save money where possible. For example the agreement with the site manager to effect some repairs has been very cost effective in that expenditure on this area has been reduced. The principles of best value are very well applied beginning with an audit of need which is carefully prioritised and outcomes monitored. This has improved development in the subject areas. It has also ensured upgraded information and communication technology, helping pupils to keep up with modern publishing and communication systems which they use well, including sending e-mails and taking information from the Internet.
16. One weakness which has not been addressed by management however is the lack of a school library. This hinders pupils' ability to develop library skills, access a wide range of books easily and become more aware of the importance of books. In addition the lack of specialised facilities for science and design and technology limits the extent of opportunities provided for learning and even better progress. The school has secured special facilities at a local school for some science groups and the quality of provision in these lessons is high.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Provision and progress for pupils post-sixteen, through a more balanced curriculum, lesson planning linked to assessment of progress and access to accreditation.

17. Students at post-sixteen spend much of their time in a high quality, purpose built facility with a kitchen, living area, modern office space and places to socialise. They have access to college link courses and go out into the community where appropriate. The quality of teaching in pottery, music, physical education, personal and social education and at college is high and students make noticeable gains in self-confidence. They are able to sing and read in school assemblies, take messages to other classes and offer to help when they see a job that needs to be done. Pupils are involved in decisions with regard to their future and the school takes every opportunity to help post-sixteen pupils move to mainstream education where possible and several pupils will be leaving for college this year. The effective careers convention between parents, students and the college helps considerably in the process towards the next stage of education and future placement.
18. However, the post-sixteen curriculum is not sufficiently broad or well balanced, which slows the development of students in skills and knowledge enjoyed by their peers in other special schools. Students do undertake responsibility for jobs around the school which helps them to learn skills for living and make a valued contribution to the life of the school, but this is not linked to the world of work. They do not have opportunities to be involved in work experience or mini-enterprise, which is unsatisfactory. Opportunities are also missed to widen the application of skills being learned. At lunchtime for example students eat as a separate social group but do not plan, shop for, prepare or cook some of their own meals. In addition to this, some of the subjects followed at college are repeated in school so that coverage of the full range of possible subjects is unbalanced. All this leads to progress for pupils in too narrow a range of activities.
19. There is also no systematic teaching of basic skills which is unsatisfactory. Some work is undertaken with money and time, and pupils read a local newspaper, work on computers, design the heading for the school newspaper and convey messages accurately which helps them towards becoming independent. However, teachers do not set goals for each student, nor assess precisely which skills are ready to be built upon and as a result achievement is variable and systematic progress in numeracy and literacy, is slow. Because of a lack of schemes for teaching basic skills, teachers do not plan lessons sufficiently well, nor do they identify which skills and objectives they should be developing. There are some sessions during the week which have no planning at all and teaching and support staff are unaware of what individual goals students should be working towards, time is therefore wasted and this is unsatisfactory. Despite these shortcomings, teachers and support staff are sensitive and encouraging when teaching pupils one to one, and there are examples of good progress being made by individuals, particularly in the use of communication skills and in their maturity and social development.
20. Finally post-sixteen pupils do not work towards any nationally recognised accreditation with the exception of swimming certificates where they do well. This is a limiting factor in supporting eventual certification at college, and it means that often, pupils' own goals are not clear to them. Pupils are assessed on the National Skills Profile by Easter of each year, but this records their achievements rather than directs their learning. However the school staff have recently agreed to develop a nationally

accredited curriculum for 16-19-year-olds which links well with the main school scheme.

The balance of activity and breadth of experience for some of the pupils in Class 1, to help them make even better progress in recognising and relating to their peers and the normal school environment.

21. The quality of teaching in Class 1 is very good indeed. The teacher and support staff understand the pupils exceptionally well and apply thoughtful and creative ideas to helping them learn. The sensory curriculum is imaginatively used to develop understanding in several subject areas. Parents feel strongly that this provision is of high quality helping their children to enjoy school and improving the quality of their life. This is supported by the inspection findings.
22. However, the age range from 6 to 16 years and the pupils' ability levels are wide. Some pupils score relatively well on the literacy and social development scales, for example, and the teacher strives to provide an environment suited to the needs of all of the pupils all of the time. For some pupils the gentle, predictable, highly supported environment is wholly suitable. However for others, experience of peer group role models, the noises and bustle of school and the variety of teaching and learning approaches is insufficient. For these pupils their ability to recognise and relate to people, events and objects in their everyday lives is curtailed by the amount of time spent in the more restricted environment of Class 1.
23. The school has recognised this dilemma and is beginning to organise a flexible regime which allows for some Class 1 pupils to move into different classes and join with normal school events such as lunch time and assembly. Often the same level of individual care with a highly personalised approach is continued into different environments. For example one pottery lesson for an individual pupil from this group was exceptionally good, leading to high motivation by the pupil to continue and contributing to the school's beautiful garden. However this is not yet sufficient and a stronger response by the school to balance the age-related and peer environment needs of some pupils with the high health care and secure environment needs of others is needed to ensure optimum progress for all pupils in this class.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- i. Improve provision and progress for pupils post-sixteen by:
 - planning a more balanced curriculum to include work-related experience, more attention to basic skills and activities leading to even greater independence;
 - planning lessons more carefully, linked to assessment of individual student attainment and goals to secure better, more clearly focused progress;
 - providing access where appropriate to nationally recognised accreditation to help students achieve certification which better prepares them for life after school.
- ii. Improve the balance of activity and breadth of experience for some pupils in Class 1, in order to help them to make even better progress in recognising and relating to their peers and the normal school environment.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	18	64	15	3	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	90
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	79
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YU5-Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.6
Average class size	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YU5-Y13

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	552

Financial information

Financial year	98-99
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	£
Total income	569,301
Total expenditure	632,779
Expenditure per pupil	7,813
Balance brought forward from previous year	158,750
Balance carried forward to next year	95,272

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	90
Number of questionnaires returned	42

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	17	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	31	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	33	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	19	11	3	22
The teaching is good.	86	14	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	78	14	6	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	94	6	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	72	19	6	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	89	11	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	17	3	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	19	3	8	17

Not all columns necessarily add up to 100 because some parents return questionnaires with some questions that are left unanswered

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are very supportive of the school and feel that more than can be expected is done for their children. The major issue for those parents with children in Class 1, was concern regarding the effect of OFSTED on the continuation of that class.