

INSPECTION REPORT

STONE BAY SCHOOL

Broadstairs

LEA area: KENT

Unique reference number: 119056

Headteacher: Richard Edey

Reporting inspector: Ian Naylor
20906

Dates of inspection: 12 –13 June 2001

Inspection number: 194548

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Maintained
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	70 Stone Road Broadstairs Kent
Postcode:	CT10 1EB
Telephone number:	01843 863421
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Angela Stuart
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stone Bay School is a maintained residential and day special school for 55 pupils. There are 42 boys and 13 girls aged 11 to 19 years who have special educational needs, such as communication difficulties, severe or moderate learning difficulties, challenging behaviours and Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). There are 19 pupils who attend daily, 12 pupils who are weekly boarders, and 24 pupils who are alternate weekend boarders. The school roll has increased significantly since the last inspection with an increase in referrals from Kent and the South East of England over the past four years. The referrals of pupils with severe learning difficulties and ASD have also increased dramatically over the past two years. Many of the pupils have a history of previous placements in more than one special school and many arrive having been excluded from their previous provision or who have missed education for an extended period. In the past 18 months a separation has been made for further education provision within the school campus. Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communications handicapped Children (TEACCH) and Picture Exchange Communications Systems (PECS) based structures are in place in all classes and residential areas. Most pupils are assessed by the school as being at Level 2 of the National Curriculum, or below, by the age of 14.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school in which very good leadership by the headteacher encourages good teaching; this helps to meet the varied needs of pupils very well. This in turn ensures that there is sustained good achievement by pupils. Sound management by senior staff and good support from the governing body, together with very good commitment by all staff, helps to create a school environment that is warm and friendly and which offers very good levels of care. The school continues to provide good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Teaching is good and there is very effective use of TEACCH, PECS and symbols to help pupils with severe communication and behaviour problems. As a result, the achievement of pupils up to age 16 is good and it is very good by age 19.
- The curriculum is good overall. In particular the further education department offers very good learning opportunities to students, especially for vocational and independence training.
- There is good leadership and management by the headteacher, key staff and the governing body.
- Very good arrangements for care produce a supportive environment in which pupils can grow in self-esteem and confidence.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The expertise of some staff in dealing with pupils with very challenging behaviours.
- The use of signing to help pupils to communicate and to assist with their general language acquisition.

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 February 1997. Since then, there has been good progress in all the issues raised in that report, especially since the arrival of the new headteacher, and they have now been addressed satisfactorily. Long term planning for the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is now good, and it is very good in the further education department. Schemes of work have been completed for most subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and for the others they are being systematically evaluated and revised. There is very good lesson planning, which sets relevant and challenging activities for all abilities. Reporting requirements in the governors' annual report to parents are now all met. French is now taught at Key Stages 3 and 4. Improvements have also been made in many minor issues.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 16	by age 19	Key	
speaking and listening	C	B	<i>very good</i>	A
reading	C	C	<i>good</i>	B
writing	C	C	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
mathematics	B	B	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	
personal, social and health education	B	A	D	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs	A	A	<i>poor</i>	E

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

Achievement is good overall. It is very good in the further education department, particularly in personal and social development and independence skills. Achievement and progress is good in English, mathematics, and science. It is very

good overall in personal social and health education. Achievement is good in the other subjects, except in physical education and modern foreign languages, where it is satisfactory. There is particularly good progress in communication skills. Whole school targets are relevant and supportive of pupils' progress; for example, those that determine access by pupils to communication systems and work experience placements for 16 to 19 year olds.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Day pupils are keen to come to school and most are enthusiastic participants in lessons. Those pupils in residence also participate willingly in evening and weekend activities as well as in lessons. All show interest, and work hard at whatever they are doing.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour around the school in lessons and during recreational activities is good. Behaviour of students in the further education department is often exemplary, particularly when they are out of school on college or work experience placements, or completing social independence training in the local community. Many pupils with particularly challenging behaviour make great efforts to make their behaviour more socially acceptable. Some pupils are more successful in achieving this than others
Personal development and relationships	Good. Most pupils make quite dramatic improvements in their personal and social skills, so that by the time they are 19 they are well prepared for full-time further education college placements or training. Many also improve their social relationship and communication skills. Relationships between pupils and staff are usually very good and are often excellent. Those between pupils are varied and are often constrained by their autism. There are however, numerous occasions in lessons and in leisure time when pupils recognise the feelings and needs of others.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Twenty-nine lessons or parts of lessons were observed. One lesson was excellent, eight were very good, twelve were good and eight were satisfactory. There were no

lessons which were less than satisfactory. This means that nearly three-quarters of teaching was good or better. Teaching is very good in the further education department. It is very good in personal and social education, and good in the other subjects except physical education and modern foreign languages, where it is satisfactory. A particular strength of teaching is the use of TEACCH, symbols and PECS, and the general management of behaviour. A relative weakness is caused by the inexperience of new teachers in dealing with very challenging behaviour.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall the school makes good curriculum provision. At Key Stages 3 and 4 there is a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum with good opportunities for learning. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are included. In further education, a variety of relevant vocational activities are offered along with English, communication and numeracy skills. Both stages of education and are greatly enhanced by the very good range of activities available during the evenings and weekends. There is still work to be completed on schemes of work at Key Stages 3 and 4.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There is a strong spiritual feeling about the school; class assemblies contribute well to pupils' good spiritual and moral development. Social development is very good; several good examples were observed of higher attaining pupils helping lower attaining pupils. Cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements for health and safety, and child protection procedures and guidelines, are very good. Residential care workers, teachers and learning support assistants work together to provide very good care. There is very good liaison with other professionals in the health, social services and careers services. There are good policies and procedures for the management of challenging behaviour. Annual Reviews and Reports are carried out well, and include detailed care plans and reports for resident pupils. Very good support is given to pupils and their families, particularly on admission and at transition at age 19, or when there are crises within families.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership. There is a sound management structure to support teaching, the development of the curriculum and the residential care.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is well organised. The chairman of governors has a very good awareness of the day-to-day workings of the school, and along with colleague governors, gives very good support to the headteacher and all staff. There are good sub-committee structures, terms of reference and regular meetings. There is a full governing body, with parents of day and residential pupils well represented. Governors are fully involved in the setting of policies and procedures. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its own performance.	The headteacher, staff and governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are constantly striving to improve. Very good whole school targets enable them to measure performance of teaching and pupils' achievements. The headteacher and governors have good systems for checking the effectiveness of management procedures as well as monitoring the quality of teaching and residential care.
The strategic use of resources	The school development plan is detailed and comprehensive. It guides all aspects of management, including financial management. Resources such as staffing, equipment and materials are well used. Sound attention is given to the principles of best value. Prudent budgeting has earmarked funding for further plans to improve facilities and accommodation, and has provided sufficient reserves to allow for the fluctuations in pupil numbers and fees.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has a bright and friendly atmosphere. • The highly successful placing of students in the local community for college courses, work experience and social skills training. • The leadership of the school, which supports pupils, parents and staff, very well. • Staff cope very well with challenging behaviour and the use of the TEACCH system is very effective. • Regular contact between school and home. • Staff always ready to listen to parents concerns. • Very good arrangements to support pupils and parents during the transition from school at 19. • The school has coped with their child when other schools could not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative methods of supporting pupils with very challenging behaviours and autism could be used. • The amount of homework their child does at home. (This was the response of a minority of parents)

Inspectors agree with all the positive views of parents. The staff are constantly seeking to find the best way of helping each pupil. The school has invested heavily in training for the TEACCH system, and this is where the best expertise lies, but staff are receptive to using other strategies. Inspectors feel that work for pupils to do at home is satisfactorily built around pupil need and parental support for it.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Teaching is good overall and there is very effective use of TEACCH, PECS and symbols to help pupils with severe communication and behaviour problems. As a result, the achievement of pupils up to age 16 is good, and it is very good by age 19.

1. Twenty-nine lessons or parts of lessons were observed. In 31 per cent of lessons there was excellent or very good teaching. In 41 per cent there was good teaching and in the remainder it was satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This means that nearly three-quarters of teaching was good or better, and teaching is therefore good overall. The quality of teaching observed during the previous inspection has thus been sustained. Teaching is very good in personal and social education, good in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology (including food technology), religious education and geography. It is satisfactory in physical education and modern foreign languages. In the further education department, teaching is very good. In Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is good overall. A particular strength of teaching is the use of TEACCH, symbols and PECS, and the general management of behaviour.

2. Planning for teaching is good, because it sets out what pupils' will do and what they will learn. Staff have very detailed knowledge of pupils' needs and at least sound and often very good subject knowledge. Good use is made of information in pupils' individual education plans and care plans to set tasks that are relevant and challenging. Teachers have high expectations of involvement and participation by pupils. Very good use is made of praise and encouragement, and of the school's award system. This supports the management of behaviour, which is usually very good. Recording and assessment is used well to further understand pupils' needs. Good use is made of verbal questioning to find out what pupils understand and recall. Activities are well thought out, so that they are interesting and relevant. Resources are all to hand and used well. Close teamwork between staff ensures that support is always available to pupils. Learning support assistants play an invaluable role in classroom management, and show dedication and superb skills, particularly in helping pupils with their behaviour and communication. They are fully involved in signing and use of symbols.

3. Achievement and progress is good overall. It is very good in the further education department, particularly in personal and social development and independence skills. In the subjects, achievement and progress is good in English, mathematics, and science. It is very good overall in personal social and health education. Achievement is good in the other subjects except in physical education and modern foreign languages, where it is satisfactory. There is particularly good progress in communication skills. Whole school targets are relevant and supportive of pupils' progress. For example, the school aims that 80 per cent of further education students should achieve National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC) awards in at least four curriculum areas by 19 year olds, and that a similar proportion should complete an agreed work experience placement. Both these targets look set to be met, as do most of the others.

4. Learning is good. Pupils know what they have to do to succeed, because teachers and staff explain things very well. Pupils follow instructions and carry them out successfully. Good attitudes to work and generally good behaviour, ensures that pupils concentrate for long periods on the tasks that are set. They work hard and usually enjoy their lessons. There are very good relationships and rapport between staff and pupils, often with the use of humour. Pupils are usually calm and relaxed and there is a pleasant productive atmosphere in lessons.

5. Effective teaching promotes good achievement and learning. For example, in an English lesson about different types of houses with 16 year olds, the TEACCH structure was very evident. Pupils' schedules and individual workstations were well organised. Pupils knew what they had to do and had a clear understanding of the classroom organisation. They related well with one another, and co-operated with staff when asked to go to their workstations and develop their language and sentence structure about houses. They worked hard and stayed on task for significant periods. Staff made good use of symbols and PECS to develop understanding. Pupils match symbols to pictures. They point out various features of houses, such as roof, doors and windows. They name them and say how they are different.

6. Another example of very effective teaching, which promoted very good learning and achievement, was seen in a series of English lessons on Shakespeare in the further education department. Each tutor group was following the same theme - to learn the play *Julius Caesar* - with the goal of having an end of term performance for the rest of the school. There was superb organisation and teamwork by staff. One group was preparing the script using symbols and word-processing and another was preparing the 'props' for the play. Swords, daggers, helmets and shields were made from papier-mâché and cardboard. A third group, was using a sensory experience with bread dough to make similar artefacts. Students were totally absorbed by the activities and thoroughly enjoyed participating. This was particularly true, when, towards the end of the lesson, the groups came together, were 'reading' through the script and holding mini-auditions to determine which student would play the parts in the play. Good reading skills by several students were observed, and good memorisation of lines of scripts. They understood that different speaking parts had to be delivered in different ways, and rehearsed the best way to do it. Their progress and achievement was remarkable. In the sensory group, the learning support assistant had excellent skills in using signing. This enabled lower attaining pupils to understand what they were being asked to do.

7. In a very good numeracy lesson with pupils aged 14, teachers used the TEACCH approach effectively, and had detailed knowledge of pupils' academic and social needs. The teacher's general management of behaviour supported pupils' learning needs extremely well. The result was that pupils remained on task and made very good progress in the lesson. Higher attaining pupils were able to add and subtract with fair accuracy and speed to 12. Lower attaining pupils recognise numbers to three.

8. A science lesson with pupils at age 16, on comparing differences between flowers and vegetables, also had many elements of very good teaching. There were

lots of resources of flowers and vegetables for pupils to see, and the teacher gave good opportunities for the pupils to develop their language. Tasks were carefully matched to the abilities of each pupil. For example, higher attaining pupils recorded the results of their investigations by writing, and lower attaining pupils used symbols or pictures (PECS). The teacher's high expectations

and understanding of pupils' abilities ensured that pupils concentrated and behaved well. Pupils made good progress. Several could give good reasons for plants having a stem, roots and leaves. One pupil recognised radishes. Most pupils knew that plants make oxygen through their leaves and that they require warmth, light, water and nutrients to live. Lower attaining pupils enjoyed handling and smelling various vegetables.

9. By age 19, students make very good progress in personal and social development. Lessons on independence skills training and careers prepare them very well for the next stage of education or training. A very good lesson about careers had superb liaison and co-operation between the teachers and the careers education adviser. They used a team teaching approach that was very effective in getting across to pupils the choices that faced them when they leave school. Very good organisational and presentational skills ensured that students were engaged, challenged to think, and helped to participate in discussion about their preferences. Students recalled what they had done at work experience and college. They related this to what they might do when they leave school. They said what sort of work they like doing; gardening, cooking, woodwork, and knew the difference between work and spare time or leisure.

The curriculum is good overall. In particular the further education department offers very good learning opportunities to students, especially for vocational and independence training.

10. The school makes good curriculum provision. At Key Stages 3 and 4 there is a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum with good opportunities for learning. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are included. Many improvements have been made to the curriculum since the previous inspection. French is now suitably taught at Key Stages 3 and 4. A subject approach has been implemented and the timetable now follows a broad and well-balanced curriculum that is very relevant to pupils needs. Planning is very thorough, and schemes of work have been completed for most subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The rest are being systematically evaluated, revised, and implemented.

11. There is a constant emphasis on personal, social and health education, including sex education and education about drug misuse. There are good links with the local community and with the local further education college, for work experience placements and college link courses. Overall, there has been good progress in both the school and the further education curriculum since the previous inspection.

12. The school is successfully and imaginatively adapting the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies to meet the needs of the pupils, but this process is as yet incomplete. The TEACCH strategy is used very well, with the emphasis on schedule (and use of PECS), so that pupils develop an understanding of routine. 'Choosing times' reward pupils for appropriate attitudes to their work and for good behaviour. Personal, social and health education, including education about drugs

misuse and sex education, is an important part of the curriculum and includes a variety of activities to support social independence training. Vocationally based courses are currently being planned for Key Stage 4 using the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Transition Challenge modules.

13. In further education, a variety of relevant vocational activities are offered, along with English, communication skills and numeracy skills. A good system of tutorial groups enables class sizes to be kept to a minimum, and some setting by ability for different activities. The department is very well organised, and the staff team work hard to maintain a warm and relaxed adult environment that is quite distinct from the rest of the school. Every opportunity is afforded to students to exercise their independence skills. For example, students take it in turns to prepare lunch for the whole department and they do this very successfully. All students eat in the department and there is a lively and pleasant social atmosphere with very good relationships between students, and between students and staff. There is detailed curriculum and lesson planning which gives clear direction to all staff. This is firmly based on teachers' detailed knowledge of students, their individual education plans and care plans. The co-ordinator manages the department very successfully, and has created a united team that is highly successful in addressing students' needs.

14. A well-organised programme of work experience placements gives all pupils the opportunity to understand the adult world beyond the classroom. A wide variety of placements have been made available by school staff; some are in the local community with retailers or other businesses, and others are within the school. The school works in conjunction with the local education business partnership to ensure placements and that suitable insurance arrangements are available. A learning support assistant has the responsibility, and works diligently, to make sure that students get a placement suitable to their interests. She provides excellent supervision and support to students whilst on placement and also makes monitoring visits. She co-ordinates the assessment and record keeping forms that placement providers are asked to complete for each student. Inspectors visited two work experience placements, one of which was at a local supermarket. The student had been on placement for nine months, attending one morning each week. He looked forward to going, and his confidence and self-esteem had grown significantly over that period. The supermarket supervisor reported that the student was competent at filling shelves and helping in the stockroom, and worked with a minimum of support. He was particularly good at helping customers to find the items they needed. The second placement visited was in the school kitchen. Here a student was well established in her routine that involved a half-an-hour washing-up session each week. She worked hard and followed instructions well; she had made good relationships with the other staff. When asked she said she enjoyed the placement very much, but just wished it was not so early in the morning! (9.15 am!) The catering manager spoke highly of her ability to fit in and get on with her tasks.

15. Another student, who was not visited by inspectors on his work placement, volunteered to describe what he did. He worked one morning each week in a local florist shop. He has a passion for flower arranging, and proudly showed the arrangement he had made which was beautifully presented - for the reception area

of the school. He could name the flowers and say why he had selected them. He explained that he changes the arrangement every week or when necessary. He shops himself for the flowers in places like the local market, and gets good bargains on the price of the flowers. He loves going to the florist on placement, and the reports by his supervisor there indicate that he has the skills to gain open employment and could follow a course on floristry.

16. Other work placements include working in the school gardens and the art room, a local garden centre and a local riding stable. The overall impact of these placements on pupils' independence skills and self-confidence is often remarkable, and produces very good and often excellent achievement. Students' social relationships and behaviour whilst attending these placements is exemplary.

17. There are several carefully co-ordinated link courses for students arranged in conjunction with the local further education college. These provide opportunities for students to engage in activities that are not available in school. They also provide a suitable adult environment. An inspector visited students on a resistant materials course. Students had made their way to the college on foot and arrived on time. They quickly put on their safety overalls and were ready to begin work. There was a calm purposeful atmosphere during the lessons in which each student continued to make a small wooden toy for a young child. There was very good collaboration between the college lecturer and the school learning support assistant who accompanied the group from school. She provided a useful link between school and college. Good progress was made by students in the woodworking skills, of sawing, measuring, gluing and use of the correct tools. Pupils also had good knowledge of safety procedures in the workshop. All pupils clearly enjoyed working at the college, co-operated well with staff and acted in a very adult manner. Other link courses with the college include pottery and painting and decorating.

18. A parent attending an annual review of her son at the school expressed her delight with the way the school organised work experience and college placements. She said how successful they were in preparing students for their lives when they leave school.

19. Both stages of education meet the wide range of interests and needs of the pupils, and are greatly enhanced by the very good range of activities available during the evenings and weekends. The 24 hour curriculum enhances the taught school day very well. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good and are made available to day pupils.

20. Accreditation is provided for all Key Stage 4 and further education students through the NPTC. Staff administer this in conjunction with the local further education college, through the Vocational Foundation Certificate Scheme. The college provides external validation, and several school staff are qualified assessors.

There is good leadership and management by the headteacher, key staff and the governing body.

21. The headteacher provides very good leadership. In the two years since his appointment, he has been instrumental in instigating the many improvements that have been made to the curriculum and the general school management and provision since the previous inspection. He has a clear view of the future direction of the school, and communicates this well to staff. He has successfully co-ordinated the revision or implementation of school policies, procedures and documentation,

has a very good knowledge of educational developments, and exercises good financial control. There is a sound management structure to support teaching, the development of the curriculum and residential care. The senior management team has been restructured and meets regularly. There is good delegation to senior managers, and there are very good links between the management of education and care.

22. The governing body is well organised. There is a full governing body, and parents of day and residential pupils are well represented. They fully support the headteacher and staff, and work in conjunction with them to secure the best curriculum and provision of care for pupils. The chairman of governors, who is local education authority governor, with a child at the school, has a very good awareness of the day-to-day working of the school, and meets regularly with the headteacher and senior staff. She also makes regular visits to the classrooms and to the residential areas, to talk to staff and pupils. Other governors also visit. There are regular meetings of the full governing body. There are sub-committees for finance, curriculum, staffing and pupil welfare, each with sound terms of reference. Governors are fully involved in the setting of policies and procedures, and all statutory requirements are met.

23. The headteacher, staff and governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are constantly striving to improve. Induction procedures are good and support new staff well. There is an extensive range of staff development. Staff development days are used well to provide staff with a range of training and development for curriculum and care. They are well co-ordinated by the deputy headteacher. Key staff attend specific training courses, such as those for the Literacy and Numeracy strategies, TEACCH and autism.

24. Senior managers set very good whole-school targets, to enable them to measure performance of teaching and pupils' achievements. The headteacher and governors have good systems for good procedures for performance management. These include checking the effectiveness of management, monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and residential care. These include, for instance, regular observations of lessons by the headteacher, and formal and informal visits by the chairman of governors and other link governors to the classroom and residences to check standards of teaching, care, accommodation and facilities. The governors also receive written and verbal reports from staff on their particular areas of responsibility. The headteacher also provides governors with very detailed reports giving information about all aspects of the school.

25. The school development plan (SDP) is detailed and comprehensive. It guides all aspects of management, including financial management. It includes planning for the current year, as well as sound projections for future development and spending. All budget holders contribute to the SDP, and subject co-ordinators provide an analysis of the development needs for their subjects. There is an efficient school office that provides very good information and support to staff and parents. The school bursar has good finance procedures and controls, as confirmed in a recent local education authority financial monitoring visit. The minutes of the governors' finance sub-committee indicate that governors have a

sound grasp of the budgetary requirements of the school, and that they monitor spending carefully. Resources of staffing equipment and materials are well used. Sound attention is given to the principles of best value. Prudent budgeting has earmarked funding for further plans to improve facilities and accommodation, and created sufficient reserves to allow for fluctuations in pupil numbers and fees.

Very good arrangements for care produce a supportive environment in which pupils can grow in self-esteem and confidence

26. The care and welfare of pupils is very good. The main reason for this is the way in which residential care workers, teachers and learning support assistants all work together to provide a consistent approach to care. There are good policies and procedures for health and safety. Child protection procedures and guidelines are good. All staff, including teachers and learning support assistants, have received training in child protection and restraint procedures. There is an ongoing cycle of training for all staff on the management of challenging behaviour through the Strategies for Crises Intervention and Prevention (SCIP) courses. There are good policies and procedures for the management of challenging behaviour. Inspectors observed examples of the appropriate use of restraint, and good management of challenging behaviour. Training is also provided for all staff in Makaton signing to support those pupils with limited verbal skills. Staff have, therefore, a wide range of skills to draw on to support pupils.

27. There is very good liaison with other professionals in the health, social services and careers service. In particular, there is good collaboration between school staff and health authority speech and language therapists. The provision of speech and language therapy has increased, and is set to increase further next term through the negotiations between the headteacher and health authority managers. An innovation by the headteacher has been the training and support for a learning support assistant to become a communication facilitator, and an accredited trainer for signing. She develops resources in conjunction with colleagues, works with pupils on targets provided by speech and language therapists, and conducts training sessions for other staff on Makaton signing. This has helped to increase the communication skills of many pupils.

28. Annual reviews and reports are carried out well, and include detailed care plans and reports for resident pupils. There is very good liaison with home, by letter and regular phone calls. For instance, each residential pupil's key worker phones parents each week to report on progress. There is very good participation by parents in annual reviews, and many parents attend high profile special events, where face-to-face contact is maintained in an informal way. Parents are further supported by regular information through home-school books.

29. Annual reviews give good information to parents on the progress of their children. An inspector attended an annual review. This was very well conducted by the headteacher and well attended by key school staff. Teachers, care staff and the speech and language therapist provided very detailed reports. Other professionals had been invited to attend as appropriate. Good future plans and targets were laid down by the meeting, in full consultation with the parent. The annual review highlighted that there is very good support given by the headteacher and staff to pupils and their families, particularly on admission, transition at age 19, or when there are crises within families.

30. The quality of care is maintained by the educational support and guidance given in good quality individual education plans and care plans. All members of

staff, including learning support assistants and care staff, provide pupils with a high degree of individual support, informed by a high level of training. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are generally very good. Attendance is well followed up, but register procedures for authorisation need a little more rigour.

31. Residential areas are very welcoming, with a high standard of furnishing and decoration to pupils' common room areas and bedrooms. Careful planning by the headteacher and staff has made accommodation appropriate to the needs of pupils. The result is that pupils are helped to remain calm and relaxed by their environment. They have privacy in their bedrooms and bathrooms. The way that pupils decorate their rooms with their own posters and pictures shows that they take a pride and interest in their surroundings. Most evening and weekend meals are taken in the residential areas, which helps to create a group identity, supports inter-personal skills and develops a relaxed, close knit 'family atmosphere'. This was particularly commented on as an excellent feature of the school by parents at the parents' meeting. Challenging behaviours are reduced because members of staff are able to give better supervision and support to pupils in an environment that gives more space to individuals and groups of pupils. Good teamwork by staff also gives excellent continuity of support to pupils. There is close liaison between teacher and care workers, especially at hand-over times. Also, there is very good continuation for pupils of skills training for the NPTC accreditation during their leisure and recreational pursuits. Parents at the parents' meeting were pleased with the way pupils continued to develop their independence and social skills outside the classroom.

32. There is a well-established programme of activities during evenings and at weekends. Many of these are open to day pupils as well as residents. The head of care organises staff well, so that pupils on fortnightly-boarding arrangements have a variety of things that they can do. He has funding from the school's budget to provide resources and equipment, and does this effectively and efficiently. Pupils and students can join activities according to their interests and abilities. They are allowed to make choices about what they do. There is a wide range of well supervised and organised activities available during each week, including tenpin bowling, football training, swimming, shopping trips, walking within the locality, visits to a local pub (for students 18 and over), aerobics classes, discos and many others.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The expertise of some staff in dealing with pupils with very challenging behaviours.

33. Some classes have pupils with severe behaviour needs and others do not. Some of those that do have severe behaviour needs, have the least experienced staff. There is an inherent danger created by the policy of segregating behaviour and learning needs that needs to be reviewed by senior managers. The perceptions of staff about challenging behaviour vary across the school and residential areas. This leads to an inconsistency of approach that may affect pupil temperament, and present staff with difficult behaviour to manage. Learning support assistants play a

vital role in classrooms, and offer very effective support to pupils in managing their behaviour. The most effective lessons were those in which teachers and learning support assistants worked very closely together with the management of pupil behaviour.

34. The headteacher and deputy headteacher give very good support to all staff, and particularly to new teachers, in managing behaviour. They help to give them strategies to cope, and endeavour to contain behavioural problems within classrooms, withdraw pupils if this does not work, and return them as soon as they are able to respond appropriately. However, at one point during the inspection, there were no fewer than six pupils out of classroom being counselled by senior staff about their behaviour. Some new staff have not yet had the benefit of the full training for SCIP, TEACCH, or the general management of severe autistic behaviours; nor do they yet have sufficient experience of teaching pupils with extremely severe learning difficulties. Given that some of the pupils present the most extreme of challenging patterns of autistic related behaviour to be found in the local authority, suitable training needs to be provided without delay.

The use of signing to help pupils to communicate and to assist with their general language acquisition

35. A great deal of effort, training and resources have been put in by the headteacher and staff to develop the use of TEACCH, PECS, and symbols across the school. This has been successful in helping pupils with severe communication problems to reduce or overcome these problems. Many staff have undertaken training in Maketon signing, much of this delivered by the school's own qualified trainer. Some staff, particularly learning support assistants, are very good signers, and many good examples of signing were seen. However, inspectors noted in many lessons, and in other situations around the school, that there was limited use of signing by staff or inconsistency in how it was used. Some members of staff were unsure of when and how much signing should be used. Inspectors feel that a more uniform approach would not only help those pupils with the most severe speech or communication problems, but also provide good support to other pupils who have limited verbal skills, in their general acquisition of language.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. In order to address the weaknesses, the headteacher, staff and governors need to consider the following points for development in their action plan:

- New staff should be given continued intense support and training to consolidate their expertise in dealing with pupils with very challenging behaviours. There should be a review of class groupings for pupils with the most challenging behaviours and the policy of segregating behaviour and learning needs.
- The use of signing to help pupils to communicate and to assist with their general language acquisition needs to be further improved. Signing should be used uniformly and consistently by all members of staff, in lessons and in the residential areas, to create a total signing environment.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	28	41	28	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	55
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

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	1

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	5.1	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	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	49
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7-13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Average class size	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

Y7-13

Total number of education support staff	61
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1819

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1605299.00
Total expenditure	1567793.00
Expenditure per pupil	31,356.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	326139.00
Balance carried forward to next year	363645.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	55
Number of questionnaires returned	26

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	20	6	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	16	10	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	9	12	1	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	2	8	0	1	6
The teaching is good.	19	6	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	4	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	24	2	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	16	9	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	19	6	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	21	5	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	20	4	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	5	0	0	1