

INSPECTION REPORT

NEWARK ORCHARD SCHOOL

Newark

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 130996

Headteacher: Mrs Sharon Jefferies

Reporting inspector: Mr H J Phillips
16227

Dates of inspection: 18 – 20 February 2002

Inspection number: 196394

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: Community special school
Age range of pupils: 3 to 19
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Appleton Gate
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Lesley Booth

Date of previous inspection: 28 April 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Newark Orchard School situated in the town of Newark, is a split-site area special school. The Town site houses primary aged pupils and the London Road site houses secondary aged pupils. The sites are about 1.5 miles apart. The residential hostel provides for only one pupil and is scheduled to close at the end of the summer term.

There are 85 pupils aged 3 to 19 on roll. The school provides for the full range of pupils with special educational needs. This includes pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), moderate and severe learning difficulties (MLD and SLD), and pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Many pupils have some additional needs, for example, some are on the autistic spectrum and others have attention deficit disorders (ADD). Many come to the school at 11 years of age having failed adequately to make the transition from primary to secondary schools. A unit for Post-16 students is based in a separate building at the Town site. Since the last inspection the number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties has steadily increased to its present level of over 30%. Only two pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds but neither needs help with English as an additional language. The ratio of boys to girls in the school is two to one. Most pupils who are admitted to the school early in the primary phase have attainments that are well below national averages. Many of the pupils coming into school during the secondary phase have attainments that are well below national averages but a few have attainments within national averages. Since the last inspection the local education authority's Outreach and Learning Support Team is no longer based at the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Newark Orchard school is a very good school with some excellent features. It effectively meets the diverse range of special educational needs of the pupils. Outstanding leadership is provided by the headteacher and the excellent school management complements this. The school governors and senior staff are committed to making the best possible provision and there is strong teamwork throughout the school. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now mainly good and often very good. All pupils make progress and achieve good standards in relation to their age and degree of learning difficulty. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher, governors and senior staff combine excellent leadership and management skills and provide an effective team that strives to improve the quality of the school's provision;
- the high quality systems of performance management and staff development have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved to meet an increasing range of pupils' needs throughout the school;
- the provision to meet pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their personal, health and social education is very good;
- excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the consistent management of pupils' behaviour results in overall standards of behaviour being good and pupils' developing positive attitudes;
- the school has very good links with parents, the community, outside agencies and other schools.

What could be improved

- The timetabled lesson lengths for some subjects in the secondary department;
- provision for, and use of, information and communication technology (ICT) to support and enhance pupils' learning in the primary years and to support the learning of mobility and communication skills;
- some aspects of the generally good teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy.

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

The school has already identified the need to improve provision and staff expertise for ICT as a priority for development during the year 2002, and to provide specific equipment for individual students. It has set targets for improving literacy and numeracy.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvements since the last inspection in 1997 and the key issues identified have been successfully acted upon. The school has taken very good steps to ensure equality of opportunity and inclusion for all pupils both in and out of school. Particular efforts have been made to enable pupils with physical and mobility difficulties to be included in all activities, including residential experiences. There have been good developments in extending the role of co-ordinators. They now carry out very good monitoring and evaluations of teachers' planning and pupils' progress in the areas for which they are responsible.

The senior management staff and school governors carry out very good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and provision across the curriculum. Play facilities have been greatly improved by the new, purpose-designed adventure playground on the primary site. Good use is made of nearby mainstream school and community sports facilities for secondary pupils.

Other improvements include the quality of teaching and learning, the development of performance management and target setting and the continuing professional development of staff to meet the changing and increasingly wide range of special needs of the pupils.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 6	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
speaking and listening	B	B	A	B	very good A
reading	B	B	B	B	good B
writing	C	C	B	C	satisfactory C
mathematics	B	B	A	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	A	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	A	

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

Standards are well below average for most pupils, apart from a few more able Year 10 pupils. Overall, pupils make good progress. They make good progress in the primary years and Post-16. They make very good progress between the ages of 11 and 16.

Pupils with **profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)** make increasing progress as they mature and their learning skills improve. They increasingly interact positively with staff and their surroundings and gain in practical and learning skills. They use switches to control equipment and electronic talkers but this is insufficiently developed throughout the school. They become less reliant on the co-active help of adults and make positive and appropriate choices as they draw, paint, measure and mix ingredients or use equipment. Their social skills develop well. Towards leaving school they become increasingly aware and interested in activities within the community, such as shopping where they develop basic skills in the use of money.

Pupils with **severe or moderate learning difficulties (SLD/MLD)** or having difficulties within the **autistic** spectrum make steady progress across the range of curriculum as they work towards targets set for them in their individual education plans (IEPs). By the time they leave school most have a good understanding of books. More able pupils become competent readers and are able to write independently. They can use a computer to wordprocess their work and print it out independently. Numeracy skills, including the use of money, develop well. They achieve good levels of competence in personal and social development, demonstrate confidence and self-esteem and become more independent in school, in the community and in their work related activities and/or work experience.

Pupils with **emotional or behavioural difficulties (EBD)** often make very good progress emotionally, in their self-control and in their educational development. They become confident speakers with some ability to use French. Their reading and writing skills improve considerably but

few pupils read for pleasure. By the age of 16, for example, many can record their experiments in science logically in their own words using neat cursive handwriting. They make very good progress in mathematics and have a good understanding of mathematical language but few are secure in their mental arithmetic. They have a good understanding of how a computer works and develop good skills in the use of desk-top publishing through the production of newsletters and downloading from the internet. Through the very good programme of personal and social education, they achieve a good understanding of healthy living and develop positive attitudes to the world of work as they follow a programme culminating in visits to places of work, work experience and link courses at colleges of further education. They respond well to their opportunities to follow art and drama courses at a local secondary school and some are achieving good standards towards GCSE accreditation. A few return fulltime to mainstream school. By the time they leave school most show positive attitudes, are confident in their interactions with their peers and with adults in the community and in their work experience placements.

Towards leaving school pupils develop good skills for independent living through a range of activities including planning for and decorating rooms in the school's bungalow or designing and developing the garden.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: Pupils' attitudes to school are always positive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: Pupils demonstrate their sense of community by supporting each other.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: Staff know pupils well and provide good role models. Relationships are very good and create a climate of personal value and achievement.
Attendance	Satisfactory: Attendance figures are adversely affected by the persistent ill-health of a minority of pupils.

Despite a significant number of pupils having emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, the positive ethos of the school and the consistent approaches to individual needs result in pupils' attitudes being very good. They are keen to participate in lessons and in the wide range of educational and leisure opportunities provided by the school. Pupils are generally friendly and respectful to adults and to each other. They try hard to abide by the school's code of conduct.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Very good	Good

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

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now very good overall. Pupils learn effectively. Teaching becomes less effective, but still satisfactory when otherwise good lessons are too long and pupils are not able to sustain interest. Overall, teaching meets the needs of all pupils whatever their gender or special educational needs. Teaching in the basic skills of speaking, listening, and numeracy is good at all stages but pupils do not have enough planned opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects. In the early and primary years, the teaching is consistently good and in Years 7-11, where subjects are taught increasingly by specialist teaching, it is often very good. Teaching in the post-16 provision is good overall.

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can learn and achieve are usually high. Whenever possible they ask skilful questions that challenge pupils to think logically before answering. Consequently, this enhances the quality of learning, helping pupils to concentrate, work hard and effectively develop a sense of achievement. Most lessons are well planned to extend pupils' learning and resources are well organised. Teachers and assistants work together effectively as a team to ensure that pupils' learning is supported. There were very good examples seen of teachers providing individual work for all the pupils in the class. In this way pupils are helped to achieve the specific targets set within their individual education plans (IEPs). Pupils often thoroughly enjoy activities and respond positively to the very good behaviour management strategies used by all staff. Teachers are skilled in undertaking assessments of pupils' achievements during sessions and make very good use of this information to plan the next lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: Curriculum provision is successful in meeting the wide range of pupils' needs. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Across the diverse range of special educational needs, the school is successful in enabling pupils to make very good progress in their personal development. There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils are very effective. Policies and procedures for child protection, health and safety and the monitoring of pupils' progress in all areas of the curriculum are well thought out and effectively implemented.

The school's curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the diverse learning needs of the pupils in the school. There are very good learning opportunities outside the classroom, including clubs, visitors and the very good residential experiences culminating in holidays abroad. These enhance the curriculum and complement pupils' very good social and cultural development. The provision for post-16 students is good. There is a strong ethos for inclusion within the school and all pupils have equality of opportunities. Particular efforts are made for pupils to return to mainstream schools whenever possible and to provide opportunities for inclusion of pupils within the community and mainstream schools. Very good partnerships with parents are effective in supporting pupils' personal and educational development. Pupils who need support in managing their personal needs are treated with high levels of respect and dignity.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership and management have enabled the school to be effective in meeting the increasingly wide range of pupils' needs.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Excellent. The governors are very effectively involved in school management and use their collective expertise very well in strategic planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent procedures are firmly established. Evaluation of provision is thorough. Target setting for improvement is a strength of the school's work.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of resources, especially staffing, and actively seeks additional support through local and national initiatives.

The headteacher, governors and senior staff work very well together as a team. Full use is made of the principles of best value through very good planning and financial management.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being enabled to work with the school• The quality of teaching and learning opportunities provided• The progress their children make both in skills and behaviour• Equality of opportunities within the very good extra-curricular activities• The approachability of the school and the support provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reducing the period some pupils have to wait for admission to the school• Supervision of pupils' use of the adventure playground

Over half of the parents responded to the inspection questionnaire. Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents and acknowledge that the school has a waiting list for places. Supervision arrangements made for pupils' use of the playground were found to be appropriate.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher, governors and senior staff combine excellent leadership and management skills and provide an effective team that strives to improve the quality of school provision

1. Since the last inspection the school has continued to benefit from the high quality leadership of the headteacher whose passion for the ideals of the school's mission statement, 'Individual Growth for Individual People' is applied to staff and pupils alike. Her commitment is reflected in her clear vision for the school's development and for continuing to improve provision for the benefit of all pupils. She is supported critically by an exceptional chair of governors who is both knowledgeable and dedicated to the school. The school governors actively keep up with local and national initiatives. Their collective expertise and enthusiasm are respected and appreciated by staff and parents. Processes of self-review are highly developed. The school has conducted thorough audits and reviews and collated assessment data purposefully. Findings have been thoughtfully analysed to identify priorities and set targets for improvement.
2. The senior management team (SMT) of headteacher, deputy headteacher, two senior teachers and a recently appointed senior teaching assistant manager have clearly-defined leadership and management roles which they pursue with imagination and enthusiasm. Other teachers provide good leadership in promoting the development of the curriculum areas for which they are responsible. Individual teachers take a lead role relating to meeting a particular need of pupils, such as visual impairment. This involves developing their own expertise through specialist distance-learning courses, leading to specific additional qualifications such as an advanced diploma, and then sharing their learning with the whole staff so that provision may be improved. This practice make a valuable contribution to improving the school's provision. Senior teaching assistants also take an effective lead role and support colleagues in aspects of child-care such as 'moving and handling'.
3. The school also has a strategic input into district and local education authority development, particularly in relation to special education needs provision in mainstream schools. Local primary and secondary headteachers value highly the help, advice and training provided by the school, enabling them to provide more effectively for meeting the needs of pupils with specific difficulties, such as those within the autistic spectrum, and supporting their continued inclusion in the mainstream school. However, these headteachers report that access to this support has been reduced by the reduced flexibility of present arrangements, following the movement of the local education authorities Outreach Service from the Orchard School base.
4. Overall, management skills are excellent. Many staff have responsibilities at different levels of management. The headteacher manages the overall day-to-day running of the school efficiently, supports and encourages staff in their work and is effective in promoting good teamwork and a sense of community. Staff are very effectively deployed to make best use of their skills and interests in meeting pupils' educational and personal needs. Pupil groupings are well considered to make efficient use of teaching with pupils being allocated to groups of similar ability for

English and mathematics lessons. Best use is also made of teachers' expertise and interest through specialist teaching of the curriculum at secondary level and some exchange of classes for some lessons, such as science, at primary level. These strategies for delivering the curriculum has helped to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school.

5. The school's development plan is clear in its stated priorities and targets for improvement relating to '*Pupils, Premises, Professionals, Partnership and Potential*'. Clear roles and responsibilities for each part of the plan are stated, enabling updates on progress and as part of its built-in quality assurance. Targets are set within a timeline over a three year period. Some key aspects, such as behaviour management, are identified as features for continuing improvement with the senior management team having lead responsibilities. The governor assigned to each development priority monitors progress as a 'critical friend' and makes a significant contribution to the school's very professional and purposeful approach.
6. Members of the senior management team manage the staff groups and provision within the school's primary and secondary departments confidently and competently and ensure that targets for development are met. The good professional relationships and support provided by the heads of departments have resulted in a highly motivated staff who work together well. Subject co-ordinators manage curriculum development well through very good monitoring and evaluation of teachers' planning and pupils' progress. They formulate and update policies, develop resources, attend specialist courses and share expertise and advise colleagues. This has been effective in raising standards in their subject area. Other staff with management responsibilities carry out their duties very well. They have developed areas of expertise such as risk assessment and contribute significantly to corporate effectiveness.
7. The school governors are actively involved in the management of the school and are very active in their roles on the various governor sub-committees. For example, the members of the finance committee keep a careful check of expenditure and report to the full governing body on the progress of initiatives and the status of the budget. This results in very efficient financial management. Each governor is also attached to a specific area of the curriculum and works alongside subject coordinators to carry out an audit of provision as part of the school's excellent programme of self-review. This results in the governors having a clear understanding of the school's needs and enables them to clearly identify the priorities for development. Parents unanimously consider the school to be very well managed.

The high quality systems of performance management have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved to meet an increasing range of pupil needs throughout the school

8. The school has established excellent procedures for performance management. The senior management team rigorously monitors the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. A well considered allocation of teachers and assistants to each member of the senior management team enables the performance of all staff, including teacher assistants and personal care assistants, to be monitored each term. Two lesson observations and evaluations are carried out for each teacher each year. Evaluations are discussed with staff and the feedback results in targets being agreed for improvement. Additionally each member of staff is linked to a different senior management team member who acts as a critical friend to provide support and

mentoring in an informal and ongoing way. The senior management team members have become skilled in these procedures and are regarded as ‘enthusiasts for getting it right.’

9. An integral part of the performance management outcomes is the effective identification of training needs. These include those chosen by the staff member, those needed to improve personal performance and those identified and prioritised by the school through its self-evaluation procedures. These training needs are very well addressed through the opportunities and arrangements made for professional development of staff. The school seeks out the best available courses and in-service training providers to meet these needs and has excellent procedures to maximise their benefit to the school. A good example of this is the ongoing training being provided to develop staff skills in behaviour management. Training days have been used effectively to ensure that training leads to a consistent approach and enables staff to support each other in their work. Excellent steps have been taken to continue the development of staff skills in behaviour management through the establishment of a team of school staff and outside professionals to further improve procedures and practice.
10. Overall, the outcomes of the school’s performance management programme are having a major positive effect on the successful development of staff skills in meeting the changing and increasing diversity of pupils’ needs.

The provision to meet pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their personal, health and social education is very good

11. Provision for the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. It is well supported by a very good programme of personal, health and social education, (PHSE), a positive school ethos and extra-curricular activities.
12. There are very good opportunities for pupils to make progress in their social development. Tasks, designed to foster a sense of responsibility to oneself and the group, are set in all classes. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, when pupils worked together as a group in a mathematics lesson, they helped one another to recall number facts. This social development is enhanced within the PHSE curriculum and this was seen in a PHSE lesson where a positive mature atmosphere was generated with good humour when Year10 and 11 pupils shared their ideas about work and suitable jobs. All staff stress the importance of pupils taking responsibilities for their own actions and have high expectations of the way pupils behave to one another. This is well illustrated by a small incident in the dining hall when one child was hurtful to another and other pupils showed sympathy to the victim. Again, in a religious education lesson, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties showed recognition of each other through touch.
13. The school makes considerable efforts to enhance the curriculum with a very good range of field trips, holidays abroad and residential experiences. These activities are open to all and underpin and provide extensive additional opportunities for pupils to live, work and enjoy activities together in a social situation. There is a tradition in the school to produce stage shows each year in each of the phases. They are written and produced by the staff and usually based on a well-known story. These events make a major contribution to the social development of pupils, their confidence and self-esteem.

14. The trips abroad are arranged regularly and provide a new and fresh dimension to pupils' cultural development. They are extremely well planned and researched so that they provide a very good range of practical cultural experiences. These experiences are specifically designed to ensure that all pupils enjoy social interaction and learn about the country's customs and traditions. A particular feature is the way pupils are taught a number of useful words in the appropriate language before they go and the way a very careful record is kept of the activities and the feelings of pupils. These records capture the fun had by all. Cultural development is also enhanced through the curriculum, in, for example, the teaching of a modern foreign language, art and design and by the skilful and sensitive choice of music in assemblies. The high quality displays around the school highlighting other cultures are a testament to the attention paid by the school to the pupils' cultural development, for example, the recent celebration of the Chinese New Year and artwork about the poppy fields, sunflowers and design work with Russian dolls.
15. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is also very good. It is well promoted through religious education lessons where pupils consider a range of bible stories. They also discuss issues about looking after the environment, the planting of seeds and pupils are taken out of school regularly to appreciate nature. More able pupils in the secondary phase discuss a range of religious issues, for example, the fact that most religions have a 'good book' and religious festivals. In the primary phase there is an emphasis on the 'small steps celebration' where pupils' achievements, however small, are recognised. Spiritual development is also supported during assemblies where the Christian festivals are explained and periods of reflection are provided. Additionally, during periods of distress, pupils are given opportunities to talk quietly to an adult about their feelings. The staff provide excellent counselling and guidance in this way. Such work makes a very good contribution to both the spiritual and the moral development of pupils.
16. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school rules are constantly referred to and pupils are expected to follow them. When pupils' behaviour is less than is expected, staff quickly deal with incidents and talk quietly to pupils, calming them down and explaining carefully how they should behave in future. All this is undertaken in such a manner as to provide pupils with extensive support and guidance which enhances their moral development. Staff are totally committed to the notion of helping their pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong and take every opportunity to promote this.
17. The personal, health and social education curriculum is very good and includes education on sex and drugs. This programme makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development. Personal and social education is extended and enhanced during break and lunch periods where all staff take the opportunities to promote good social development as they arise in these informal situations.

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the consistent management of pupils' behaviour results in overall standards of behaviour being good and pupils developing positive attitudes

18. The school has had a changing pattern of admissions over the last few years. Increasingly, older pupils are admitted at age 11+ after being included in mainstream primary schools up to the age of transition to secondary school. Some older pupils are admitted following permanent exclusion from mainstream schools. At the time of the inspection, one third of the pupils in the school had emotional or behavioural difficulties.
19. Skills of behaviour management have been an ongoing priority for staff development in recent years. This has resulted in the teachers, their assistants and personal care assistants becoming very proficient in managing pupils' behaviour which is often challenging. Staff work very well together and use very good agreed behaviour strategies with individual pupils. These strategies are, when necessary, discussed and agreed at focused staff meetings and consistent approaches supported by shared individual behaviour programmes are put in place.
20. These procedures are effective in enabling pupils to make rapid progress towards good behaviour. Staff involve pupils positively in their own behaviour targets. This individuality and flexibility by the school enable pupils to achieve a clear awareness of their difficulties. Pupils become secure in knowing that they are accepted but the inappropriate behaviour is not. They invariably respond positively. A strong feature of this effective work is the very good relationships between staff, who work harmoniously as a team, and between staff and pupils, where the individual consideration of the pupil's needs creates a bond of trust and respect. The overall positive climate within classrooms often produces situations where other pupils support the strategies being used. For example, when a pupil had refused to take part in a group activity, the teacher was asking the pupils' opinion about the point being discussed to encourage involvement, and other members of the class also tried to draw the pupil into the discussion.
21. Staff make good use of praise and rebukes so that challenging pupils know what is accepted and what is expected. Occasionally, when a challenging pupil becomes too difficult, the ultimate sanction of a short fixed-term exclusion is used to enable a cooling-off period for reflection before returning to school. This has been very effective but, as the school has developed its procedures, the incidence of these exclusions has reduced to become rare. Parents are enabled to work in partnership with the school in resolving challenging behaviour and, where appropriate, home/school contracts are agreed. They confirm that support and guidance for their children and themselves are very good and help a great deal in enabling these pupils to settle quickly into the school. When a pupil becomes near the limit of self-control, he/she is encouraged to take a 'time-out' and return when ready to continue the lesson. At such times staff take the time to talk through with the pupil the cause and resolution of the difficulty. Additionally, a teacher has undertaken training in counselling and this is being used sensitively to support pupils with emotional difficulties.

The school has very good links with parents, the community, agencies and other schools

22. The school aims to actively encourage a good working partnership with parents and continues to be very successful in achieving this aim. Over half of the parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and they were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and feel welcome in school. They confirm that the school is very approachable and that helpful support and advice is freely given. Parents appreciate the wide range of learning opportunities provided,

in particular, the residential experiences and extra-curricular activities available to all pupils, for example, the SPARKS club for pupils to take part in a range of sports within the locality.

23. The quality of information available to parents through the annual review reports is very good. Parents are fully involved in the review process; they are able to contribute when targets are reviewed and new targets set. They are appropriately involved when individual programmes and strategies to address inappropriate behaviour are devised. They appreciate the clear information when changes are made, for example, if a child is moved to another group. Parents confirm that their children make good progress in their learning activities and that the school's strategies when inappropriate behaviour has occurred are consistently applied and are effective.
24. The school makes very good use of the community. Pupils benefit from well-planned field study trips where they learn to apply their learning in real situations, such as shopping or visits to art galleries.
25. The school has excellent links with local mainstream schools at both primary and secondary phases. Primary classes benefit socially from their link with a neighbouring primary school for sport and some shared lessons. Secondary classes have sessions in two local secondary schools and colleges of further education to follow courses such as GCSE art and drama or pre-vocational courses. These challenging courses set high expectations to which the students respond positively: and several are achieving standards within the average range. These links also provide opportunities for pupils to be re-integrated into mainstream schools whenever they make sufficient social and educational progress. Several pupils have been successfully re-integrated in recent years. Professional links extend to more mainstream schools within the area and the school is used effectively as a source of special education needs expertise to provide advice, support and training which is highly valued.
26. Very good links are established with other professionals and agencies involved in meeting the needs of the pupils at the school. Speech therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists work closely with staff in the classrooms and in this way effectively share their skills so that individual programmes resulting from specialist assessments can be implemented regularly. The valuable contribution of visiting specialists, such as teachers for pupils with sensory impairment, working alongside staff also enables the school to meet the range of pupils' needs.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The organisation of the afternoon timetable in the secondary department;

27. Present timetable arrangements set the time for the afternoon sessions in the secondary department as one hour and ten minutes. This is applied generally to all subjects timetabled in the afternoon. For practical and activity based subjects, such as science, design and food technology, art and design and physical education, the amount of time allocated is suitable. For other subjects, such as French, religious education and humanities, pupils are unable to concentrate for sustained periods and their interest and attention is sometimes lost. This results in otherwise good lessons becoming less effective. The school needs to review the timetabling of lessons in relation to the learning demands for pupils and plan accordingly.

Provision for, and use of, information and communication technology (ICT) to support and enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum in the primary years and to support mobility and communication

28. Throughout the school there is a significant number of ageing computers that are becoming increasingly unreliable and inefficient in accessing the good network facilities. This applies particularly to the primary phase where additionally the available software is limited in its scope. There are insufficient suitable programs to provide support for learning in many subject areas. Teachers' planning does not give sufficient attention to the use of information and communication technology to enable pupils to practise and improve their computer skills or to provide exciting and interesting learning opportunities.

29. The planned use of a suitable switch to activate a toy, visual or sound effect or make a statement on a single-switch touch-talker is aimed at developing pupils' awareness of cause and effect. Pupils make good progress in understanding and using these skills. However, the use of touch-talkers and computers, throughout the school, to enable pupils who cannot speak to become effective communicators by being enabled to make useful statements throughout the day about choices, or contribute to class discussion, is underdeveloped.

30. Throughout the school very good use is made of switch technology to enable pupils with severe difficulties to control a range of stimulating effects and equipment. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils who are unlikely to become independently ambulant to learn to use these skills to control movement devices and enable them to progress to controlling a motorised wheelchair.

31. Through its self-evaluation procedures the school has identified the need to provide specific equipment for individual pupils. A good start has been made in enabling pupils to communicate through the use of touch-talkers but not enough consideration has been given to the development of skills for independent mobility.

Some aspects of the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

32. Overall, pupils make good progress in literacy as a result of a structured approach to developing literacy skills and good teaching. Very good use of signs and symbols effectively promote pre-reading and writing skills. Older and more able pupils become competent in reading and writing. However, there is often too much repetition of written work tasks, such as a daily diary. Although this helps to consolidate skills, it also results in some pupils being insufficiently challenged to produce extended or imaginative written work.
33. Pupils are presented with appropriate reading material, including interesting magazines, which enable them to relate well to the context of a story. They have ready access to good libraries but, across the age range, these are presently underused in lessons to create the enthusiasm for books that would lead to better use of this resource.
34. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in their mathematics and work is well matched with individual pupils' learning needs. The mental arithmetic skills of some older and more able pupils are insecure. Opportunities are missed for pupils to apply their learning in mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum, for example, the collection and representation of data.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

35. In order to maintain and further improve the school's provision the headteacher, staff and governors should:
 - (1) review and modify the allocation of time to lessons so that the length of lessons in each subject reflects the learning demands of the subject on pupils;
 - (2) improve the provision and use of ICT resources to support pupils' learning across the curriculum;
 - (3) further develop the use of technology to:
 - provide alternative communication opportunities;
 - enable non-ambulant pupils to learn to control movement devices;
 - (4) further develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, in particular:
 - writing skills for a range of purposes;
 - their interest and use of the library;
 - their use of numeracy skills in all relevant subjects.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	13	17	5	0	0	0
Percentage	0	37	49	14	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	85
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	35

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	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.38

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	14	100
	National	0	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.2
Average class size	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YR – Y13

Total number of education support staff	31
Total aggregate hours worked per week	609

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	955078
Total expenditure	919313
Expenditure per pupil	10815
Balance brought forward from previous year	30748
Balance carried forward to next year	35765

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	85
Number of questionnaires returned	47

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	26	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	36	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	40	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	26	11	0	11
The teaching is good.	77	21	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	77	13	6	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	15	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83	17	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	74	19	4	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	77	19	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	26	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	64	30	4	0	2