

INSPECTION REPORT

ELLEN TINKHAM SCHOOL

Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113633

Headteacher: Mrs. J. Warne

Reporting inspector: Mr. Tom Smith
21044

Dates of inspection: 2nd - 4th June 2003

Inspection number: 249355

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
Age range of pupils:	3 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ellen Tinkham School Hollow Lane Exeter Devon
Postcode:	EX1 3RW
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs K Ahmed
Date of previous inspection:	July 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school provides non-residential education for 87 boys and girls aged from 3 years to 19 years. There are very few pupils from ethnic groups other than white European. Very few pupils speak English as a second language. On admission all pupils have a Statement of Special Education Needs (SEN) and these indicate a range of learning difficulty, including severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). There are also a few pupils who have additional visual impairment or emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). When pupils are admitted to the school their attainment is very low and for the majority their ability to communicate is severely compromised. Twenty-three pupils are entitled to free school meals. This represents 26% of the school roll, a figure slightly below that of similar schools. Pupils are brought to the school from Exeter as well as other parts of mid- and East Devon. Since the last inspection the school has had two changes of headteacher, the school roll has increased and the range of pupil needs has widened. It has also undertaken a major building programme which has greatly increased the available facilities. Higher attaining pupils join with mainstream peers in carefully managed inclusion opportunities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ellen Tinkham is a good school in which staff have responded well to the very good leadership of the headteacher. In so doing they have raised the standard and quality of provision they make for all pupils, and have gained the support of the majority of parents. Teaching is of good or very good quality in eight out of ten lessons and because of this pupils throughout the school make good progress in their academic and social development. As at the time of the last inspection, the school continues to provide an effective education for pupils but the standard of provision is now higher. The school gives good value for money even though the expenditure for each pupil is above the national average.

What the school does well

- The headteacher, with the support of staff and governors, has created a supportive ethos in the school which is directed at sustaining and further raising standards.
- The quality of teaching is good and provides a range of learning opportunities which extend pupils' achievements and enjoyment of learning.
- Assessment procedures are good and outcomes of these are analysed well to provide good information for management and teachers, which is used to raise standards and set challenging targets for pupils.
- The school's practice of including its pupils in local mainstream schools is having a good impact on the academic and personal development of these pupils.
- The school works very well with parents and they feel wholly involved in their child's education.
- The school encourages the personal development of pupils so they develop into mature young adults by the time they leave.

What could be improved

- School development planning.
- The arrangements for the arrival and departure of pupils.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the governing body.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in July 1997 and since that time has made good improvement. Most key issues have been successfully addressed, though some work remains to be done in relation to the arrival and departure routines of the pupils. The improvement in the accommodation is more than was

envisaged. The senior management team is now very effective and has put in place measures which are raising standards. These include full access to the whole National Curriculum for all pupils as well as secure systems that monitor and have improved teaching and learning. Staff have a full understanding of how to evidence progress made by pupils and students. The ways in which the staff and senior management now evaluate the outcomes of pupils' learning are good. The governors are effective in their work of monitoring the school's performance, though the processes of comparing themselves with other similar schools need further development. The number of teachers and support staff has increased and this has resulted in better access for pupils to a wider range of learning. Learning support assistants (LSAs) make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and welfare. The school has significantly increased its accommodation through a major building programme. This has made better facilities for teaching and learning. The difficulties with arrivals and departures remain, even though the space allocated to these activities, which was formerly cramped, has greatly increased. New Opportunities Funding (NOF) has enabled the school to put in place a very effective 'Holiday Club' for pupils and their brothers and sisters.

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 very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
speaking and listening	B	B	B	B	
reading	B	B	B	B	
writing	C	C	C	C	
mathematics	B	B	B	B	
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	
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.

For all pupils, their achievements are severely compromised by the nature of their individual difficulties. Despite this pupils throughout the school make good progress, though there are individual examples of higher attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged. This is especially the case for some older pupils. Although they too make good progress, the rate at which this occurs is too slow. Pupils make significant gains in their skills of speaking and listening as well as reading. Where pupils have no spoken language their use of alternative communication systems ensures they too make good progress. Progress in writing, although satisfactory, does not occur at the same rate but teachers do give appropriate emphasis to this skill. Standards in writing are slightly below what might be expected, though individual pupils make good progress when given challenging written tasks. Targets set within annual reviews and especially individual education plans (IEPs) are challenging and demanding. Because of good teaching and learning support some 93% of pupils achieve these targets, which encompass academic and social development. By the time they leave the school all pupils achieve success in national accreditation through the modular scheme of Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) and most of these continue on to further education. Trends in pupils' achievements are rising.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the	Very good; pupils are happy at the school and in lessons they are very keen

school

to learn and take part in all activities. The rates at which they work as well as their levels of concentration are commendable.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; the school is a very calm community in which pupils show how well they behave as individuals, taking responsibility for their own behaviour. They know right from wrong
Personal development and relationships	Good; pupils mature into responsible individuals the longer they stay at the school. Parents especially are pleased with this development in their children.
Attendance	Very good; Pupils are anxious to come to school and in many instances they also attend holiday clubs provided by the school.

Senior pupils are encouraged to become prefects and so take on additional responsibilities. Pupils play co-operatively with each other, regardless of ethnic background, and there were several instances of pupils showing genuine concern for one another during the inspection. By the time they leave they have become mature young adults ready to go to their next stage of education and learning. Many pupils also attend the school on Saturdays as well as holiday periods for additional activities organised by staff and other helpers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year R	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	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.

Eight out of ten lessons seen during the inspection were good or very good. With the exception of one lesson which lacked challenge for pupils, the remainder were satisfactory. The expertise of teachers ensures that the challenge provided to pupils is well matched to their attainment and built on what they already know. As a result the pupils achieve well. The expertise and range of support provided by LSAs is also good. Their contributions enable lessons to proceed with considerable effectiveness because they make timely and expert interventions. In some instances LSAs provide additional support under the guidance of the occupational or speech and language therapist. The quality of teaching of literacy and numeracy is good and pupils make good progress. Teachers follow the format of the national strategies but adapt these skilfully in a way that makes pupils' learning more effective. Where pupils have little or no language skills the good range of other communication systems ensures they too make good progress. The quality of learning by pupils is at least good – however the inspection team found some evidence where individual pupils of higher attainment were insufficiently challenged. This was particularly the case for some older pupils. Generally, however, the school meets the needs of pupils very well. Pupils' personal, social and health education are sensitively and very well provided at appropriate stages in their development and understanding. The school is currently over-subscribed and there is a waiting list of pupils wishing to attend.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; In addition to the statutory curriculum the school has also put in place an enriching curriculum which adds to the range of experiences for pupils. The balance of the provision, through timetabling, is not as strong as its content.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social	Good; Social and moral development are very good; spiritual and cultural development are not yet equal to this but they are developing

and cultural development	their own strengths to provide a good basis for future progress. There is appropriate emphasis given to society's diverse nature.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The provision for pupils' care is very good and is a high priority in the minds of all staff. A quirk in the funding arrangements means that not all pupils are entitled to occupational therapy as of right. This is under review.

The school values parents as full partners in the education of their children. Even though some parents live some distance from the school, and are not always able to visit frequently, they benefit from the range of letters and reports which teachers provide for them. All the evidence provided by parents indicated substantial support for the work done by the staff. The inspection team believes this support to be well merited. In addition to medical needs, which are provided to a high standard through the presence of full-time nursing care, staff also record and evaluate the social and academic progress of pupils. This is done very well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is very good and she makes a very effective senior management team along with her deputy and senior colleagues. Within a relatively short time they have created a united team of staff who are providing good and very good standards of care and education for pupils.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body carries out its responsibilities well. They are fully committed to, share and promote the ideals of the school. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities and ensure the school maintains its drive for higher standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good because there is a growing database of information on its activities which it uses to evaluate its own performance. It uses this information to further raise standards of teaching and learning but the ways in which it compares its outcomes with similar schools could be improved.
The strategic use of resources	Good; staff are particularly well deployed and because of this the quality of work achieved within lessons is consistently good. Funding through grants is used well to raise standards of provision.

The senior management team, as well as the governing body, are relatively new in their posts and consequently some of the procedures they have put in place have not yet provided the intended outcomes. Up until this point they have also worked with a restricted development plan which is now complete. Despite this the progress towards these outcomes is as good as could be expected. There remains a weakness, both within the governing body and the senior management team, in the understanding of best value principles. While the school provides good value for money and has also made good improvement since the last inspection, it cannot yet confirm how well it is doing through comparison with similar schools.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents have significant trust in the management of the school – many say that it is the best in their experience. • The levels of care and concern shown by staff, who they describe as 'like friends'. • For children with pronounced medical needs, the presence of a full time nurse in the school is appreciated by all those parents with vulnerable children. • They believe their children make good progress when at the school because they are taught well. • That the school responds to their concerns and acts upon them. • The quality of communication they have with the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children having unrestricted access to the range of therapies provided by the school. • The amount of homework provided.

The inspection team endorses the positive views of parents – particularly those relating to the quality of teaching and levels of care provided to pupils. Parents are right to be concerned about their children's access to occupational therapy but the school is actively addressing these concerns. Some parents felt they would like to see more homework for their children, though most felt the opposite. The inspection team take the view that pupils work very hard when at school and in some cases have long journeys home. Additional work at home would therefore not be appropriate in every case.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher, with the support of staff and governors, has created a supportive ethos in the school which is directed at sustaining and further raising standards.

1. The headteacher, governors and staff share a common commitment to providing pupils with a happy, caring school in which they can achieve their potential. The leadership and management of the school are very good, but the energy, vision and expertise of the headteacher are the catalysts for many of the improvements that have taken place. She has guided the school through a difficult period in its development. Standards since the last inspection have risen. Although in her post for a very short time, the headteacher provides very good leadership to the school. Although many of her initiatives have yet to have a full impact, she has generated a feeling of full commitment from both staff and governors. Parents agree that the beneficiaries of this are their children because the headteacher has put in place many secure procedures which ensure improvement in their academic and social welfare.
2. The headteacher is supported in her work by a recently appointed deputy headteacher as well as a reconstituted governing body. Because until recently some of these positions were temporary, the school has been working towards the targets identified within a restricted school development plan (SDP). Despite this the management team has worked hard and successfully to gain the support of all staff and has done all that could be expected to move the school forward. As a result the school presents as a vibrant organisation in which all staff are working to high standards.
3. Whilst in the role of acting headteacher, the headteacher has had to steer the school through a period in which it was identified by its local education authority as being a school which was under-performing. With good support from the local advisory service the headteacher and her staff have not only arrested the decline but put the school on the road to full recovery by putting in place measures that secure its long term health. The leadership of the school is clear about the school's weaknesses and within the time available they have done all that could be expected to address these. Likewise they have identified the school's strengths and are building on these in their push for higher standards.
4. Central to the headteacher's vision is the need for high standards of teaching. Already she has put in place a system of formal monitoring which has given her an accurate picture of the standards throughout the school. Along with senior management colleagues she makes sure that examples of very good practice are spread throughout the school and where necessary additional support is provided in those instances where teaching does not match these standards. These measures are already having an effect and there has been a rise in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. This has also had a good impact on how pupils learn and their achievements now cover a wider range than previously. Where gaps have appeared in staff professional expertise the headteacher has arranged for a very good range of professional development – for example, in team teaching techniques (a style of teaching where more than one teacher becomes active in teaching a class of pupils), assessment as an aid to learning, the picture exchange communication system (a form of communication for autistic spectrum disordered pupils where they show a picture which identifies their needs or responses) and in developing schemes of subject work for younger pupils up to Year 6.
5. The impact of the headteacher's vision is most noticeable in classrooms. The intensity of learning undertaken by pupils is considerable and this has resulted in good progress. This approach may, in part, account for why some parents are disappointed that their children do not get more work to do at home. In most cases it would be inappropriate to provide this because the pupils have worked so hard during their day at school, and in some instances have also had a long journey home at the end of it.
6. Among the first measures put in place was an action plan which, though limited in scope, addressed the most fundamental issues facing the school. As viewed by the school these were:

- i. Raise standards in pupils' communication.
- ii. Improve the curriculum at all levels so that the subject leaders have a clear understanding of the strategic direction their subject requires.
- iii. Use and apply assessment data effectively so that teachers know what to teach next.
- iv. Develop the role of subject leaders so that they have a clear picture of pupil progress in their subject.

The management and staff have been successful in these aims and are now in a good position to plan the longer term development of the school. The priorities for this longer term development are the right ones, though the time frame in which they are developing needs to be shorter. The plan for the forthcoming academic year has yet to fully written and agreed.

- 7. Central to the ethos of the school is the headteacher's vision, which has already helped the school to establish very good relationships with parents and the community it serves. Discussions with parents during the course of the inspection brought about comments such as "I regard the staff here as friends", and "We feel much more welcome and part of the school".
- 8. The headteacher provides very good leadership because she maintains a personal commitment to raising standards and keeping these at high levels. In this she is fully supported by the staff and governing body. An example of this commitment is the establishment of a 'holiday club' for the use of pupils and their brothers and sisters. This club is much more than an opportunity for parents to have respite during the holidays. It provides many additional experiences for pupils from which they continue learning. Staff report that the start to each term is now much more effective because pupils have not got out of the habit of learning. In their turn, pupils are reported by parents as being "very upset" if they are unable to attend the school during the holiday periods. The rise in standards which this initiative has brought about has been helped by funding received through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) which the headteacher secured. The headteacher's vision includes extending this provision to other pupils who may have a learning difficulty, though may not be part of the school roll.
- 9. Governors play a full part in the school's drive for higher standards and are led by a very knowledgeable and active chairperson. They have recently re-constituted their group to one smaller than the original, so that meetings are more purposeful and all governors feel more involved. A discussion with a governor of long standing showed that this re-organisation has had the desired effect. She stated that until recently she had never fully contributed to the school and that on her occasional visits she often felt superfluous. The opposite is now the case, or in her words "I now feel so much a part of the school that I realise how little effect I was having before." The feelings in this statement were echoed in discussions with other governors.
- 10. The school now benefits from a powerful and united management body which has very good potential to raise standards even further. In this they are supported by a committed and energetic group of staff who are determined to do their best for their pupils. There are no substantial weaknesses in the make-up of this team. Each individual does their best on behalf of the pupils and this teamwork becomes evident in every moment a pupil spends in the school. Collectively they provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to extend their learning and achievement.

The quality of teaching is good and provides a range of learning opportunities which extend pupils' achievements and enjoyment of learning.

- 11. Inspectors observed 26 lessons during the course of the inspection and eight in ten of these were either good or very good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Parents who replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire, as well as those who attended the meeting for parents, overwhelmingly agreed that teaching was good and inspection findings endorse this view. Only one lesson, for older pupils, was thought to be unsatisfactory because it failed to provide a sufficiently high level of challenge. In all other lessons the strengths were considerable.
- 12. The planning which teachers undertake is of high quality. Individual teachers vary in the degree of detail which this includes but in all cases there are clear statements about what pupils are expected to learn. A significant strength of the planning is its inclusive nature and the way in which

the individual needs of pupils are taken into account. This latter aspect is derived from the very good knowledge that teachers have of their pupils as well as the detailed assessment records they maintain. All lesson plans have detailed challenges for pupils which they are expected to learn. Pupils' achievements are helped in this because learning support assistants (LSAs) are very well deployed by the teachers and because the expertise of this group is so good.

13. All lessons are taught according to a central theme but learning occurs at the level of the individual because teachers deploy their LSA appropriately. The LSAs provide a level of expertise and energy to pupils' learning that is consistently good throughout the school. Opportunities for learning are never missed. For example, when going upstairs to a classroom a pupil was required not only to complete the physical part of the exercise appropriately but also to count the steps as he went. In another example a pupil with severe difficulty in communication was required to make a choice about whether she wanted some more bubbles to be blown – to do this she had to express her opinion by pressing one of two 'big macs' (electronic, recordable devices). The LSA would not continue until the pupil pressed one of the devices (she chose more bubbles).
14. The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school and for all pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis on enabling pupils to communicate and the learning they do is underpinned by this achievement. By the time they are ready to leave the school the oldest pupils communicate well and have also become effective readers – though in some individual cases this is limited to words and phrases most needed within a social environment. Teachers and LSAs never accept second best from pupils and consistently challenge them to do more or better. Because of this pupils make good progress, especially in English and mathematics. Progress and achievement in science, although satisfactory, is not as good. In part this is explained by the fact that the science co-ordinator is a very recent appointment to the school and she has yet to have the opportunity to match the standards in other subjects.
15. Standards of teaching and learning are good because the expectations of teachers are high. The youngest through to the oldest pupils are expected to achieve as much on their own account as possible. The inspection team did not record any instance where a pupil had anything done for him or her which they could not have done for themselves. This provides a greater sense of achievement for pupils of all attainments and enables them to make good progress. Minor improvement could be made by more rigorously following published timetables so as to ensure better balance to pupils' learning.

Assessment procedures are good and outcomes of these are analysed well to provide good information for management and teachers. These are used to raise standards of achievement and set challenging targets for pupils.

16. The school has put in considerable effort, within a relatively short space of time, to collecting data about the achievement and performance of its pupils. This bank of information is growing and already enables the senior management team and individual teachers to track the performance of their pupils. The starting point is a series of baseline tests which pupils undertake on their arrival at the school. This provides a comparison for future performance. Also, there is an assessment week for all pupils during the autumn term. The results from these tests are moderated using recognised assessment packages and the outcomes compared to the result of similar routines carried out during the summer term. The impact of this is that the school management can focus resources and deploy staff where they will have most effect on pupils' learning.
17. Because of this data bank it has become possible to set realistic though demanding targets for groups of pupils as well as individuals. In this way the school maintains a consistent effort to raise standards. For example, within the last year the school identified 95% of its pupils who successfully achieved their objectives within the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and personal, social and health education. (PSHE) The targets set for each pupil are challenging and when linked to good teaching, common throughout the school, they represent good added value in terms of pupils achievements and progress. By the end of Year 2, for example, 73% of pupils are expected to achieve P4 in the core subjects. (P-levels are a means of identifying attainment in pupils who would not normally be expected to achieve the higher National

Curriculum levels.) By the end of Year 6 the expectation has increased so that pupils will attain P6 in the core subjects. This expectation is further raised for pupils completing Year 9. By the end of Year 11 at least one-third of all pupils are expected to attain at least Level 1 in the National Curriculum. The only exception to this final objective is that Year 11 pupils are expected to achieve P6 in PSHE. This is an entirely realistic but also challenging target because of the complex needs of these pupils. By the time pupils are in Year 11 those of higher attainment are attending local mainstream schools for increasingly longer inclusion opportunities and for this reason they are not counted within the school targets. This artificially depresses the actual outcomes when measuring pupils' achievements.

18. The senior management have recognised a weakness in the current format, in that it does not allow them to examine the statistics in more than broad detail. For example, it is not yet possible to tell which groups of pupils may achieve more successfully than others, or which styles of teaching and learning may be more effective for individual pupils. Recognising this, senior management is co-operating with the local education authority to develop a computer program which will enable them to identify the information they require. When this comes on stream in September 2003 teachers will be able to fine-tune their teaching even more to the needs of individual pupils.

The school's practice of including its pupils in local mainstream schools is having a good impact on the academic and personal development of these pupils.

19. The practice of including its pupils, wherever possible, in local mainstream schools is having significant benefits for the learning which these pupils undertake. This provision is well founded on the Devon County Inclusion Policy as well as the school's own philosophy and policy. The opening remarks of this policy summarise this when it states that "... the school adapts to fit itself around the needs of the child" and "We teach children, not disabilities".
20. The inclusion initiative is successful because it has been organised in a very professional manner by the headteacher and her staff. The scheme has been in place since 2002 and currently 18 pupils (20% of the school roll) have the opportunity to undertake some of their learning alongside other mainstream pupils in five different schools. These opportunities range from single sessions to complete days. Parents are very supportive of the initiative and in at least one case a parent has requested that her child attend the mainstream school for a longer time. The impact of the initiative is that an increasing number of pupils have greater challenges to their learning as well as opportunities to mix with peers in mainstream schools.
21. The degree of professionalism in its organisation has included aspects such as providing funding so that pupils can purchase the uniform of the school they attend, arranging transport to the mainstream school, and providing training for the staff of the receiving school. This latter aspect has generated a professionally produced training package for schools who may be considering similar initiatives. In addition the school has set up a budget to cover aspects such as LSA support for the mainstream school and meetings between the host school and staff from Ellen Tinkham School.
22. The initiative has benefited the school and its pupils in two ways. It provides challenging opportunities for those pupils involved because they take part in lessons alongside their mainstream counterparts. It also enables the school to direct more of its effort to providing for the needs of lower attaining pupils. The impact of this is that pupils who receive all of their education in the school are well provided for and those who attend local schools raise their levels of achievement.

The school works very well with parents and they feel wholly involved in their child's education.

23. Parents are very satisfied with the work done by the school and fully recognise the effective aspects of the school's provision. During the course of discussions with parents at the meeting held prior to the inspection, as well as with those who visited the school informally during the

inspection, it became evident that parents have significant trust in the work done by the staff. They feel very well informed about what happens in the school as well as the progress made by their child. They unanimously offered praise for the way in which staff make them welcome – describing them as “friends”.

24. Some parents offered the view that there have been great improvements “since the new headteacher took over”. They identify the most significant of these as the care their children receive because it allows them to feel reassured about their child’s welfare. A good example of this was when parents returned their child to the school having attended a medical appointment. The discussion initiated by the teacher in whose class the child was based was characterised by the warmth of concern whilst very professionally establishing the changes in medication for the pupil and what side effects might be anticipated. Notes of the exchange were made and these would be used to update the pupil’s individual education plan so that the new circumstances could be taken into account.
25. Many parents expressed appreciation for the medical and therapeutic support provided for their children. They did, however, express concerns that for some pupils occupational therapy was not provided as of right – because they live outside of the Exeter Area Health Authority (EAHA). The school management is very aware of this anomaly and is actively addressing these concerns. It is anticipated that a satisfactory resolution will be reached. Parents spoke very highly of the physiotherapy provided for their children. When asked at the pre-inspection meeting to nominate the most significant progress in their child, two parents identified the advances in physical capability their children have made. One went so far as to describe the physiotherapist as someone who “could walk on water”. Advances made by pupils in their physical welfare enable pupils to achieve higher standards in their work. There is also statistical evidence which suggests that the presence of a full-time nurse in the school has had good outcomes on pupils’ attendance. Parents mentioned this as a factor because they are confident in the expertise of the nurse and other staff to care for their children, should they ever fall ill during school sessions.
26. An analysis of the returns to the questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection corroborates the positive views of those parents with whom discussions were held. When comparing current responses to those made at the last inspection the majority show improvement in the views parents have of the school. For example, there has been a 16% improvement in parents who feel comfortable in discussing issues with the school and a 28% improvement in parents who believe the school is getting their children to do their best. Such outcomes are supported by inspection evidence.

The school encourages the personal development of pupils so they develop into mature young adults by the time they leave.

27. Part of the vibrancy of the school comes from the way in which pupils go about their activities as well as the enthusiasm they put into these. These outcomes are the result of the caring attitudes of adults who give pupils total respect and encouragement to do their best in everything.
28. Pupils’ welfare is central to the care that is provided for them and there are very good procedures and practices which ensure this. For example, there is a full-time nurse on the premises who takes care of all medication and provides information to teachers about pupils’ medical needs. This in itself provides peace of mind to parents of medically vulnerable children. In addition the school provides on-site physiotherapy and has the services of part-time occupational therapists as well as speech and language therapists. Parents wish to have more time devoted to these therapies – something the school management recognises and is responding to.
29. Assemblies are occasions when the achievements of pupils are mentioned and pupils show genuine pleasure when they are recognised for these. There was no shortage of volunteers when requested to take part in an impromptu acting of an assembly story. Those who took part enjoyed their time in the limelight.

30. Older pupils serve as school prefects and they carry out their duties with considered seriousness. Tasks such as collecting registers or running errands between classrooms, are performed by many pupils. These opportunities are not restricted only to those of higher attainment. Where necessary pupils are escorted around the classrooms by LSAs, who provide appropriate prompts as to what should happen next or where they should go. For example, when coming into a classroom to collect the number of pupils requiring lunch, the LSA asked the pupil to wait until it was appropriate to speak and when having had the number provided was then asked where they needed to go next. The prompting was firm but insistent and the LSA showed very good awareness of when to provide information and when to hold back.
31. Older students, by the time they leave, have developed into responsible and mature young adults. They relate well to the staff around them and clearly know when it is appropriate to have a joke, share a task or settle to serious work. The majority of these students continue to further education or training and are as well prepared as they can be by the time they leave the school. During the inspection two former pupils returned to the school to give a talk to pupils about their experiences in college since they had left the school. The mature way in which they conducted themselves was a credit to the staff of the school. It was also very noticeable that they were welcomed as old friends.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

School development planning.

32. School development planning and the monitoring of this have still to develop into fully effective tools for guiding the school. As yet the intentions for the forthcoming academic year are not established. However, there are good procedures in place by which this should be achieved – among these are clear expectations of subject leaders, which make them accountable for standards in their subject, and the full involvement of the governing body.
33. Although the school management and governors are clear about what they want to achieve much of this is notional and there are few indicators by which the school can assess the impact of its action. However, in some aspects such as the collection of data relating to pupils' achievement, there are growing strengths. The planning procedures are strong in identifying strategies that are likely to raise or maintain high standards, for example the approach to staff training, but they do not include sufficiently rigorous indicators against which to judge outcomes. The school acknowledges this weakness and is working very hard to address it.

The arrangements for the arrival and departure of pupils.

34. A key issue within the last report required the school to provide 'directed supervision of the arrival and departure of transport so as to reduce the potential hazards to the safety of pupils.' Since that time the school has undertaken a significant building project, with the result that the location for arrival and departures has completely changed. Generally there has been improvement in that space for vehicles is now greater and non-ambulant pupils can be boarded on transport while protected from bad weather. Even so, some of the risks still remain and, overall, the procedures remain unsatisfactory.
35. Arrival procedures are marginally safer than departures because vehicles arrive at the school during a longer time frame. At the end of the school day, however, the majority of vehicles are present at the same time and this causes severe congestion within the car park. Because there is no overall control of vehicle movements each vehicle, ranging from mid-size buses to saloon cars, chooses where to stop and when to leave. In some cases drivers double-park buses in their desire to be closer to the school exit. This further restricts the safe manoeuvring space for other vehicles. Vehicles also reverse without adequate rearward visibility – in the case of the larger buses this is a significant hazard. A damaged concrete bollard immediately in front of the school entrance is evidence of this.

36. Pupils are normally escorted to vehicles, but the requirement that local authority escorts do not provide this service from the school hall makes the procedure unnecessarily complicated and prone to potential hazards for pupils. The risk to pupils is considerable where they are required to mingle with moving traffic. In the absence of someone to exercise overall control of traffic movement opportunities for independence are lost to the oldest pupils and students who, reasonably, could make their own way to their transport. Within months, some of these students will be finding their own way around much larger colleges of further education.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. The governors and school management should now:

- (1) Establish clearer indicators of success, against which development planning and the progress of the school can be systematically evaluated. The school is working towards such a system. (Paragraphs 32-33)
- (2) As a matter of urgency, and in conjunction with the local authority, put in place well-organised and secure arrival and departure procedures for pupils that ensure their safety. (Paragraphs 34-36)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	14	4	1	0	0
Percentage	0	27	54	15	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	87
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	23

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	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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

Attendance overall for this year is running at 93%. This compares favourably with other similar schools nationally where overall attendance is 90.3%. Pupils are normally absent because of deterioration in their medical conditions which require hospitalisation.

Attainment of pupils

The school does not take part in National Standardised Assessment Tasks and Tests (SATs). In place of these the school undertakes measurement of attainment through the use of P-levels, which are accepted as more appropriate descriptors of the performance of pupils similar to those found at Ellen Tinkham School. Because the number of pupils is less than 11, the school is not required to publish these figures. Parents, however, are fully informed of the outcomes of these individual tests.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	79	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.8
Average class size	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YR – Y13

Total number of education support staff	38
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Financial year	2002-3
	£
Total income	821,003
Total expenditure	815,064
Expenditure per pupil	9,437

Total aggregate hours worked per week	993
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Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	5,939

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7
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	87
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	25	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	35	0	4	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	71	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	9	43	9	17	22
The teaching is good.	57	39	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	29	0	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	18	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	41	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	39	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	32	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	35	4	4	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	74	19	4	0	4

Figures may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Other issues raised by parents

During the meeting held before the inspection some parents expressed concerns that their child was excluded from receiving occupational therapy because they live outside of the Exeter Area Health Authority. The inspection team found that there was substance to these concerns but also that the school was actively addressing the issue. It is anticipated that this situation will change.

Some parents were critical of the previous governing body, stating that in their view it was insufficiently involved in school affairs. The inspection team found that while these comments might have applied to the previous and larger governing body they do not apply to the current group, who are very active in their practical and strategic support.

In all other matters parents were very supportive of the school and felt that the efforts of the new management team had benefited their children.