

INSPECTION REPORT

Rowden House School,
Winslow,
Bromyard,
Herefordshire
HR7 4LS

LEA area : Hereford and Worcester
(Independent school)
School Register Number : 918 6113 A

Principal : Ms. Heather Hardy

Reporting inspector : Michael McDowell
T11762

Dates of inspection : 3rd - 6th February, 1997

Under Ofsted contract number: 400607

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Cambridge Education Associates Limited

Information about the school

Type of school :	Special Residential, severe learning difficulties
Type of control :	Independent
Age range of pupils :	11 to 19 years
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Winslow, Bromyard, Herefordshire HR7 4LS
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Appropriate authority :	N/A
Name of chair of governors : (where appropriate)	N/A

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Main findings

It is inappropriate to judge the attainment of pupils for whom this school caters against age-related national expectations or averages. The report does however give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do. Judgments about progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements and annual reviews.

Educational Standards achieved by the pupils

Pupils make good progress over time in achieving the social and behavioural targets that are set for them. They are able to take part in the social and educational experiences offered to them and, with few exceptions, make good use of these. Progress in the curriculum, across the age range, is mostly satisfactory, but rarely good, and in almost a third of lessons progress is unsatisfactory.

Progress in English is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 but the progress made by post 16 students is unsatisfactory. Pupils are generally making satisfactory progress in speaking and listening although there is insufficient emphasis on the augmentation of communication through the use of sign. Reading shows less evidence of progress and the gains individual pupils and students make are strongly related to the emphasis put upon reading by their teacher. There is little use or understanding of symbols as an aid to communication and, overall, progress is unsatisfactory. Skill in writing is beginning to emerge, and in some cases use is made of information technology to promote it. While more needs to be done, most pupils and students make satisfactory progress.

In mathematics progress in Key Stage 3 is mostly satisfactory, while, in Key Stage 4, it is predominantly satisfactory but occasionally poor. The progress made by post 16 students in mathematics varies, being satisfactory in half of the lessons but unsatisfactory or poor, in equal measure, in the remainder.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in science in Key Stage 4 but progress is poor in Key Stage 3. Post 16 students make satisfactory progress in this subject.

In the other subjects of the curriculum pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 make satisfactory progress in physical education,(PE) and information technology,(IT). Post 16 students also make satisfactory progress in PE. In art, pupils at key stage 4 make good or satisfactory progress whilst post 16 students make good progress. In geography, pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 while post 16 students make progress which is satisfactory or unsatisfactory in equal measure. Pupils in Key Stage 3 make unsatisfactory progress in design and technology but for post 16 students progress is satisfactory. Progress in music is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, while, for post 16 students it is variable, being good, satisfactory or poor in equal measure. The school does not teach modern foreign languages. No teaching in religious education or history took place during the inspection and there is insufficient evidence on which to report progress.

Many pupils arrive at the school with a history which involves challenging behaviour, and inevitably aspects of this persist in many cases. However, most pupils show a positive response to the school, they are interested in their work, and value their learning. They relate well to each other, to staff and to visitors, and form appropriate friendships. They are

tolerant of each other's difficulties and support each other well at times. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and show initiatives, but are not given sufficient opportunity to do so. Older (post-16) pupils often relate to staff and each other on an appropriate adult to adult basis.

Quality of Education

In just over two thirds of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better (with no significant differences across the key stages). Some is very good, and none is poor. Generally the teachers' knowledge and understanding of curriculum subjects is adequate, and their knowledge of pupils is satisfactory. There is, however, a need for the development of skills in working with severe learning difficulties, especially with pupils who are autistic. Teachers' day to day planning is adequate, but longer term planning is not related to programmes of study of the National Curriculum and is insufficient to ensure continuity and progression in learning. Methods and organisational strategies are generally sound, but there is a need to develop a greater variety of approaches. The management of pupils is a positive feature, except in a few cases. Use of resources is sound but use of time is weak on occasions, as is the use of classroom assistants.

The curriculum lacks balance with significant and arbitrary variations in the time allocated to subjects within and across the key stages. There is no overall curriculum policy to guide teachers in their planning and to detail the principles by which time allocations are to be made. The short teaching week and the uneven allocation of time to subjects, adversely affects the delivery of the curriculum, the progress made by pupils, and the quality of education offered to them. At post-16 the curriculum is insufficiently separated and there is no formal system whereby students can receive credit for their achievements.

The high priority given to the individual's personal, social and health programme develops pupils' competence and is a strength of the school. However, much of this work could be taught through the core and foundation subjects which would enable the school to give sufficient coverage to the National Curriculum. Assessment of pupils' work takes place, but this is not clearly used to inform teaching within a relevant timescale.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school makes very good provision to support the moral and social development of pupils. It provides them with a range of experiences and opportunities which enable them to be successful in many everyday social situations, to have self-esteem, and to be aware of issues of right and wrong. This is particularly well supported by assemblies, and by links with local churches. However, religious education is not well developed and there is no evidence of planning for spiritual development through the curriculum, although both art and music provide incidental opportunities for reflection at times.

Provision for cultural development is made both during the school day and in the residential setting. Pupils are offered the opportunity to experience a range of contexts and visits to museums, cinemas, theatres and exhibitions of art provide good extension. They have the chance to study aspects of cultures other than their own and to develop empathy, but the school does not do enough to prepare them for life in the multi-cultural communities from which many of them come.

The Management and Efficiency of the school

The management team is relatively new. The development of a consistent approach to the care and welfare of the pupils and the establishment of a secure and safe environment have been successfully addressed as a first priority. Work on the curriculum is just beginning, and planning to ensure that the pupils receive a curriculum of sufficient breadth and that individual pupils make progress, is at an early stage. Presently there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning. There is forward planning but this lacks the necessary detail to make it really useful.

The school makes sound use of its resources. It is providing an effective framework of care in a secure environment and has developed accommodation for education which is of good quality. The social and care curriculum are good. The academic curriculum, however, lacks coherence and it is in need of substantial development if it is to fully meet the needs of pupils. Overall, however, and across the full range of their development, pupils and students make satisfactory progress.

The school gives sound value for money.

Key issues for action

The principal, deputy headteacher and teachers should:

- improve the progress made by pupils in communication, including speaking and listening and the use of signs and symbols;

- improve progress in those subjects, including mathematics and science where a significant proportion of progress is unsatisfactory;

The principal and the deputy headteacher should:

- improve teaching in those areas where it is unsatisfactory by enabling teachers to increase their knowledge and expertise in key areas of their work, extending opportunities for professional development and securing training in work with pupils with severe learning difficulties and autism; and by developing sound management of time and the best use of personnel resources in the classroom.

- improve the overall breadth and balance of the curriculum;

- refine the procedures for planning and pupil grouping to ensure that pupils experience continuity and progression in what they are taught;

- improve assessment and recording so that they inform the future planning of teaching;

- develop a relevant and more clearly separate curriculum for the post-16 group of pupils;

- monitor the lessons taught within the school by direct observation and by scrutiny of curriculum planning.

Introduction

Characteristics of the school

Rowden House is a privately owned school which operates as a limited company. The co-owner is a director of the school and personally manages issues concerned with site development and maintenance. The teaching and care functions of the school are controlled by the principal. The school accepts pupils with severe learning difficulty and challenging behaviour aged 11 to 19 and offers a developmental curriculum which encompasses elements of the National Curriculum. Pupils are placed by local education authorities or social service departments. They are drawn from a nation-wide radius and the school makes accommodation available for carers who wish to visit their children. All pupils are resident and can be accommodated for up to 52 weeks of the year, although most return home for part of the holiday period. Currently there are 16 boys and 6 girls on the school roll with a very small proportion being drawn from minority ethnic and racial communities. Attainment on entry is extremely low in comparison to National age-related norms. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs in respect of their severe learning difficulties. Three pupils are said to be autistic.

The school has undertaken major developments in the recent past and has just opened a purpose built education block which is of a high standard. This new resource will be a significant factor in enabling the school to promote, develop, and extend the curriculum. This activity is planned to take place during the next year and key staff appointments to facilitate this have been made. The boarding accommodation is scheduled to be improved and redeveloped in the next twelve months. High standards in care are being encouraged by a programme of staff training and professional development that will lead to all residential care staff having a relevant, externally validated, qualification.

Key indicators

Note:

National Curriculum teacher assessments of pupils, and pupil assessment tasks, in English, mathematics and science were not undertaken in 1996 or in the previous year, 1995. Because there are fewer than five pupils registered at the school who were eligible to undertake these assessments it is not required that national comparative data about National Curriculum assessments be published in this report.

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year :1996			%
	Authorised Absence	School	5
		National comparative data	8.5
	Unauthorised Absence	School	0
National comparative data		2.6	

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year :1996			Number
	Fixed period		0
	Permanent		0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :			%
	Very good or better		2
	Satisfactory or better		70
	Less than satisfactory		30

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress

Pupils and students make good progress in meeting the objectives in their statements of special educational needs. These are chiefly concerned with behaviour and social learning rather than attainment within the subjects of the curriculum. Targets are, however, set for pupils in aspects of their school work, particularly in basic communication and mathematical skills. Across the school, pupils' progress is appropriate to their abilities in more than two thirds of lessons. While the high level of individual support seen during the inspection contributes to the progress made by pupils and to their ability to address the tasks set, the rate of progress made by some individuals, taking this level of support into consideration, is disappointing. The progress made by post-16 students in science is satisfactory but in English and mathematics it is unsatisfactory. In English students are not always encouraged to communicate with each other and opportunities to develop individual contributions are lost. In mathematics number skills are very limited and students have little ability to apply these skills in other subjects and around the school.

For the younger pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 progress in English is generally satisfactory. It is better in speaking and listening than in reading and writing, which are under-developed. Some pupils can express themselves in conversation, exercise choice and express likes and dislikes. Some can identify their names, recognise socially useful written words and copy text. Progress in Mathematics is generally satisfactory and some pupils quickly absorb and remember information about relative capacity and demonstrate their confidence in what they have learned, but, in a small proportion of lessons in Key Stage 4 progress is poor. In Science progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 4 but either unsatisfactory or poor, in equal measure, at Key Stage 3.

In other subjects, pupils in Key Stage 3 make satisfactory progress in physical education,(PE) and information technology,(IT) and unsatisfactory progress in design and technology and music. Whilst no teaching of art was seen at Key Stage 3, pupils' work was scrutinised and progress is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 pupils make satisfactory progress in geography, music, physical education,(PE) and information technology,(IT). In art, pupils make good progress.

Post 16 students also make good progress in art. Their progress in PE is satisfactory, however, in geography, students make satisfactory progress in some lessons but unsatisfactory progress in an equal number. In music, progress for post 16 students is also variable, being good, satisfactory or poor in equal measure.

The school does not teach a modern foreign language because the National Curriculum regulations requiring this are disapplied. No teaching in religious education or history took place during the inspection and there is insufficient evidence on which to report progress.

Amongst the pupils making insufficient progress are some with the most severe learning difficulties and also some who are among the most able. A contributory factor in this is weakness in curriculum planning which does ensure that there is the necessary graduation

of difficulty within tasks set. In some areas much of what is offered is consolidation of previously acquired knowledge and rehearsal of skills already mastered. Another factor that slows down progress is the limited time allocated to all subjects.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

A majority of pupils arrive in the school exhibiting challenging behaviour which is not necessarily voluntary. In addition, many pupils have considerable difficulty in understanding and assimilating appropriate social behaviours as a result of their disability. It is not appropriate, therefore to apply conventional criteria to pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Within the limits of their cognitive and social functioning, pupils are friendly and well-disposed towards staff, each other and visitors. They are often engaged by tasks, show pleasure in success and enjoy praise. They generally show respect for the fabric and resources. Behaviour is particularly good in the residential setting and pupils respond well to social learning experiences, particularly where these involve going out of the school for visits or use of community facilities. Relationships are generally good and staff and pupils are mutually supportive. Where pupils are in difficulty, others allow the space and time for these difficulties to be addressed. Pupils form appropriate friendships and often support one another generously around the school. Older pupils in particular, are seen relating adult to adult with each other and staff.

1. Pupils respond well in the great majority of lessons. In successful lessons, and at their best, they are engaged, motivated, compliant, willing, genial and well behaved. They remember what has been learned, and apply skills, with concentration, care and perseverance. Where response is not good, they show no sustained interest in tasks, they are disruptive or passively resistant, they become excitable and, at times leave the room. On rare occasions, lessons are seriously disrupted as a result of uncontrolled behaviour. Some behaviour difficulties are seen at the beginnings and endings of lessons, particularly where these are not well managed, or time planning is weak. Pupils have few skills as collaborative or independent learners while the extent to which they show initiative and willingness to take responsibility is limited. The tendency of staff is to limit opportunities for independent learning.
2. The school does not exclude pupils, difficult behaviour is seen as part of the pupil's special needs and responded to within the school. Pupil behaviour is positively influenced by the patient and tolerant example of staff, and enhanced by the quality of relationships between staff working together. While pupils' behaviour sometimes has an adverse effect on attainment, it is far from being the major determinant, and, to a very large extent, the school's aims in this area are being met.

Attendance

3. Attendance is very good and a register is kept appropriately, recording, attendance and absences. There are no exclusions or unauthorised absences. Punctuality to lessons is sometimes erratic and thus unsatisfactory. The school does not monitor the use of time well and this sometimes results in the educational opportunities of some pupils being restricted.

Quality of education provided

Teaching

4. Much of the teaching in the school is satisfactory and some is good, but in a significant proportion of lessons, in about one in every three, teaching is unsatisfactory. It is, however, never poor. The quality of teaching does not vary significantly according to the age of the pupils being taught.
5. In English, mathematics and science, teaching is mostly satisfactory but is occasionally unsatisfactory; the quality of teaching to pupils at post-16 level is better in mathematics but is unsatisfactory in English. Science teaching is often good. In geography, and design and technology (food technology for the most part), teaching is mostly satisfactory and in music the quality ranges evenly from good to poor; in physical education teaching is unsatisfactory in half of the lessons seen. Art is always taught to at least a satisfactory standard, and sometimes teaching is good or very good. Insufficient teaching was seen in history, information technology and religious education to make reliable overall judgements. The teaching of communication skills is an area where there is need to extend teachers' expertise.
6. Satisfactory teaching arises from teachers bringing clear expectations to lessons, setting a good level of challenge and using regular questioning of the pupils to ascertain what is being learned and, particularly, what is misunderstood. Sometimes good subject knowledge is brought to bear in engaging pupils well, and support staff in classrooms are purposefully engaged at times.
7. Many lessons, while satisfactory, fall short of being good, and others are rendered unsatisfactory, by some widespread shortcomings. The most common weakness relates to the poor management of teaching time, where lessons start late and, often because teaching material has been exhausted, end prematurely. At such times pupils are left inactive. Related to this weakness is the absence of a clear rationale for, and the monitoring of, the deployment of classroom assistant staff. At times, such staff make an invaluable contribution to the management of problematic behaviour, but they spend a lot of time as passive onlookers at lessons waiting for their presence to be needed. Management needs to address these two aspects as a matter of priority in terms of improving learning and overall efficiency. Some of the work presented does not provide sufficient challenge to pupils and this applies particularly at Post-16 level where expectations, and the excessive amount of help given at times, are not appropriate to the age of the students.

The curriculum and assessment

8. A statement on pupil's educational entitlement is included in the school brochure and the school makes clear its intention to promote autonomy, meet individual needs and manage behavioural problems but no reference is made to promoting communication skills, the importance of literacy and numeracy or the need to ensure high standards of achievement. The school's overall curricular aims do not provide a wholly satisfactory starting point for the planning and development of the curriculum
9. Co-ordinators for most subjects are nominated and written aims are available in each subject but these are not supported by comprehensive schemes of work that address and

include the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. There is no written guidance on recording progress and appropriate teaching methodology nor on the resources required to support the work. There is no monitoring of curriculum continuity and progression across year groups and across Key Stages.

10. Some members of staff are responsible for areas of the curriculum for which they have no additional training. This has a detrimental effect on those subjects where teachers lack the knowledge to provide guidance to colleagues. Present arrangements make it difficult for co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate the teaching of their subject and the progress which is made by pupils.
11. The curriculum lacks balance and what is offered varies from group to group. For example not all are taught RE, and I.T. The pupils' working week is approximately two hours short of the minimum recommended for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4. The rationale for the time allocations for subjects and activities is unclear at all stages. Some subjects like personal and social and health education receive too much time at the expense of others. The school sees personal, social and health education as underpinning the curriculum but it has not identified the ways in which it could be taught through core and foundation subjects. The three period day makes it difficult for the school to match the length of the lessons to the demands of the various subjects and to pupils' need. Lessons are generally too long and this affects the pace of work. Frequently lessons do not start on time. Careful monitoring is needed to ensure that time is effectively used and that lessons start promptly.
12. The curriculum emphasis differs very little at each educational stage. For example Key Stage 3, and Key Stage 4 pupils and post 16 students are all following the same topic 'weather' and year 8 and post-16 pupils receive music together. The topic is so broad that many activities cannot be explored in sufficient depth. Work is determined by the topics rather than National Curriculum programmes of study. Pupils' progress in subject knowledge and understanding is limited by this practice.
13. The curriculum is partially successful in preparing students for adult life. Good work is taking place in personal, social and health education, but whilst options are in place more needs to be done to develop a coherent and distinct curriculum for students over 16. Presently, there is no formal system whereby post- 16 students can receive credit for their achievement.
14. The school has in place an effective and systematic approach to the assessment and recording of individual learning, and behavioural targets for pupils based on a multi-disciplinary approach. This provides a frame work and clear guide lines for all staff to follow. All pupils have individual educational plans which are reviewed every six months. This meets the requirements of the Code of Practice.
15. The assessment of pupils' personal and social development is good. However, day to day assessment of achievement within National Curriculum Programmes of study to inform teacher's daily planning, lacks consistency. Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 has not taken place.
16. Each pupil has a portfolio using photographic evidence. These are used to produce the "Record of Achievement" and the resultant summative document provides a portrait of each pupil when he or she leaves school. At present these are in embryonic form with evidence

of social activities. They need to be developed to show the whole range of activities and achievement within the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

17. The school makes good provision for pupils' development in each of these areas. The school's ethos and the relationships within it make an important contribution, and the residential setting offers very good support..
18. There is good support for spiritual development, both in terms of planned experience as in assemblies, and in the incidental experiences of pupils. The act of worship is held daily, is varied and is appropriate for the understanding of pupils and they participate within the limits of their ability. There are good links with local churches and these are used well. Although religious education is not well established, and there is little evidence of planning for spiritual development in other subjects, music contributes well at times, and the highly successful promotion of art both as an activity and an experience has a very beneficial effect. Displays are generally stimulating, and the site and situation of the school are effectively exploited in terms of creating opportunities for pupils to experience awe and wonder in the natural world.
19. Although pupils' moral understanding is limited by their level of cognitive functioning, they are taught the importance of the difference between right and wrong and learn to identify correct behaviour. Where pupils are shown trust, as they often are in the residential setting, they respond by being trustworthy. Teaching and care staff are good role models and maintain a consistently high moral tone. Pupils' ability to assimilate moral concepts is assisted by the consistent caring example of staff.
20. Many pupils have an extremely limited repertoire of appropriate social behaviours. Much of the work of the school therefore is concerned with social development. Pupils' development needs are assessed in detail, and individualised programmes devised. Appropriate behaviour and discipline is maintained through positive relationships with very limited recourse to sanctions, which are clearly specified. Guidance on permissible forms of control is clear and detailed, conforming to the recommendations of the Department of Health. Provision is integrated but with sufficient separation to provide distinction between home and school. However, the use of residential care workers as classroom assistants leads at times to a confusion of roles, and there is not a sufficiently clear distinction between expectations in the classrooms, and those appropriate in the "home" setting. The residential provision makes some good provision for the next stage by offering semi-independent living experiences, but overall the school needs to do more to promote independence within the limits of pupils' disabilities. Although the school has not been inspected by Social Services during the last four years, so that no recent report is available, the developments within the school have ensured that pupils' experiences are appropriate, they are safe and secure, and arrangements comply with current legislative requirements and good residential practice. In particular, the high quality of recent building additions go a long way to enhancing pupils' self-esteem.
21. Pupils are exposed to a range of cultural experiences. While their comprehension of them is limited by their special needs, they are well used to extend understanding. There is a good range of visits, both to support the curriculum and to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world to which they will return. Although no pupils are taught a foreign

language, they benefit from the “French week” held as an annual event during which they experience aspects of the language and culture of France. Leisure planning includes a wide range of activities to support pupils' social and personal development, including music, art/craft etc. and PSE skills training is integrated across school and home. They have contributed to an exhibition of art at Hereford Cathedral and gained great benefit from visiting to see their work displayed. In lessons, pupils are given opportunities to examine other cultures and beliefs, and encouraged to respect them. However there is insufficient preparation for life in multicultural societies, especially given the communities from which many pupils come, and the library provision and displays do not adequately provide role models for pupils from ethnic minorities or validate their cultural inheritance .

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

22. There is an adequate system to ensure that information is exchanged between the school and the residential staff, both orally and in written form. Incidents are recorded as they occur. The arrangements for child protection are sound and understood by all the staff.
23. Fire drills are held and there is regular monitoring to ensure the health and safety of the pupils, students and staff. However, the school has not yet carried out a full risk assessment of its premises and site. The school policy regulating use of the spa pool is not always strictly adhered to and this presents a potential risk to the safety of the pupils. Outside caterers provide all meals and in liaison with the cook propose menus. They are responsible for overseeing the standard of hygiene in and the cleanliness of the kitchens. During the inspection the kitchens were noted on occasions to be untidy with dirt on the floors and unremoved waste and packaging on working surfaces. This was drawn to the attention of the management. The school must monitor the kitchens regularly to ensure that there is a healthy and safe environment. The small size of the gymnasium and the storage of apparatus within it poses a potential threat to the safety of pupils.
24. There is good preparation for independent living but the lines of development are not sufficiently differentiated between the post-16 students and others. Further opportunities for independence and decision making for the post-16 would enhance their development. All pupils participate in outings both during the school day and after school; this enhances the education and development of the young people. The need for 'space' is recognised and the pupils and students have the opportunity to use the grounds while discreet supervision, from a distance, takes place.
25. To extend expertise, consideration should be given to arranging for a qualified nurse to visit the school on a frequent and regular basis to monitor, advise and support staff in dealing with the pupils' medical conditions.

Partnership with parents and the community

26. The school encourages parents to keep contact with their child and offers accommodation for short stays. Reviews are held every six months and these are generally well supported with reports being circulated to all carers prior to the meetings. The school complies with the Code of Practice of the Education Act 1993 in its arrangements for Annual Reviews. Annual reports to parents on the progress made by their child in the National Curriculum are not presently produced and these should be instigated. Parents express general satisfaction with the school and many visit on open days despite the distance pupils they

have to travel. Pupils have the opportunity to use the telephone, although they need help with this in many instances, and there is an independent visitor who regularly comes into the school and to whom the students and pupils have access. The school has a published complaints procedure.

27. There are good links with local social services and other members of other professions visit the school. The local community and the church support the school and the local Rotary Club helpfully, provide services. Pupils and students have the opportunity to visit both educational and social establishments and camping equipment has been bought for use this year. These arrangements are sound and the schools' links with parents and the local community contribute to pupils' and students' social and educational development.

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management

28. The principal has been in post for a year and the head of care and the deputy head teacher for less than that. The principal has provided strong leadership. Following an audit commissioned by the principal, changes were instituted that have furthered the development of good quality care for resident pupils, the promotion of a safe and secure environment, and the offer of relevant training to all residential care workers. During the same period of time a school building of high quality has been constructed and has just come into use. The impact of leadership on these aspects of the school's work has been positive.
29. The curriculum and the arrangements for grouping pupils to receive it are in need of development and revision. The principal acknowledges these needs and is moving to address them. Currently, however, this aspect of the work of leadership and management is unsatisfactory.
30. Current arrangements for monitoring and supporting teaching and for promoting the development of a curriculum that fully reflects the school's aims are ineffective. There has been recent production of policies in curriculum areas but there are as yet no schemes of work in place that fully reflect the pupils' individual needs or the National Curriculum programmes of study. The school development plan, which prioritises issues of residential care staff training and building development does not give sufficient detail about curriculum development and implementation.
31. There are generally good relationships within the staff group and between staff and pupils and a high quality learning environment has been produced.
32. Whilst job descriptions exist, the respective roles of the principal and deputy head teacher need to be clarified. This particularly relates to the areas of promoting the development of the curriculum, monitoring teaching and learning, and the allocation of pupils to teaching groups.
33. There is a good ethos within the school and the well-designed and well-finished school buildings, and the social and behavioural progress made by the pupils reflects a commitment to high achievement.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

34. The school has sufficient staff of all sorts but a significant number of teachers lack specialist qualification in the field of special education and need further professional development in the particular subjects they are seeking to co-ordinate and develop, and in aspects of the management of the learning of pupils with severe learning difficulties. The induction and training of residential staff is good and benefits from a current initiative which provides a part-time trainer on the site; the appraisal of teachers needs to guide a systematic programme of further training for them. Classroom assistant staff sometimes have a very beneficial effect on pupils' learning but their deployment needs to be more vigorously managed and monitored if their impact is to be effective at all times.
35. The resources for learning in the school are barely sufficient for the present ambitions in many subjects; when subject specialisms develop further and schemes of work are devised, there will be a need to extend learning resources in many subjects. Although budget is available in general, there is only limited soft-ware supporting information technology, insufficient resources for history, few for French and none for religious education.
36. The accommodation of the school is sufficient overall, with the exception of the gymnasium, and the very recently-opened school building is excellent; it provides well-appointed facilities and the attention to detail in the finish provides a high quality learning environment. The proposed new residential facilities, due for completion later this year, promises to create a very good quality of accommodation throughout. The gymnasium is small and the available space is further reduced and cluttered with large apparatus for which there is no separate storage nearby; this reduces the activities that can be undertaken and constitutes a potentially dangerous situation. The use of the spa-bath needs to be better monitored to ensure that pupils do not spend too long in it. Overall, the accommodation of the school is managed well, is effectively used and makes a positive contribution to standards and progress.

The efficiency of the school

37. Financial planning is good and proposals to develop buildings and resources are carefully planned. These plans are efficiently implemented.
38. Financial control and school administration are good. Ordering procedures and stock controls are effective and a recent audit noted no deficiencies. The personal money of pupils is banked securely and there are appropriate safeguards against unauthorised use.
39. The deployment of teachers is generally sound but the use of residential care workers to support in the classrooms as non-teaching assistants poses some difficulties in maintaining continuity of approach, because the pattern of shifts that they work means that these staff members can be in class for only one week in every three.
40. The quality of the extended curriculum is good with a full range of social experiences and visits being used to promote the social development of pupils. The curriculum experienced during the school day is, however, limited and the post-16 curriculum does not fully address the needs of this group. While teaching is generally satisfactory, there is a need for more training to be given to ensure that the learning needs of pupils are

fully met.

41. The recently appointed principal, aided by the staff, works hard to make an appropriate education available to the pupils and has invested extensively in providing a good quality setting. It gives sound value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science

English

42. Progress in English is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and 4 but unsatisfactory at Post 16; Progress is facilitated by the high level of staffing which ensures pupils attend to and complete their work.
43. When the pupils are motivated they respond well to their lessons. They can express themselves in conversation, exercise choice and express likes and dislikes. Some can identify their names, social sight words and copy text. Progress is generally satisfactory but is less so for more able pupils.
44. Teaching is better at Key Stage 3 and 4 in developing speaking and listening skills between adult and pupil. At post -16 and where the emphasis is on behaviour management pupils are not encouraged to communicate with each other and opportunities are lost to contribute to the lesson as a group, for example, in a session about diaries, one pupil's news was written on the board without discussion or comment by the group.
45. Whilst some staff use signs to support communication and the school has introduced a sign each week, the school does not have an overall policy on the use of signs, and symbols. Technological aids to support teaching in communication for those unable to use the spoken word are very limited.
46. Progress in reading and writing is limited and there are no policies to develop these skills in a structured progressive manner. A few pupils are able to read and enjoy simple stories or identify social sight words, some can copy text that has been written for them. There is little attempt to produce writing unaided. Time given to reading and writing is inconsistent and insufficient across teaching groups and there are no schemes of work to support development of these skills.
47. Progress in all attainment targets in English is hampered by the lack of a detailed policy and co-ordination of the subject throughout the school. There are no defined schemes of work. Some literacy objectives for individual pupils are included in the learning area of 'language' or 'cognition' but they are few in number and narrow in coverage. The school is not yet offering the full breadth of National Curriculum coverage. There is no policy for developing speaking, listening and literacy skills across the whole curriculum or for recording progress and achievement of pupils.
48. Classrooms are new and are being developed. Currently they lack stimulating book areas. Computer software is available but staff need time to explore this and to feel secure in its use.

Mathematics

49. The progress that pupils make in mathematics ranges from satisfactory to poor, but is satisfactory overall. This is true both for younger pupils and those over 16. Number skills are very limited, and pupils have little ability to apply these skills in other subjects and

around the school. In lessons where pupils are seen making satisfactory progress, while many are struggling to recognise numbers and match these to collections of items, others quickly absorb and remember information about relative capacity and demonstrate their confidence in what they have learned.

50. The response that pupils show is mainly satisfactory, although at times it is poor. In the best lessons pupils participate well in oral work, concentrate well and are willing to engage in written tasks. They show considerable pleasure in demonstrating what they have learned and become excited by the work. They take care over their presentation. In other lessons, pupils opt out and decline to participate, and show signs that they are not used to the demands of the classroom. Many require considerable support and cajoling by staff to complete their work.
51. The quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory, but is, in the main, satisfactory. Teaching usually consists of individual support to pupils in working on tasks designed to develop basic number skills. Approaches and relationships are appropriate, although the material offered is not always so. Where teaching is good, especially class teaching, there is a clear exposition of the task, and a good mixture of oral and practical work. An enthusiastic approach by the teacher helps to sustain pupil interest and maintain a good pace. Lessons are well-planned with clear objectives and attention is paid to how they begin and end so that activities and learning outcomes are reviewed. It is unsatisfactory when unplanned, or poorly-planned tasks are offered because a previous lesson has finished early, inappropriate worksheets are given out without adequate preparation, pupils are repeating work, and there is little to enthuse or challenge them in the work offered. Teachers' subject knowledge is adequate for the level at which pupils are working, but their subject skills would benefit from in-service training in materials and methods.
52. A curriculum is currently being developed which is intended to provide for continuity and progression, based on the programmes of study for Key Stage 1. This is an appropriate approach, but will need to be extended and matched to assessment structures to ensure that an appropriate programme can be offered for pupils who stay at the school for a number of years. Arrangements for the management and co-ordination of mathematics are recent and not fully established. Resources are adequate for the present level of pupils' work and have recently been increased, but need to be developed in conjunction with the curriculum and scheme of work to ensure that not only do they support this, but also that they are age-appropriate for the pupils. Insufficient use is currently made of information technology to support mathematics, and there is insufficient planning for pupils to use mathematics as a cross-curricular tool.

Science

53. A great deal of the science is taught through topics and the progress of students and pupils' in science is satisfactory overall but poor in Key Stage 3. Many are developing an awareness and a basic understanding of wind power and are building on their previous learning about things like evaporation. They have an adequate and developing understanding of presenting results, as on wall charts. Some have an understanding of plants growing and that they need water to survive; they carry out very simple experiments and some have a reasonable understanding of solids, gases and liquids.
54. Responses to lessons are mostly satisfactory and often good. Although many pupils need

a lot of individual help, they are keen to take part and make a contribution, they offer answers to questions, persevere well, and make a particularly enthusiastic effort in practical work. Relationships are good and there is an amicable, generous atmosphere in most lessons; at times they explain to each other what they have seen or what they believe in an open, helpful way. Pupils treat the equipment in science with respect.

55. The teaching is mostly satisfactory and often good; it is occasionally unsatisfactory. Individual lessons are planned in good detail and there is sufficient attention to the needs of individuals; at times this extends to a good use of sign-supported speech. A variety of practical activities and effective questioning give lessons pace and maintain pupils' endeavour. Overall, the management of learning and behaviour is satisfactory and subject knowledge is sufficient. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurs when the work presented is too complex, particularly when the learning of the previous lesson is not reviewed and reinforced. While assistant staff make a valuable contribution sometimes, they spend too much time unproductively waiting to be involved because their contribution has not been planned and is not being monitored.
56. Science is co-ordinated by a non-specialist and guidance and training, particularly with regard to policy and the development of schemes of work, is a priority need. Lacking these essentials, the curriculum, although reasonably broad, does not satisfy National Curriculum requirements and continuity is not demonstrated. Resources are only adequate for the current work and there are sensible plans to improve them, through project boxes to cover electronics for example.

Other subjects or courses

Art

57. Art is offered to all pupils and students as part of the classroom activity for the topic being studied. During the course of the inspection the topic being studied by the whole school was "weather". The content of art lessons related to this theme.
58. In Key Stage 4 pupils make satisfactory progress in art lessons. They can follow instructions and undertake simple techniques such as direct printing using sponges or transfer printing using paper and water paints. They are learning to associate colour with properties such as warmth or cold and most can recognise "hot" colours. Individual pupils can communicate their intentions and identify aspects of their work, for example the white shapes that signify clouds in a landscape.
59. Post-16 students can choose to do art as an option activity in addition to their class work. In the option group progress is good. There is consolidation of learning about making art, choosing colours, applying techniques and drawing from memory. Co-ordination in some cases is developing well and students can accurately stencil or cut around boundaries with scissors.
60. The pupils and students respond well to their art lessons. In the option group response is generally very good with full engagement in the task and evident pride in what has been achieved. Generally, and because of their learning difficulties, pupils and students find it difficult to initiate ideas, except in those cases where there is a tendency to repetitively produce drawings of the same subject. Nevertheless they develop in their

capacity to sustain work, respect the work of others and separately contribute to collaborative production of works such as friezes.

61. There are no specialist qualified teachers of art but the knowledge and understanding of those who take the subject is adequate for the level of work required. The school is fortunate to have the services of a practicing artist who works with the options group and advises on accommodation and materials. He maintains the new art room which is an attractive space, well-furnished, reflecting in its display a sensitivity to the intents and products of the pupils.
62. Teaching is always satisfactory or better and most is good or very good. Where teaching is very good, work is carefully planned and media well chosen to be suitable for the students who are using them. There is great respect for the students and the integrity of their artistic endeavour is carefully presented. Students are fully and actively involved and enjoyment in the work being undertaken is promoted.
63. The work undertaken in art addresses some of the aspects of the National Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2, but as yet there is no scheme of work for pupils in Key Stage 3 which is firmly based in the programme of study of the National Curriculum. Assessment is not formally undertaken.
64. The management of resources is good and art has been well used to develop the self-esteem of students and pupils and to help in enabling them to reflect and to relate to others. A well-mounted exhibition of the school's art work was being held in Hereford Cathedral at the time of the inspection, thus forging links with the local community, and showing the pupils that their work was highly valued.

Design and technology

65. Too little teaching of work in design and technology with resistant materials was seen to report progress in these aspects. The progress made in food technology at post-16 is satisfactory. Pupils identify materials and utensils, mix ingredients with reasonable accuracy given some assistance, handle hot dishes from the oven responsibly and clear up reliably given some encouragement. They plan meals and, through shopping trips, are developing an understanding of the entire process of planning, pricing, purchase, preparation and presentation.
66. Pupils' attitudes to these lessons are mostly satisfactory. They enjoy the prospect and the outcome of food preparation, they are attentive when making flapjacks, they take turns, share tasks, accept instruction and work reliably. Sometimes their persistence and attention is not maintained but, overall, they stick at the task in hand without undue supervision. They show particular pleasure at the successful outcomes of their efforts, as when a meal was prepared and shared with other pupils and staff.
67. Teaching is sound. Lessons are prepared well and the level of expectation is sufficient to maintain pupils' engagement. Pupils are supported well individually, lessons run to time and have successful outcomes, subject knowledge is sufficient and there is good regard for safety aspects in the kitchen. A good balance is struck between demonstration and allowing pupils to attempt things on their own. Relationships and learning are well managed overall.

68. Apart from work with food, design and technology is under-developed; there is no scheme of work and the teaching does not sufficiently address the requirements of the National Curriculum. Aspects of the subject are found occasionally in topics and other subjects, as with the making of kites or making a simple clock in mathematics, but the subject needs to be fully established and further resourced throughout the school.

Geography

69. Progress is satisfactory overall, at each key stage and post 16 but at post-16 there is some unsatisfactory progress. Activities often consolidate previously acquired skills, but, when the teacher's learning objectives challenge pupils, there is some evidence of progress in understanding.
70. Pupils respond satisfactorily in all lessons. They followed instructions and generally are co-operative with adults.
71. Pupils at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and post-16 have been actively engaged in a topic about the weather and good use was made of school grounds to develop use of wind power and board display to develop understanding of the water cycle.
72. Teaching is satisfactory and teachers plan lessons with materials suitable for the abilities and interests of the pupils. Lesson objectives are clear and pupils are encouraged participate and develop understanding through questioning. Where teaching is good, pupils are challenged to think about the consequences of their observation and hence extend their understanding.
73. Geography is taught through a cross curricular topic approach and throughout the school there are displays of work undertaken in different aspects of weather.
74. There are no schemes of work based on programmes of study and continuity and progression is not secure.

History

75. This subject is taught as a whole school topic in one week during each year. The school has produced a set of aims and outline content to cover a four year cycle but this does not constitute a detailed scheme of work to support the subject and ensure continuity and progression.
76. It was not possible to inspect history and form a secure judgement about pupils progress and response and the teaching.

Information technology

77. Insufficient lessons were seen in information technology to report on progress, or on teaching in the normal way. Approaches to the subject are relatively new in the school, and it is not well established, or offered to all pupils. Recent resource acquisitions provide the basis for offering an appropriate skills programme for more able pupils and this is being developed. There is a need to plan in greater detail, particularly in terms of pupils with little

experience, both in terms of programme and assessment structures. The policy for teaching information technology does not give sufficient guidance, and in the absence of an effective scheme of work, does not provide the basis for planning for individual pupils' needs. Arrangements for co-ordinating the subject have only recently been established, and considerable in-service training will be required if staff are to make an appropriate contribution to pupils' learning. There is a well-appointed specialist room where the limited resources are used, but there is no evidence of cross-curricular use, and pupils do not have access to equipment as part of their residential experience.

Music

78. Overall progress in music variable. It is sometimes good or satisfactory, but in the majority of lessons it is poor or unsatisfactory. Where it is good, pupils explore sounds, use instruments and voice and recognise the musical elements of pitch, duration, dynamics and tempo. They sing in tune and maintain a part in a round. They make good progress in using percussion. They start and stop on teachers' instruction, beat rhythmically to music and match their playing to the sense of the words. Pupils make gains in the lesson when introduced to new tasks, instruments and musical concepts evaluate their own and other pupils' work within the group. They make poor progress when they are repeating tasks using skills which have been poorly learned, or where the task does not permit learning gains to be made.
79. The response that pupils make is similarly varied, in that in a half of lessons it is good, and in the rest it is unsatisfactory. Where it is good, pupils are enthusiastic, concentrate well over long periods and show enjoyment in their music lessons. They co-operate and listen carefully to one another. They support each other's performance and are spontaneous in their applause. It is unsatisfactory when they do not sustain interest, and become detached, and behaviour deteriorates.
80. The quality of teaching is also variable in that in a half of lessons it is good, but unsatisfactory in the rest. It is good when lessons have clear aims and objectives, teachers use a range of techniques to consolidate previous work and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding and have high expectations of pupils' learning. Lessons have good pace, and time is well used. It is unsatisfactory when music is offered as an unplanned experiential activity with little or no challenge, where expectations are low, and the lesson drifts on until it finally dies. Overall, teachers' musical skills are not matched by subject knowledge and expertise, so that they are not able to plan effectively. The absence of an effective policy or scheme of work adds to this difficulty, so that many opportunities to promote learning are missed.
81. There is, at present, no curriculum structure to provide for continuity and progression, no structures for assessment and no established arrangements to promote or co-ordinate the subject. Resources are adequate for the present level of use, and have recently been augmented, but there are no arrangements to monitor their use or evaluate recent spending decisions. There is a need for much more effective and detailed planning and considerable in-service support to be undertaken if music is to make an adequate contribution to meeting the school's overall aims in both cognitive and therapeutic development.

Physical education

82. Pupils were seen in the gymnasium and on a visit to a local bowling alley; swimming could

not be seen because the local pool, which is used regularly by the school, was temporarily closed for repairs. Progress in physical education in this limited group of activities is satisfactory throughout the age range. At Key Stage 3, pupils play very simple ball games, move along inclined benches on their haunches, climb ladder towers and most jump from a small height. At Key Stage 4, most throw and catch a big ball from a short distance if directed accurately to their hands, a few can complete a series of forward rolls and a very few manage a series of hops on one leg and walk backwards confidently. At Post-16, some pupils walk along a bench about three feet from the floor with minimal assistance, shoot into a basketball net successfully and catch and throw confidently. A few older pupils can change their footwear with assistance at the bowling alley and understand the task of bowling, which they manage with varying degrees of success, but do not understand the scoring.

83. Pupils' responses to these lessons vary from good to unsatisfactory, but are mostly satisfactory. With a very few exceptions, they enjoy physical activity, they wait their turn, try hard, applaud each other's success, abide by the rules and behave responsibly. Many lack confidence but there is clear evidence of slow improvement over time in this respect. They behave very well indeed in the more social situation of the bowling alley. Where response is unsatisfactory pupils are lethargic, barely co-operative and successfully avoid making much effort.
84. The teaching of physical education is satisfactory in half of lessons and unsatisfactory in the remainder. There is no overall plan for the subject and subject knowledge is sometimes weak; the challenge provided is occasionally insufficient and the more capable and confident pupils are not stretched. There is too little emphasis on teaching skills and recording progress. While supervision is good, and there is reasonable attention to health and safety factors from committed staff, the lack of expertise and experience in the subject means that teaching is too often unsatisfactory. The available apparatus is not used to best effect, neither pupils nor staff change for sessions in the gymnasium, staff wear wholly inappropriate walking boots which bring dirt onto the floor on which pupils are working. The management of lesson time is unsatisfactory where activities start late and finish before the end of the time allocated.
85. There is no scheme of work for physical education and the school needs to increase staff expertise in this subject as a matter of priority. The gymnasium is small and its use is further restricted by it being cluttered with large and small apparatus for which there is no adequate storage, and which constitutes a potential safety risk.

Religious Education

86. There is insufficient evidence to form a judgement about the progress made by pupils in religious education. During the course of the inspection no teaching in this subject took place. Very little teaching is, in fact, planned for, with only a single class group being offered a regular weekly lesson. Some teaching has taken place in the past and the theme of "festivals" has led to the making and use of artefacts connected with such religious feasts as Diwali, Hannukah and Christmas. There is reference in assemblies to religious concepts and acts of worship including the singing of hymns take place. Pupils sometimes visit churches and on occasion Hereford cathedral. While the difficulty involved in making some aspects of religious education meaningful for these pupils a more systematic and rigorous approach to the planning and teaching of the subject

should be adopted so that all pupils have an opportunity to gain familiarity with the beliefs, symbols and festivals that are embedded in the fabric of our society.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

87. The inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors for a total of sixteen inspector days. During their time in school inspectors observed twenty four hours of teaching extending over forty lessons and spent a further period of approximately sixteen hours observing assemblies, lunch arrangements, social organisation and provision and residential arrangements including meal times, menus and the records kept by staff of incidents. The work of pupils was scrutinised and teachers' planning and records were examined. Key figures in the organisation of the school were interviewed including the proprietor, the principal, the head of residential care and the deputy head of education. Other members of staff held discussions with inspectors about their roles and responsibilities. Inspectors communicated with pupils where this was possible. A visit was made to see the work of pupils in an art exhibition. The special educational needs statements of pupils were examined as were their individual education plans. Inspectors attended various meetings within the school. Prior to the inspection a meeting for parents was held which was attended by the Registered Inspector. The views expressed by parents in this meeting and in the questionnaires that some parents completed were shared with the team to inform them more fully in reaching their judgements

1. Data and indicators

PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on schools' register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 - Y13	22	22	22	N/A

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (YR - Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	5.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	3.7

Education support staff (YR - Y13)

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week	318

1. FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:

95/ 96

	£
Total Income	1, 197,750
Total Expenditure	1, 168, 531
Expenditure per pupil	61, 501
Balance brought forward from previous year	62, 008
Balance carried forward to next year	91, 227

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

20

Number of questionnaires returned:

6

Percentage return rate:

30

Responses (percentage of answers in each category) :

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	33	33	17		17
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	33	50			17
The school handles complaints from parents well	50	33		17	
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	50	17	17	17	
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	50	17	17	17	
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	33	67			
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	83	17			
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	17	33	33	17	
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	33	67			
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	50	33			17
My child(ren) like(s) school	67	33			

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