

INSPECTION REPORT

**Storm House School
134 Barnsley Road
Wath upon Dearne
Rotherham
S63 6DQ**

LEA area: Rotherham

School Register Number: 106965

Principal: Andrea Hull

Reporting inspector: Ms S M Shoesmith

Date of inspection: 17 - 21 February 1997

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the Schools Inspection Act 1996

Information about the school

Type of school:	Special
Type of control:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	134 Barnsley Road, Wath upon Dearne Rotherham S63 6DQ
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Appropriate authority:	National Autistic Society
Name of Chair of the Service Support Committee:	Dr G K Benson

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Main Findings

1 Storm House School has a number of considerable strengths in the care and support it offers to pupils with autism and the high standards of behaviour and response it achieves with most pupils. However, it also has a number of weaknesses particularly in relation to the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4.

2 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. Judgements about progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements and annual reviews.

3 Progress made by post-16 students is consistently good. The students benefit from a range of pre-vocational courses which have nationally recognised accreditation. Students make considerable progress in personal and social development and in a range of key skills which support the high levels of independence they are able to achieve.

4 For secondary aged pupils progress is satisfactory in only half of the lessons across the curriculum. Progress is often satisfactory and occasionally good in English, especially speaking and listening, practical mathematics and personal, social and health education. Progress in science is often satisfactory in individual lessons and in records of work but the overall programme is not well enough planned to promote the progress of pupils consistently. Individual educational plans for some pupils show the progress made over time but often this is difficult to monitor because targets are not specific enough and often relate only to personal and social skills.

5 Progress for primary aged pupils is satisfactory or better in eight out of ten lessons. Progress is often good in English, especially in relation to the use of sign and symbol to support language. Several young children with little or no speech use signs and increasingly link them to spoken words and phrases. In mathematics progress is satisfactory and pupils can count accurately, recognise numbers and use mathematics confidently in everyday situations; a few older pupils can manage computation work. In science, progress is satisfactory and sometimes good. Young children learn about their bodies and progress in Key Stage 2 to understanding other living things. Individual educational plans show the progress that pupils make over time and in most plans the targets are specific and focus on educational and social needs.

6 Taking account of their special educational needs; pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and a strength of the school. Pupils are enabled to relate as well as they can to other pupils and to adults. The management of difficult behaviour is good. Individual instances of challenging behaviour related to the individuals' special needs are handled effectively. Adults respect pupils and are careful to acknowledge their rights at all times.

7 The quality of teaching for primary aged pupils is satisfactory or better in almost nine out of ten lessons. In well over half their lessons the quality of teaching is good or very good. For secondary aged pupils the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in only seven out of ten lessons and good or very good in a quarter. A significant number of lessons for this age group are less than satisfactory.

8 The quality of teaching in the post 16 classes is of a very high standard; all lessons are consistently good or better and in almost six out of ten lessons the quality of teaching is very good or excellent. The detailed attention given to designing individual programmes which enable progress is impressive.

9 Assessment practices are well developed in a number of subjects. Teacher assessment and standard assessment tests and tasks are carried out at the end of each Key Stage and are useful in showing the achievement levels of the pupils but the results of these are not published in the annual report to parents. Day to day assessment is not used consistently to inform the future planning of pupils' learning.

10 The school's curriculum is broad and incorporates each subject of the National Curriculum at levels which takes into account the special educational needs of the pupils. The work in most subjects for primary aged pupils is sound and sometimes better but for secondary aged pupils the curriculum is fragmented and as a result pupils are not able to make consistent progress. The work in some subjects across the whole school lacks depth and systems to ensure that pupils maintain their progress and build on their skills as they move from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 are not fully effective.

11 The curriculum provision for post 16 students at Benson House is very good and a strength of the school. Residential provision at Hoylands House is also a strength, in particular, the links between care plans and educational plans which promote the pupils achievements especially in personal, social and health education.

12 Social development of the pupils is particularly strong, moral development is good and cultural and spiritual development are sound. The welfare and guidance needs of the pupils are very well met. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for.

13 Leadership is strong and effective in most, but not all, parts of the school and in the residence. It is strong in the primary and post 16 departments but weak in relation to the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4. The role of curriculum co-ordinators is underdeveloped at each Key Stage. The new principal, supported by some very effective team leaders, is beginning to have a positive influence on the work of the school.

14 Financial control is good but the current practice of no carry forward of funds makes the longer-term financial planning difficult. School development planning has been established but priorities are not yet clear, success criteria are too broad and the plan is not fully costed. Systems for monitoring and evaluation do not focus enough on the effectiveness of the quality of education the school provides and on the progress which pupils make.

15 The school is well staffed with committed and hardworking teachers, special support assistants, residential staff and support staff. The quantity and quality of resources for learning varies across the school. In some subject areas resources are adequate but many subjects are not well resourced and this inhibits the progress pupils are able to make. Resources in the residential provision are satisfactory.

16 The quality of accommodation is variable across the sites; provision at the Priory Annexe (primary aged pupils) is appropriate but inadequate at Storm House (secondary aged pupils). Benson House (post 16 students) provides a very suitable learning environment and Hoylands House provides very good residential accommodation for pupils of all ages. The residence, however, is a considerable distance from the primary provision and creates too long a journey for pupils at the beginning and end of the school day.

17 With the exception of the secondary aged provision, which offers poor value for money, other aspects of the school offer satisfactory value for money and the provision for post 16 students offers good value for money. Overall, therefore, the school offers sound value for money.

Key Issues for Action

18 In order to build upon the considerable developments which have taken place over the last year, the principal and staff with the support of National Autistic Society should undertake the following action.

19 Develop the curriculum for the secondary aged pupils to:

- . improve their attainment and progress;
- . incorporate National curriculum programmes of study;
- . provide a broad and balanced curriculum which meets their needs, and
- . include specialist subject teaching.

20 Improve the quality of teaching for secondary aged pupils by:

- . establishing a clear purpose for all lessons;
- . improving the teachers' subject knowledge, and
- . ensuring that teachers have higher expectations of pupil achievement.

21 Improve school development planning to put in place;

- . clear priorities, especially for the attainment and progress of pupils;
- . longer term financial planning;
- . more specific criteria for judging the success of developments specified in the plan;
- . systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school especially in terms of the attainment and progress of the pupils, and
- . a clearer educational direction for the school.

22 Continue to develop the whole curriculum for primary aged pupils with specific emphasis on the development of:

- . schemes of work in all subjects which guide and support the work of teachers;
- . clearer learning objectives for all lessons.
- . the role of curriculum co-ordinators, and
- . strategies to maintain and build on the pupils' attainment and progress as they move from Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 3;

23 Improve the teaching accommodation for secondary aged pupils and the resources for teaching and learning in several subject areas across the whole school.

Introduction

Characteristics of the school

24 Storm House School was opened in 1976 by the South Yorkshire Society for Autistic Children and is now part of the National Autistic Society. The school provides education and care for 93 pupils on 4 sites; Priory Annexe for 54 pupils aged 3-11, Storm House for 29 pupils aged 11-16, Benson House for 10 students aged 16-19. Hoylands House provides residential care for 22 pupils five days each week in term time; 22 pupils are currently resident. Several of the sites are a considerable distance apart. The travelling time between the residential provision and the primary provision is one hour.

25 All children have statements of special educational needs. They are diagnosed as autistic or with needs on the autistic spectrum and include pupils who have challenging behaviour. Nationally there are more boys than girls diagnosed with autism however, the ratio at the school of 8.5 boys to every girl is a significantly greater imbalance than would usually be expected, but reflects referral patterns. All but four children are white and one child comes from a home where English is not the first language. The children have a wide range of ability and on entry usually have low levels of attainment although there is some variation. There are no specific criteria for admissions apart from the diagnosis of autism.

26 All children have their places funded by their local authority. At present 20 shire county and metropolitan local authorities in the North and Midlands fund places for pupils at the school.

27 The school roll has been steadily increasing from 12 in 1976 to 75 at the beginning of 1995 and to 92 in December 1996. The school has recently been granted approval from the Department of Education and Employment to increase the numbers of pupils on roll to 105. The intention is to build new provision on the Manvers development at Wath, close to the present site of Storm House. This development will offer 75 secondary school places and 50 residential places for pupils of all ages. The school would continue to operate on three sites and the travelling time between the residence and primary provision will be halved.

28 The school's main priority is to secure the new development and to achieve the current Service Mission Statement. The school regards itself to be in a good financial position to achieve this.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1

Of the five at the end of Key Stage 1 none achieved level 2 or above either in teacher assessment or in the tasks and tests in 1996. All five pupils were working towards level 1 in the three core subjects.

Attainment at Key Stage 2

Of the eleven pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, none achieved level 4 or above either in teacher assessment or in the tasks and tests in 1996. In English six were working towards level 1, in mathematics three pupils were working towards level 1, one achieved level 1 and one pupil achieved level 2 and in science two pupils were working towards level 1 and three achieved level 2.

Attainment at Key Stage 3

No pupils achieved level 5 or above either in teacher assessment or in the tasks and tests in 1996. Of the two pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, both achieved level 1 in English, level 2 in Mathematics and level 2 in Science in both teacher assessment and the standard task.

Attainment at Key Stage 4

There is no accreditation at Key Stage 4.
One pupil is studying for GCSE at a nearby secondary school.

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year :

		%
Authorised Absence	School	6.7
	National comparative data	8.5
Unauthorised Absence	School	0
	National comparative data	2.6

Exclusions: There have been no exclusions.

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	Key Stages 1& 2	%
Very good or better	12.5	
Satisfactory or better	86	
Less than satisfactory	14	

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and Progress

29 Progress made by students in the post 16 provision is consistently good. Most students relate well to each other. They work together with a high level of independence to produce a midday meal for the group and a range of interesting products of high quality as part of their business enterprise. They develop independence and self-confidence by taking part in leisure pursuits in the community. Many students read at a simple level and others are able to recognise social signs and labels. The use of mathematics in everyday situations is encouraged and, for example, several students can use money in simple transactions and make sense of bus timetables.

30 Students benefit from a range of pre-vocational courses which have nationally recognised accreditation. For example, City and Guilds Numberpower and Wordpower, Basic Food Health and Hygiene Certificate, Certificate in First Aid, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and the South Yorkshire Open College Federation: Units of Accreditation. The students' records of achievement are of a high quality.

31 For secondary aged pupils progress is satisfactory in only half of the lessons across the curriculum. Progress is often satisfactory and occasionally good in English, especially speaking and listening, practical mathematics and personal, social and health education. Progress in science is often satisfactory in individual lessons and in teachers' records of work but the overall programme is not well enough planned to promote the progress of pupils consistently. Successive individual educational plans for some pupils show the progress made over time but often this is difficult to monitor because targets are not specific enough and often relate only to personal and social development.

32 Progress for pupils in most foundation subjects in the secondary curriculum is limited, mainly by the lack of curriculum planning which builds on the skills and knowledge of the pupils and by the lack of teachers' specialist knowledge and skills. Records of work show that progress in physical education, especially in outdoor pursuits, is good. There are missed opportunities for recognising the achievement of the pupils through external accreditation of progress and attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. One pupil is expected to achieve his General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in mathematics and information technology systems at the end of the current school year, through attendance at a local secondary school.

33 Progress for primary aged pupils is satisfactory or better in eight out of ten lessons. Progress is often good in English, especially in relation to the use of sign and symbol to support language. The speech and language therapists make a valuable contribution to the achievement of the pupils. Several young children with little or no speech use signs and increasingly link them to spoken words and phrases. In mathematics progress is satisfactory and pupils can count accurately, recognise numbers and use mathematics confidently in everyday situations; a few older pupils can manage computation work. In science, progress is satisfactory and sometimes good. Young children learn about their bodies and progress in Key Stage 2 to understanding other living things.

34 For primary aged pupils progress in physical education and personal, social and health education is satisfactory and often good. Much attention is given to enabling pupils to achieve acceptable table manners and this is usually successful although exceptions do occur. Progress in geography and religious education is broadly satisfactory and progress in design and technology, art and music ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Progress for pupils in information technology is unsatisfactory although some more able pupils have better achievements where they have acquired keyboard and control skills.

35 Individual educational plans set out specific targets for most primary aged pupils and their progress over time especially in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education is clear.

Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development

36 Taking account of their special educational needs, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are a strength of the school. The pupils are enabled to relate, as well as they can, to other pupils and to adults. Many pupils demonstrate an interest in visitors and approach them in a sensible manner. Attitudes to learning are positive. Levels of concentration are often good when pupils are enjoying the work or are undertaking a task about which they feel confident. Those pupils with lower levels of concentration persevere with tasks successfully when the staff's encouragement provides the incentive.

37 Standards of behaviour are very good for the most part. Individual instances of challenging behaviour related to the pupils' special needs are handled effectively and pupils generally respond well. Staff demonstrate a well understood, professional and caring response at these times and ensure that pupils with difficult and challenging behaviour have a minimal effect on other pupils. The current behaviour policy provides staff with useful guidance although it is being updated at present to cover those areas of the present policy which are less specific. The system of Positive Intervention Programmes, although demanding on staff time, has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour. The recently introduced monitoring system is designed to increase the efficiency of this approach. Adults respect pupils and are careful to respect their rights at all times.

38 Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of personal independence in all parts of the pupils' life in the school and they respond well. This is particularly so in the residential setting which is an extremely positive aspect of the school. There is a very strong family ethos and pupils are helped to build upon the skills which they are learning in school. Provision for post 16 students enhances both their attitudes and their personal development through its very purposeful curriculum and programmes.

Attendance

39 Attendance rates at the school are high. However, the school does not always distinguish between the reasons for absence in the registers and therefore does not comply with the requirements of Circular 11/91. Pupils arrive at school via pre-arranged transport which is usually punctual. The start of teaching sessions sometimes lacks urgency, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Quality of Education Provided

Teaching

40 For primary aged pupils the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in almost nine out of ten lessons. In well over half their lessons the quality of teaching is good or very good. The quality of teaching for secondary aged pupils is satisfactory or better in only seven out of ten lessons and good or very good in a quarter. An unacceptably high number of lessons is unsatisfactory for secondary aged pupils. The quality of teaching for post 16 students is of a very high standard; all lessons are consistently good or better and in almost six out of ten the quality of teaching is very good or excellent. The detailed attention given to designing individual programmes which enable progress is impressive. The teaching of personal, social and health education is consistently satisfactory or good throughout the school.

41 In effective lessons which promote the progress of pupils:

- . teachers and support staff know the pupils and students well and have appropriately high expectations of them; for example, specific approaches which establish a high level of organisation enable young children to make appropriate choices and to understand the structure of their day;
- . there is a consistency to lesson planning which results in clear objectives and classroom routines which are understood by pupils; for example, in a speaking and listening lesson in Key Stage 1 pupils understand the requirement to make a contribution and to listen to the contribution of others;
- . teachers are confident in subject knowledge; for example, in music at Key Stage 2 rhythm and percussion instruments were used successfully to tell a story about a lion;
- . tasks are well matched to pupils' needs and take account of the range of ability in the classroom; for example, at Key Stage 3 following a shopping trip the teacher set up a range of activities which focused precisely on the mathematical skills for each individual pupil;

- . there is good and consistent use of sign to support communication for pupils of all ages who require it;
- . support staff are well briefed and deployed effectively, they make substantial contributions to pupils' learning, often by enabling those with additional difficulties, to take part;
- . staff show skill in managing the difficult behaviour of individual pupils and students and their good knowledge of individuals keeps the incidents down to an unavoidable minimum;
- . there is a range of activities which offer pace and challenge to the pupils; for example, teachers plan for short sessions within lessons which keep the pupils' attention.

42 Where the teaching is unsatisfactory:

- . the specific learning goals for pupils are unclear in lessons and appropriate links with the National curriculum programmes of study are not made; this is especially the case in Key Stages 3 and 4;
- . there is a lack of subject specialist knowledge and expertise to promote the progress of secondary aged pupils or to provide a coherent scheme of work to support teaching and learning in the classroom;
- . there are low expectations of the need for rigorous teaching and progress for pupils, for example, valuable teaching time is lost and lessons often lack purpose, pace and challenge, assessment of the pupils' achievement is not used to inform the next lesson, therefore inhibiting further progression; and
- . staff are usually aware of those pupils who are more able but in some lessons their individual needs are not fully met as their tasks are unchallenging.

Curriculum and Assessment

43 The school's curriculum is broad and incorporates each subject of the National curriculum at levels which take into account the special educational needs of the pupils. Specific approaches to the curriculum are used effectively, for example, the Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) to enhance the pupils' learning skills. Policies for each subject have been produced which provide broad guidance together with a useful detailed document on aspects of communication. However, the lack of individual subject schemes of work means that some of the work throughout the school lacks depth and fails to build effectively on what has gone before. This is especially the case between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

44 The curriculum for primary aged pupils is planned well in most subjects and is particularly effective in English and some aspects of mathematics, personal, social and health education and physical education. Schemes of work are not yet in place for a number of foundation subjects and those in existence require further development. A variety of approaches is used to teach the curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 including topics and the detail of these subjects within the topic is usually clear.

45 The curriculum for secondary aged pupils is fragmented and as a result pupils are not able to make consistent progress. The curriculum is taught partly through separate subjects and partly through integrated studies, for example by bringing history and geography together. The detail of these subjects is unclear and not sufficiently linked to the national curriculum programmes of study. The lack of schemes of work means that individual teachers plan in isolation. Moreover, teachers' long and medium term plans are not sufficiently monitored by senior management to ensure appropriate coverage. Short term planning lacks specific detail about what the pupils should learn. In contrast, good use is made of community based leisure and sports facilities and of the wider community to provide a broad range of educational and social experiences.

46 Flexible grouping enables the exceptional needs of some pupils to be met. Recently, for example, specific provision for a small number of older pupils was established to overcome particular behavioural difficulties and it is proving to be effective.

47 Two pupils benefit from learning for part of the week in local schools; one at a primary and one at a secondary school. These arrangements provide good opportunities for these pupils to benefit from a broader curriculum. A small number of pupils join local schools for various activities for short periods.

48 The provision for the post 16 students is of very good quality and makes effective use of pre-vocational courses at the college of further education. In addition, students benefit from a wide range of both externally and internally validated courses in school to prepare them for the next stage of education or training. The work in the business enterprise is very good; students develop many skills including communication, co-operation, imagination, a range of artistic and design and technology skills and mathematical skills. Appropriately strong emphasis is placed on developing individual self care and independence skills in a teaching environment that has been thoughtfully planned.

49 Planning within the post 16 unit is effective. All courses contain clear learning objectives for each student. There are good well-established systems for monitoring and assessing the progress of post-16 students including use of the National Partnership for Records of Achievement. Transition from Key Stage 4 to Post-16 is thoughtfully and carefully planned.

50 Baseline assessment on admission is firmly established and informs planning for individual pupils. Good examples of subject-based assessments exist, for instance in English, mathematics, science, physical education and personal, social and health education. There are also good examples of self-assessment but these are not in widespread use. Teacher assessment and standard assessment tests and tasks are carried out at the end of each Key Stage and are useful in showing the achievement levels of the pupils but these are not published in the annual report to parents. Day to day assessment is not used consistently throughout the school to inform future planning.

51 Procedures for the conduct of annual reviews and transitional reviews are operated rigorously. Consultation with the local education authorities is conscientiously undertaken and take full account of statutory requirements. Parents and pupils are fully involved. Any amendments needed to the Statements are notified to the Local Educational Authorities concerned and despite the care the school takes some statements remain out of date and some do not include transition plans.

52 The outcomes of assessments and reviews inform the pupils' individual educational plans but for some secondary aged pupils these often do not have enough focus on academic goals and concentrate on social and personal development. Academic progress is therefore difficult to monitor.

53 The 24 hour curriculum operated at the residence is good and is based on a carefully constructed care plan for each pupil. The care plans are linked well to the objectives for personal, social and health education identified in the pupil's individual education plan in school.

Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

54 The school's provision for spiritual and cultural development is sound and for social and moral development it is good.

55 The school provides for spiritual development through its class worship and whole school assemblies. Pupils understand about being still and quiet at such times and join in the prayers and the singing. Opportunities for spiritual development are not planned for in the curriculum especially in subjects such as music and art.

56 The school promotes a clear moral code and most pupils know the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are encouraged to show respect and courtesy, to consider the consequences of their actions and to be sorry for any unkindness or misbehaviour. Good manners are praised. Staff provide good examples of what the school considers acceptable.

57 Many pupils have difficulty in working together due to their disabilities but the school makes every endeavour, through its curriculum and classroom management, to encourage good social development. The use of visits and visitors to the school and links with other schools and the community help pupils to develop an awareness of acceptable social behaviour in a variety of settings. Parents are appreciative of the progress their children make socially.

58 Cultural development is a growing area of work within the school. Assemblies provide pupils with an understanding of their own and others' cultural traditions. There are examples across the curriculum where pupils are enabled to have an appreciation of other cultures, for example in food technology, French and geography. Visits to museums and places of interest enhance understanding and visiting artists and performers, for example, "Live Music Now", enrich the pupils' cultural experiences.

Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

59 A supportive atmosphere is created throughout the school by caring and hard working teaching and support staff. Opportunities for informal learning, such as mealtimes, are used effectively. The pupils benefit from the well-established daily routines. Staff know their pupils well and are able to anticipate their guidance and welfare needs often before problems occur.

60 The monitoring of academic progress is satisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2 and contributes to the planning of the work for individuals and groups. At Key Stages 3 and 4 monitoring systems are not in place and as a result the progress of pupils is not promoted effectively. Pupils' personal development is satisfactorily monitored both in school and in residence and good continuity between the two enables the pupils to make good progress. Behaviour programmes, including any use of restraint, are well monitored. Incidents and accidents are clearly and diligently recorded.

61 Effective child protection procedures have been established and work well, however the new acting head of care has not completed her training. This is to be undertaken in the very near future.

62 The school has a well-developed awareness of health and safety, including risk assessments for individual pupils. However, in the secondary building the poor accommodation presents a number of potential hazards. For example, the steep stairs to the lower ground floor with part of the handrail which is faulty. The shared toilet area for boys and girls of secondary age lacks privacy even though the staff have taken steps to improve this. The school makes every effort to ensure that the accommodation is pleasant and comfortable as possible for the pupils.

63 The support, guidance and welfare needs of pupils in the residential provision are very well met. The staff ensure that pupils' rights to privacy are respected. Some pupils have access to an independent listener and the school is aware that this facility should be extended to all pupils. The good family atmosphere enables the pupils to feel secure.

64 The long distance between the residential accommodation and the primary school site results in pupils spending one hour on each journey which is too long especially for these younger children. The new residential provision which is in the planning stage should halve this time. Some non residential pupils also travel long distances by transport which is arranged by local education authorities. The supervision of pupils in transit varies widely in quality. At present, liaison between the school and some local education authorities is insufficient to ensure that it is appropriate in all cases. At the Storm House site, space is insufficient for the safe unloading of pupils from mini buses and taxis.

Partnership with Parents and the Community

65 Parents are supportive of the school and are confident that their children are safe and well cared for. Some parents are uncertain about what levels their children are achieving academically. This uncertainty inhibits their ability to support their children's work at home. Day to day contact through the home-school diary is often good but comments tend to focus more on pupils' care and well being rather than educational progress. Parents are fully involved with the annual review process.

66 The school has recently developed good quality newsletters for parents and the residential sector informs parents about the activities the pupils have been involved in through a simple newsletter. Workshops are provided for parents on different aspects of education and care of their children.

67 The school benefits from generous support from members of the local community. The active Friends of Storm House Association raises considerable funds to enhance the facilities and resources of the school. Good use is made of the local community as a teaching and learning resource by all sectors of the school.

68 The school makes a positive contribution to the development of knowledge and understanding of autism through its involvement in training courses and support of visiting students, but its links with other parts of education system are more limited.

69 Some integration of pupils in local primary and secondary schools takes place but the school's intention to enable contact between the pupils of this school and pupils in ordinary schools is not a reality for most pupils. Particularly strong community links exist for post 16 students and students contribute profits from their Business Enterprise to local charities of their own choice.

The Management and Efficiency of the School

Leadership and Management

70 The school has clear and appropriate aims which are being broadly met. Pupils who are diagnosed as autistic or who are on the autistic spectrum are admitted to the school but the admissions policy is not clear about the specific intellectual range and autistic characteristics for which the educational provision is designed.

71 The National Autistic Society through its education adviser has a very active role in the school and in the developments which have taken place in recent years. The Service Support Committee, which is an elected body of staff, parents and co-opted members is very supportive of the work of the school. The Service Support Committee has no legal basis which remains with the National Autistic Society. Members of the Service Support Committee visit the school regularly and produce reports for the Principal and the National Autistic Society about their views of the work of the school. They are not actively involved in the development planning of the school.

72 The Principal has been in post for one year. She is beginning, with the support of several very effective team leaders, to have a positive influence on the work of the school. For example, school development planning has been established but priorities are not yet clear, success criteria are too broad and the plan is not fully costed. The longer term financial planning required to achieve the aims of the school is not fully effective.

73 Substantial development of the curriculum has taken place at the school over the last few years. The school is in a period of continuing change as the project to build new provision takes place. Whilst important policies have been written and accommodation has been improved the educational direction which the school should take has been much less clear. Some monitoring of the standards of the work of the school has been undertaken by the National Autistic Society and the Service Support Committee. However, internal systems are not in place for monitoring and evaluation which focus clearly on the effectiveness of the quality of education the school provides and on the progress which pupils make.

74 The leadership is strong and effective in most, but not all parts of the school and in the residence. It is strong in the primary and post 16 departments but particularly weak in relation to the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in ensuring that pupils maintain their skills and knowledge as they move from Key Stages 2 to 3. The role of curriculum co-ordinators is underdeveloped at all Key Stages. The whole staff is involved in appropriate levels of decision making and staff work well together. Communication, despite the multi-site nature of the school is good. Regular meetings at all levels are minuted and day to day administration is good. An excellent staff handbook has been produced recently which details all important aspects of the life of the school.

Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

75 The school is well staffed with committed and hardworking teachers, special

support assistants and residential staff. The qualifications and experience of the staff are broadly appropriate for the disabilities and age range of pupils and students. There is a high ratio of adults to pupils of 1: 1.8 pupils which is used to good effect especially in managing personal and behavioural needs.

76 Staff are appropriately trained and experienced to work with pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 but in Key Stages 3 and 4 the teachers' specialist knowledge is not adequate to cover the full range of national curriculum subjects. In most cases staff are deployed effectively and all staff have suitable job descriptions. The roles and responsibilities of subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently developed to influence the quality of provision. Arrangements for the appraisal and induction of new staff are satisfactory. Arrangements for the professional development of teachers are in place but are not sufficiently linked to the school's curriculum needs and consequently are not yet effective in contributing to the quality of education and the progress pupils make.

77 The quality of accommodation is variable across the sites. The educational facilities at Priory Annexe help to promote high standards and the building is in a good state of repair and decorative order. The dining facilities promote social contact and the separate gym enables good standards in physical education. The outdoor play equipment for the younger pupils is sparse despite the recent addition of a climbing frame.

78 Educational facilities at Storm House for Key Stages 3 and 4 are inadequate. The provision for science, art, design and technology and information technology and the teaching kitchen are too small and do not provide appropriate working environments for these subjects. Although efforts have been made to make the surroundings pleasant, Storm House is an inadequate building for its present purpose. The descent into the basement teaching area is unsatisfactory. Play areas are not particularly attractive although there is good provision of activity equipment. Car parking is poor and the access for minibuses and for taxis at the beginning and end of the day is very poor.

79 Benson House provides a very welcoming base for the post 16 students. It is ideally positioned for the community that the school uses so well and provides a suitable environment for the students. Recent decorative work creates pleasant and suitable surroundings

80 Hoylands House provides a very good residential provision. Rooms are spacious with en-suite facilities and pupils have decorated them with their own pictures and posters. Comfortable lounges and activity rooms provide a family atmosphere and the kitchen areas are a very good facility in which students learn to look after themselves. The needs of the different age groups are managed very effectively.

81 The quality and quantity of learning resources vary across the school. In English, resources are generally sound but there is a need for more age-appropriate resources for older pupils. The number and range of books in each of the three sites are adequate to support the curriculum and have been enhanced by a recent

initiative to replenish and extend the school library stock. In mathematics, resources are satisfactory overall with an adequate range of practical equipment but there can be an over reliance on workbooks or worksheets. Resources in science are barely adequate and often poorly organised, whilst the lack of a fully equipped science room is detrimental to progress.

82 Resources for physical education are adequate for primary aged pupils with a purpose built gymnasium but no separate facilities for boys and girls changing or showering. There is no gymnasium for secondary aged pupils but pupils make good use a community facility although it is barely adequate. Resources are adequate to support a range of outdoor activities and access to a local swimming pool is easy. The resources for information technology have recently been improved with the addition of a number of personal multi-media computers so that each class has a computer however access to control technology devices and switches which would promote the attainment and progress of many pupils are severely limited.

83 In all other subjects resources are just adequate at Key Stages 1 and 2, for example in religious education resources are limited but developing in range. In Key Stages 3 and 4 resources are inadequate in many subjects, particularly music and art. Good use is made of the multi sensory and soft play areas. The resources available at the residence are satisfactory. The school has minibuses based at each site which are used effectively to provide a good range of experiences for the pupils.

The Efficiency of the School

84 Financial planning and monitoring is undertaken by the National Autistic Society in consultation with the Principal. Financial guidelines issued by the National Autistic Society provide a framework for budget planning in the school. The annual fee for day pupils is £22,901 and for residential pupils is £34,071. Currently, all pupils irrespective of age or need are charged the same fee. In addition, extra funding is sometimes requested from LEAs if a pupil displays exceptional needs which demand additional provision in school.

85 At the end of each of the last two years in excess of £300,000 has been unspent; these surpluses are recouped by the National Autistic Society for central and capital expenditure priorities. This represents 13% of the total income from fees and is a very high percentage. There is no carry forward of unspent monies and this prevents the school from planning effectively for the longer term, for example over a three year period.

86 Once the budget has been set, it is devolved to the Principal for financial control. The systems in the school to support this are efficient and well managed. The Principal has, during the past year, established processes which have enabled senior management to take a more active role and decisions about spending are now involving more staff than previously. Once central costs have been accounted

for, capitation budgets are devolved to the site managers and subject co-ordinators. Although still in the early stages, there is some evidence, for example, the library initiative, which indicates more effective longer-term financial planning leading to improved educational outcomes.

87 Although the Service Support Committee and the National Autistic Society undertake a monitoring role, the arrangements for evaluating the effects of all spending decisions and their impact on influencing the educational outcomes of the school are underdeveloped at all levels. With the exception of the secondary aged provision, which offers poor value for money, other aspects of the school offer satisfactory value for money and the provision for post 16 students offers good value for money. Overall, therefore, the school offers sound value for money.

PART B : CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science

English

88 Attainment throughout the school is well below national expectations but some pupils are achieving levels in some aspects of English which are average for their age.

89 Primary aged pupils make good progress in all aspects of English. There is a wide range of skills from non-verbal communication to good oral skills. The consistent use of signs to support speaking and listening has promoted the pupils' progress especially for those who are reluctant to use language. Pupils listen well to instructions from adults and some are able to sustain this in group situations.

90 Writing ranges from early markings using pencils, crayons or paints, tracing of words, dot-to-dot letters copy writing and skills in writing sentences using capital, letters and correct punctuation. Some pupils recall visits and record their experiences in writing, others describe visits by placing pictures in sequence.

91 Younger pupils are developing an interest in and enjoyment of books. Some pupils are using pictures and symbols to develop their skills and some older pupils in the primary department are reading a range of texts accurately and with understanding. They follow stories on tape and carry out instructions using computer software. For some pupils reading is mechanical and there is limited understanding. Pupils are starting to use the library to extend their experience of books and to locate information.

92 Pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in speaking and listening. Many pupils are able to interact with adults and respond orally and with understanding. Their progress in reading varies and is restricted by the lack of access to national curriculum programmes of study. Many of the pupils use a range of strategies to establish meaning from written texts and make good use of their knowledge to find information. However, some still require a much more structured approach. Few opportunities are available for pupils to make progress in writing across the curriculum. There are missed opportunities for enriching the curriculum for pupils in the secondary age range as there is no means of external validation of pupil progress and attainment at the end of Key Stage 4.

93 For post 16 students progress in key skills is consistently good. The students develop skills which promote their independence in the context of the adult world. Some students engage in conversation, perform simple shopping tasks, recall experiences and plan meals independently, whilst others are supported individually to access these experiences. Reading and writing skills are applied to practical and relevant activities; these result in letters, invitations, shopping lists and evaluation of visits or experiences. Their work is accredited, for example using City and Guilds Wordpower, and students receive a Record of Achievement.

94 Throughout the school pupils are well motivated and enjoy their work. They respond positively to tasks set, undertake work with interest and are willing to discuss its content with visitors. They have learned classroom routines well. They are developing their interaction with adults confidently but to a lesser extent with their peers.

95 The quality of teaching is usually sound, often good and sometimes very good. In the best practice, teachers and special support assistants provide well-focused support to enable pupils to learn and they offer useful feedback. Lessons are well managed and teachers have high expectations. They have sound knowledge of the subject and of pupil needs. Resources are well selected to promote choice and independence. Information technology is used well. Effective assessment and recording occur and is used to inform planning. In the few unsatisfactory lessons the expectations of teachers are not as high. Lesson planning is not clear, especially the aims for the pupils' learning and insufficient attention is paid to providing experiences which are appropriate for the ages of the pupils.

96 The school has a number of policies which enhance the teaching of English. They include the use of speech and language therapy as well as the use of sign and symbol. The recently completed schemes of work contain thorough assessment and recording systems. The schemes of work for Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 are, however, all the same. Although these recognise and reflect the attainment levels of speaking, listening and writing up to Level 5, insufficient emphasis is placed on the development of reading at Key Stages 3 and 4. This restricts pupils' ability to learn in other subjects.

97 Much of the practice across the school reflects the aims and objectives of the English policies. However, these policies need clearer strategies for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness in enabling pupils to make sufficient progress as they move through the school. The two co-ordinators for English should continue to improve their effectiveness in managing this subject across the school.

Mathematics

98 Progress for most pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 is at least satisfactory and for a few it is good. In Key Stage 1 most pupils match, sort and copy patterns of different colours. A few pupils count accurately to 10 and recognise numerals. Many pupils in Key Stage 2 recognise and add and subtract numbers to 20 in practical situations. The best achievements are seen where activities are practically based or arise out of everyday situations. Some pupils in Key Stage 2 are beginning to show a sound understanding of measurement as demonstrated in their work on 'About Me' and represent data using simple graphs. A few pupils at both Key Stages demonstrate good achievement particularly in computation work.

99 Progress for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 is sometimes satisfactory but frequently limited by the range of activities provided. A few pupils are making good progress when the aims for their learning are clear and related to real life situations. Some good work was demonstrated by Key Stage 4 pupils in measuring using metres and estimating whether objects were longer or shorter. These pupils are developing a sound understanding of the language of this aspect of mathematics. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are developing a sound understanding of money by using real life situations, for example when preparing for the cafe, calculating how much to charge to make a profit. Another group demonstrated a good understanding of time when talking about the times and duration of television programmes.

100 Pupils generally have good attitudes towards their mathematics work. They concentrate well both in small groups and in individual work. A few pupils work independently of adults when they are clear about what is expected of them. In some lessons pupils are eager to take part and enjoy success.

101 Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is mostly sound with some good features. Good teaching is characterised by clearly focused tasks which are appropriate for individual pupils needs. There are high expectations and good pace and challenge. In these sessions support staff play a vital role in the well focused tasks. Teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4, although sometime sound and occasionally good, has a significant amount of unsatisfactory features. These result in activities which are undemanding and unrelated to everyday experiences. They result from a lack of confidence by the teachers in the subject matter. There are some examples of good teaching where pupils are engaged in meaningful activities related to their own interests. The quality of teaching in post-16 is consistently good with work well planned and part of a range of practical activities.

102 The scheme of work for Key Stages 1 and 2 is effective in promoting achievement and covers all areas of the national curriculum programmes of study supported by a system of assessment and recording. At Key Stages 3 and 4 programmes of study and assessment and recording of progress are underdeveloped and as a result teachers' work is not supported and pupils' progress is not promoted.

Science

103 Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress across the four Key Stages. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils' knowledge and understanding starts with themselves and moves to the needs of other living things, both plants and animals. Pupils understand the properties of certain materials, the place of science in everyday life, the effect of heat on a variety of substances and the importance of seasonal change. By Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils are widening their understanding of life and physical processes and undertake simple investigations and practical tasks. Using the school gardens and making visits to nature reserves and coal mines enhances their ability to connect science with the wider world.

104 The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory and sometimes good, with the exceptions arising out of low teacher expectation and tasks unsuited to pupils' abilities. All teachers teach science either as part of a subject focused topic at Key Stages 1 and 2 or as part of integrated studies at Key Stages 3 and 4, but there is a need for greater attention to continuity of the subject throughout the school and for the two co-ordinators to work more closely together.

105 The curriculum is well planned for primary aged pupils but lacks co-ordination and monitoring at the secondary phase where there is a lack of subject specialist knowledge among the staff. Assessment of pupils' performance is satisfactory but assessment is rarely used to inform future planning. There is good attention to all health and safety issues.

Other Subjects or Courses

Art

106 Pupils make limited progress in art, although on occasions progress is good; particularly in three dimensional work. Good progress is usually due to the pupils' willingness to work hard at a task and as a result they show consolidation of simple subject knowledge. They demonstrate good attitudes and work well alongside other pupils. Art contributes to pupils' personal development as it allows groups to be established that encourage inter-personal skills.

107 Teaching is generally sound or better in art and although teachers are hard-working and caring there is a low level of expertise within the subject and teachers do not have sufficient guidance. Planning is in place for the medium and short term but it does not identify the skills to be taught or what pupils are to learn. Tasks are well managed and controlled in the classroom and there are reasonable expectations for the pupils in terms of positive behaviour.

108 National curriculum programmes of study are not being consistently covered, there is no scheme of work for the subject and assessment does not meet statutory requirements. The lack of breadth and balance and poor continuity and progression through the subject, particularly between the primary and secondary phases, is a significant weakness for pupils. The needs of more able pupils are not fully met. The new co-ordinators are not yet fully aware of their role although the school recognises in its planning that the subject is to be developed.

Design & Technology

109 Overall pupils make limited progress, although on occasions progress for some individuals is good. Good progress is usually in food technology and relates to the use of items such as microwave ovens and hotplates. Pupils occasionally show some consolidation of simple subject knowledge. They demonstrate good attitudes towards design and technology and work positively alongside other pupils. They show interest and enjoyment and concentrate well on the task in hand.

110 Teaching is generally sound although there is an inadequate level of expertise within the subject. Medium and short term planning is in place but this does not identify what skills are to be taught or what pupils must learn. Tasks are well managed and controlled in the classroom and teachers have high expectations of the pupils in terms of behaviour.

111 National curriculum programmes of study are not being covered adequately. The lack of a scheme of work for the subject makes it difficult for teachers to identify skills to be taught to meet appropriate levels of designing and making or knowledge and understanding. The lack of breadth and balance within the subject and poor continuity and progression, particularly between the end of the primary phase and the beginning of the secondary phase, is a significant weakness for the pupils.

112 The curriculum is not well enough planned to meet the individual needs of pupils and assessment does not meet statutory requirements. The co-ordinators are not yet fully aware of their role although the school recognises in its planning that the subject is to be developed.

Geography

113 Primary aged pupils make sound progress in acquiring geographical knowledge, skills and understanding. They start with their own environment and move outwards to observe buildings, towns and landscape features. Links are made with science, for example weather charts, and with religious education through the celebration of festivals from other countries. For secondary aged pupils geography is mainly taught through outdoor pursuits as part of personal development. Pupils learn to recognise some physical features of the landscape, such as valleys, hills, settlements and to navigate difficult terrain. However, these lessons are not well co-ordinated and planned, nor do they build upon one another.

114 Only two lessons were observed; in one the quality of teaching was satisfactory and the other unsatisfactory due to a lack of challenge. Records show that good use is made of the school site for basic field work. Pupils are given many opportunities to visit other localities from which they recall facts and information with accuracy. Storytime and assemblies are also used as ways of teaching about distant lands whilst photographic and video evidence records pupils' learning and enjoyment.

115 At Key Stages 1 and 2 there is a need to extend further the good start made on developing the curriculum whilst at Key Stages 3 and 4 schemes of work and better monitoring are needed to achieve full and coherent subject coverage in order to comply with the national curriculum.

History

116 No history was observed during the week of the inspection. However, discussion with staff and scrutiny of records and pupils' work on display provide evidence of recent work.

117 History is taught through focused topics in the primary phase, and through a broad-based integrated studies approach in the secondary phase. Extensive use is made of local resources of historical interest, including established communities such as Wath and Wombwell, museums, castles and churches. Appropriate emphasis is placed upon direct experience, for example, a trip down a coalmine, and a line of enquiry which is concrete and practical, and thus most likely to be of personal relevance and interest to pupils. Pupils are learning to make distinctions between aspects of their own lives and past times, by considering the age and possible uses of everyday items, for example, food, clothes and toys, and means of transport.

118 The policy document and schemes of work have been completed recently. At Key Stages 1 and 2, co-ordination of the subject takes effective account of national curriculum coverage. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the scheme of work is not yet implemented, and coverage of the subject is not linked securely to national curriculum programmes of study. At this level assessment and recording of pupils' achievements tends to refer to topics completed and pupil behaviour and enjoyment, rather than the knowledge, skills and understanding attained by individuals. It is therefore difficult to plan for progression, especially for those pupils who may have exceptional skills, perhaps in narrow areas of study.

Information Technology

119 Attainment throughout the school is generally low in the subject, but some more able pupils in Key Stage 2 have acquired keyboard and control skills which are average for their ages. Pupils generally lack essential skills and knowledge about the subject but make some progress through their increasing familiarity with keyboards and are learning to use programs more confidently. Their progress is enhanced by more specific teaching arrangements.

120 The quality of teaching varies. Often teachers and special support assistants are not able to use the software appropriately and there is insufficient guidance. Where data handling is starting to be introduced at Key Stages 3 and 4 there is insufficient staff expertise. However, the involvement of the co-ordinator in teaching the subject is improving their skills.

121 Pupils demonstrate good attitudes towards their work, enjoy information technology and work with interest on their tasks, often for prolonged periods of time. Information technology contributes to the social development of the pupils when they work in groups.

122 As no scheme of work is in place for the subject, skills that need to be taught are not clearly identified and the curriculum does not take account of the needs of more able pupils. Insufficient work is being undertaken in control and modelling, and areas of communicating and handling information are largely restricted to word-processing. Teachers' planning is in place for medium and short term, although this does not take enough account of national curriculum programmes of study. Assessment is being introduced. The new co-ordinator has a clear view of the role and recent developments in the curriculum are beginning to have a positive effect on achievement. Access for a wider range of pupils is limited by a significant shortage of control technology devices and switches.

Modern Foreign Language (French)

123 The provision of effective teaching and learning opportunities in French is at an early stage and no co-ordinator has been identified. No lessons were observed during the inspection. However, some satisfactory work has taken place; an outline policy has been devised, which will need development, and some appropriate resources have been acquired but more are needed. Pupils in year 7 had done some interesting work in basic vocabulary in French and in appreciating some cultural aspects of the country. Pupils enjoy the work and respond positively.

Music

124 The progress pupils make in Key Stages 1 and 2 varies from good to unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 3 progress is unsatisfactory. The development of skills across the age groups is limited. Pupils, however, respond well to music lessons. They have very good attitudes, show interest and enthusiasm, and good responses to each other's music making.

125 The quality of teaching is sometimes good in Key Stages 1 and 2 but in too many lessons teaching is unsatisfactory. In the better lessons teachers succeed in motivating pupils, they are clear about the objectives for the lesson and pupils achieve appropriate knowledge and skills. In unsatisfactory lessons, the teachers' subject knowledge is lacking, and the purpose of the lesson is not clear. The positive response of pupils is not used to extend their skills and knowledge.

126 The music curriculum is underdeveloped in the school. There is no scheme of work and no assessment of the pupils' skills. A group of pupils learn to play the recorder but opportunities for individual instrumental tuition for those pupils who could benefit are unavailable. The management has identified the need to appoint a specialist teacher of music.

Physical Education

127 Progress in physical education is generally good. At Key Stage 1 pupils are learning simple skills in dance, gymnastics and games, supplemented at Key Stage 2 by swimming, athletics and outdoor activities. Through an extension of outdoor and adventurous pursuits, secondary aged pupils learn to solve problems in a very practical context, and gain in confidence, self-esteem and independence skills. They learn basic skills and gain experience in a range of activities, including cycling, climbing, caving and canoeing.

128 Pupils' attitudes and responses to physical education are generally good at all Key Stages. Most are co-operative and well-motivated, they find the activities relevant and interesting, respond to instructions promptly, sustain concentration and enjoy themselves

129 The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and often good or very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils, clear instruction is often supported by good use of symbols and signing, and there is sharp observation of new learning with appropriate acknowledgement and reward. Teachers have good specialist skills, and this is a strength for the school. There is effective teamwork, and special support assistants help pupils with behaviour problems with patience, skill and awareness, and they work hard to draw them into group activities.

130 For primary aged pupils the curriculum is broad and balanced, and linked to programmes of study in the national curriculum. Schemes of work and lessons are particularly well planned with clear objectives. All pupils have individual targets, often linked to wider curricular needs, and these are systematically assessed. Some effective links have been established between physical education and the wider curriculum, most notably in the development of language and communication skills and social skills and awareness.

131 In the secondary phase the scheme of work is not fully established nor is it based on the national curriculum programmes of study. There are some opportunities for self-assessment by pupils, for instance in the personal fitness programme, but these are not in widespread use. The outdoor pursuits programme, however, is long-established and valuable in motivating pupils, and building relationships. Staff are mindful of safety considerations and risk assessments have been completed for canoeing and rock climbing.

Personal, social and health education

132 Personal, social and health education is a significant aspect of the curriculum experience of all pupils. It is taught as a distinct subject as well as a cross curricular skill. Attainment and progress for most post-16 students is particularly good. In Key Stages 3 and 4 it is usually sound and in Key Stages 1 and 2 it is at least sound and often good. Many pupils in each age group develop a range of important social skills and many older students have achieved a high level of independence. There is good continuity of skill development between the school and residence where care plans ensure that progress is maintained and promoted.

133 The quality of teaching is usually sound and often good. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and they maintain very high expectations of pupils' social skills, for example in taking turns and showing respect for each other. In a small number of lessons the lack of a clear purpose for the lesson leads to ineffective learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and they make good responses to each other given their special educational needs. Good examples of tolerance and meaningful interaction occur in many classrooms.

134 The curriculum for personal, social and health education has been revised recently for all Key Stages and now includes an assessment schedule. The programme includes major aspects of social development, for example social relationships, social awareness and social initiative which are relevant to the needs of this pupil group. Parents were especially appreciative of the development of their children's social skills. Pupils are able to develop and build on their skills as they move through the school. The programme for post 16 students is very well planned and very effective in promoting the skills of the young people in an environment which enables easy access to the community.

Religious Education

135 Pupils generally make satisfactory or good progress in relation to their abilities. Through themes such as "sharing", "special people" and "what I value" they are developing a sense of self-identity, and the significance of personal relationships. They are also learning about their own and other faiths and cultures through festivals.

136 The quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory or good. Where teaching is good, staff convey a true sense of purpose, and engage pupils' interest. In a minority of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory, lessons are unduly routine, too little emphasis is placed on winning pupils' attention, and they remain unsettled. Pupils response is generally positive. Some older primary aged pupils contribute to assemblies especially in singing and signing to familiar songs and hymns. Most pupils concentrate well in large assemblies, at least for short periods of time with adult support.

137 The school has adopted the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education, as being straightforward, accessible and relevant to pupils with special educational needs. The school's religious education policy sets out clear, well-considered aims which are supported in assemblies. Evaluation is at an early stage. There is a need for closer monitoring of subject coverage across the curriculum as a whole, and an emphasis on progression across Key Stages, for pupils who characteristically find abstract concepts difficult.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of Inspection Evidence

138 The school was inspected by seven inspectors including a lay inspector. A total of thirty-two inspector days were spent in the school over a period of five days. The inspection was of all four sites including the residential provision.

139 One hundred and sixteen lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Activities in the residential provision were observed. A total of fifty-six hours was spent in classrooms and a total of ten hours in the residential provision. A further ten hours was spent observing activities at lunch time and the arrival and departure arrangements.

140 Teachers, planning and records and a large number of children's records were scrutinised. A selection of statements of special educational need and annual reviews were read. Discussions took place with the service support committee, the principal, deputy principals, all teachers, the speech and language therapists, the acting head of care, school psychologist, the education adviser, training officer and finance director from National Autistic Society and there were less formal exchanges with special support assistants and support staff. The attendance registers and incident books were inspected.

141 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
YR - Y13	92	92	6	n/a

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (YR - Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6

Education support staff (YR - Y13)

Total number of education support staff	35
Total aggregate hours worked each week	1369

FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	1995-6
	—
Total Income	1,947,150.00
Total Expenditure	1,613,459.00
Expenditure per pupil	19,439.27
Balance brought forward from previous year	not applicable
Surplus budget returned to National Autistic Society	333,691.00

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	92
Number of questionnaires returned:	64
Percentage return rate:	69%

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	50.8	38	6.6	4.9	1.6
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	58	36	3.2	1.6	1.6
The school handles complaints from parents well	40.0	37	18.2	3.6	3.6
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	49	44	12.9	4.8	
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	56	36	4.8	3.2	
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	57	28.8	13.6	1.7	
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	57	32.2	11.9		
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	41	35	17.3	3.8	3.8
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	58	30.6	4.8	6.5	
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	58	33.3	8.8	1.8	
My child(ren) like(s) school	56	32.3	4.8	4.8	

Other issues raised by parents

142 Twenty-one parents wrote letters or sent additional comments to the inspectors. Fifteen made positive comments about the progress their children had made at the school. The remaining six were dissatisfied with particular aspects; for example, lack of communication between home and school. Several parents commented on the unsuitability of some of the questions for this type of school.

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