

INSPECTION REPORT

**THE WEST OF ENGLAND SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH
LITTLE OR NO SIGHT**

Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113652

Principal: Mr P Holland

Reporting inspector: Mr T Richardson
16500

Dates of inspection: 19 – 21 November 2001

Inspection number: 196802

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special (Visual Impairment)
School category:	Non-maintained; residential and day school
Age range of pupils:	3 – 19 plus
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Countess Wear Exeter Devon
Postcode:	EX2 6HA
Telephone number:	01392 454201
Fax number:	01392 428048
Appropriate authority:	Trustees, Board of Governors
Name of chair of governors:	Brigadier R Rhoderick-Jones
Date of previous inspection:	May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
16500	Mr T Richardson	Registered inspector
19338	Mr G Ellis	Lay inspector
7465	Mr R Brent	Team inspector
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL*

The school is a non-maintained, residential and day, special school for children, pupils and students aged three to nineteen with visual impairment. Pupils attend the school from more than 30 local education authorities, with some pupils travelling from as far away as Cumbria and Yorkshire. The school is made up of Main School (for pupils with visual impairment aged three to 16); St David's House (for pupils and students with visual impairment and complex additional learning needs aged five to 19); and The West of England College (for students with visual impairment over the age of 16). There are 160 pupils and students altogether, with slightly more boys than girls. Fifty-five boys and 56 girls are boarders at the school, with some of these pupils and students boarding part-time each week. All pupils and students have Statements of Special Educational Needs; are predominantly of white UK heritage; and four pupils are fluent in English as their additional language. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the proportion of pupils with additional and complex educational needs and the school has expanded its provision for medical and therapeutic care. The attainment of most pupils on entry to the school is now well below national averages and more pupils are entering the school in Years 7 to 11 than before. The school is large and has more than 265 staff in total. During the inspection a water therapy pool was being built.

**Please note that, throughout the report, the word 'school' refers to the school and college.*

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a high quality of education. Outstanding leadership and management from the senior staff and governors are successfully providing an environment where every individual is valued and is happy to give of their best. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is very good; educational standards are raised by the excellent provision for medical and therapeutic care; and pupils are enabled to achieve as much as they possibly can. The school has an excellent curriculum with outstanding provision for the specialist teaching of mobility, Braille, the use of low vision aids and computers and the development of independent learning and living skills. In all it does, the school is highly effective (with the exception of preparing pupils for life in our multi-cultural society) and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Meets the specialised educational needs of its pupils and students so that all are appropriately challenged and their achievement overall is very good
- Promotes a culture of learning for its teaching and non-teaching staff so that the quality of teaching is very good and the pupils and students develop very good independent learning skills
- Has outstanding leadership and management from senior staff and governors that is successful in creating a positive and inclusive environment where teachers, pupils and students are happy to give of their best
- Provides an excellent curriculum with rich and varied experiences that prepares pupils and students most effectively for life after school
- Provides an outstanding level of care for its pupils and students so that their personal, social, medical and academic needs are met

What could be improved

- Students in St David's House should receive nationally recognised certificates for their achievements
- The school should continue to develop and extend its provision for pupils with more complex educational needs in Main School
- The school can do more to prepare the pupils and students for life in our multi-cultural society

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1997. Since then, the school has done more than would usually be expected and very good improvement has taken place. All the issues identified by the inspection team have been addressed successfully and other improvements have also taken place. For example, the quality of teaching and learning has improved; the quality of the curriculum has improved; educational standards have remained at a high level even though the attainment of pupils on entry has reduced; the school has significantly extended its provision for therapies and medical care; professional development for all staff is now of very high quality so that pupils and students are benefiting from the increased expertise of their teachers and support workers; and the quality of leadership and management has continued to improve. The school is now evaluating accurately what it does well and is taking effective action to improve the areas it identifies as needing development.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	Main School By Year 11	St David's House By Year 13	West of England College By Year 13	Key	
speaking and listening	A	B	A	very good	A
reading	A	B	A	good	B
writing	A	B	A	satisfactory	C
mathematics	A	B	A	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A		

*IEPs are the individual education plans provided for pupils

Main School: pupils achieve very well and many are successful in their GCSE examinations. The 2001 results show that two thirds of the pupils in Year 11 gained grade A – G in English, mathematics, science and French. In addition, about a third of the pupils were awarded grade A – G in drama, information and communication technology and music. The majority of pupils who were entered for the Certificate of Achievement examinations attained distinction grades in their results. Pupils with lower attainment were entered for examinations well matched to their needs and were successful in gaining nationally recognised awards in English, numeracy and computer skills.

St David's House: all pupils have severe and complex learning needs, in addition to their visual impairment, and make good progress over time so that they achieve well for their level of disability. Pupils compile a record of achievement that includes the school certificates they gain for achievement in their academic, personal and social development. They also gain school certificates for achievement in therapies, mobility and independence. These achievements are not yet rewarded with nationally recognised certificates.

West of England College: students do very well in their college courses and are successful in gaining a wide range of vocational and academic courses that are effectively matched to their ability and special needs. Their achievements in 2001 range from, for example, one student attaining four GCE Advanced Level passes at grades B and C to students with more complex needs gaining vocational qualifications and accreditation in their life skills.

In all departments of the school: there is very good achievement in personal development and pupils and students make very good progress in developing the skills for independent living, achieving highly in

their work experience, so that they are prepared most effectively for adult life. Pupils' achievements are high in their mobility training and many pupils gain the skills, for example, to go shopping in Exeter by themselves. Records show that pupils make very rapid progress in their Braille and reading skills and gain fluency in using computers to assist their learning. In addition, the school enables many pupils to be successful in sports, outdoor pursuits and other activities. All pupils routinely meet the targets set for their development in their individual education plans and each department is also successful in meeting its targets for improvement as detailed in the school development plan.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Outstanding – pupils are very enthusiastic about their school and want to work hard in all they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Exemplary – pupils behave exceedingly well and are polite and courteous to adults and to one another.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent - individuals grow into rounded personalities with secure friendships and value the relationships they have with each other.
Attendance	Excellent – there is a much higher rate of attendance than other schools for the visually impaired due to the exceptional arrangements the school makes for providing therapeutic and medical care.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Throughout the school, teachers show specialist skills in meeting the needs of pupils with visual impairment. Teachers and other staff work very effectively together and this high level of cooperation between, for example, teachers, assistants and therapists leads the pupils to make very good achievements in their mobility, Braille skills, and their use of low vision aids and computers. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations that pupils will learn to be independent in all they do. This results in pupils wanting to do things for themselves and being keen to, for example, use the library in the evening to help with their homework. Teachers give a very good emphasis to helping pupils to develop their communication, literacy and numeracy skills. For example, in St David's House, pupils learn to understand body signs and gain awareness of events through teachers using objects of reference and routines for activities. In the College, teachers have high expectations that students will take part in discussions and use their literacy and numeracy skills in everyday situations and, as a result, the students gain a very effective knowledge and understanding of these areas. In Main School, the subjects of English, mathematics and science are taught very well and this leads to pupils being successful in their examinations. Very good assessment is made of what each pupil can do and this is used very well to plan what will be taught next. This information is shared very effectively between teachers, assistants, therapists, care staff and others so that the needs of each pupil are systematically addressed in lessons, therapy sessions and residential activities. As a result, pupils and students build step by step on what they already know and can do and this success spurs them on to try even harder. In all departments of the school, personal and social education is taught very well; adults respect the dignity of the pupils and value them as individuals. This leads to high quality relationships being

established that motivate the pupils to high levels of concentration and to give maximum effort to their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent – in addition to the National Curriculum, the school provides a high quality supplementary curriculum that includes Braille, mobility, the use of computers and low vision aids. There is outstanding provision for therapies and medical care that is fully linked to what pupils are learning in lessons. The curriculum in St David’s House is adapted very well to the pupils’ severe and complex learning needs. College students benefit from their excellent range of flexible individual programmes including attendance at a number of local colleges. There is outstanding provision for work experience and developing independent living skills. Also, there is an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities that further promotes success in learning.
Provision for pupils’ personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Excellent provision is made for pupils’ social and moral development. Very good opportunities are provided for spiritual development and there is good provision for cultural development. However, more can be done to prepare pupils for life in our multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Exemplary. There is an outstanding range of care that is delivered at the highest level of quality. The school cares with all its heart about the academic and personal development of its pupils. It provides high quality residential, medical and therapeutic care and monitors every aspect of pupils’ personal development very effectively indeed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Outstanding leadership is successful in creating an environment where all individuals are valued. As a result, adults and pupils enjoy learning and the quality of the school improves. All members of staff feel part of the team and are proud of their school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Excellent - governors provide an outstanding level of expertise, support and guidance to the school with perceptive strategic planning.
The school’s evaluation of its performance	Excellent – all departments of the school routinely review their work, identify what is done well and what can be improved, and take effective action to increase further the quality of education provided.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent – the school is extremely well organised and run. The arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff are exemplary. The best possible use is made of fees, grants and other funding and the principles of ‘best value’ are incorporated in all the school does.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school and are making good progress.• The school is approachable.• There is good leadership and management.• Pupils are expected to do their best.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small minority of parents, who attended the meeting with inspectors, feels their children are insufficiently included in school activities and their academic skills are insufficiently extended.

Inspectors agree with all the positive opinions of parents expressed above. The findings of the inspection are that the school is doing all it can to: meet the needs of individual pupils; include pupils in activities as much as they are able; and is providing effective challenge to meet pupils' academic needs.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Meets the specialised educational needs of its pupils and students so that all are appropriately challenged and their achievement overall is very good

1. Very detailed assessment is carried out for every pupil that enters the school. This assessment covers all areas of the pupil's personal, physical and academic development and identifies clearly what each individual can already do and what they should learn to do next. Teachers, therapists and care staff use this information very effectively to plan a programme for each pupil to follow and write effective individual education and care plans that include challenging targets for pupils to achieve. These targets show that staff have high expectations of pupils:
 - learning to use their visual skills to the full;
 - learning quickly to use Braille;
 - becoming fluent in using computers to support their learning;
 - learning, through mobility training, to be independent in finding their own way around;
 - using objects of reference and body signs to understand daily routines and procedures; and
 - developing the necessary skills to live as independent an adult life as possible.
2. For example, in a lesson observed in St David's House, the teacher was very aware that one pupil needed to practise locating and finding her own way. A routine trip to the toilet was then used most effectively for the pupil to locate familiar markers around the room, find the class door and go to the toilet unaided. Staff gave verbal prompts and praise when needed but resisted the temptation to help too much and, as a result, the pupil gained success. In another lesson, the teacher knew how one pupil's poor circulation could lead to inattention and provided a hand and foot massage that quickly warmed the pupil and enabled effective communication and learning to take place as a result. In a science lesson observed in Main School the teacher had detailed information about how much each pupil already knew and about the extent of their visual abilities. This information was very effectively used to enable all the pupils to carry out experiments involving acids and metals in such a way that each pupil could use their differing observation skills to reach valid conclusions about reactivity. In a mobility session observed in Main School the teacher's assessment showed that the pupil lacked confidence when in large spaces. Through a sensitive approach, the teacher coached the pupil so that he was successful in making his own way across the school hall to locate a table placed near the centre. Many other examples were seen, in all areas of the school, of staff knowing what each pupil is capable of and providing challenging tasks to help to take them on to new achievements.
3. The results of this focused and rigorous approach are clearly seen in the very good achievements of the pupils. In Main School, many pupils are successful in their GCSE examinations. The 2001 results show that two thirds of the pupils in Year 11 gained grade A – G in English, mathematics, science and French. In addition, about a third of the pupils were awarded grade A – G in drama, information and communication technology and music. The majority of pupils who were entered for the Certificate of Achievement examinations attained distinction grades in their results. Pupils with lower attainment were entered for examinations well matched to their needs and were successful in gaining nationally recognised awards in English, numeracy and computer skills. In a lesson for Year 11 pupils in Main School, the teacher led a discussion where pupils were expected to think carefully about the poetry of John Clare and consider hidden meanings and how the poem was constructed. The pupils demonstrated high levels of skills in their discussion: reflected thoughtfully; listened carefully to the opinions of others; and provided reasoned argument to support their hypotheses. This led each pupil to develop their own ideas and gain a clear understanding of the text. In Year 3, one pupil was encouraged to address a physical target, within the context of an English lesson and was successful in reaching and grasping five objects which could be 'eaten' by *The Hungry Caterpillar*.
4. In St David's House, many pupils have severe and complex learning needs, in addition to their visual impairment, and make good progress over time so that they achieve well for their level of disability. For example, one pupil on entry to the school was able to roll a wheelchair a short distance and

understand two word commands. Records and observations show that this pupil is now able to remember messages, take them to others, and can propel the wheelchair to local shops. These skills have developed year on year as a result of careful teaching and high expectations and show good achievement for this pupil. Another pupil, over seven years in school, has progressed from repeating single words that others said to forming and using sentences independently and this is a good achievement over time in communication. Pupils compile a personal record of achievement that includes the school certificates they gain for achievement in their academic, personal and social development. They also gain a wide range of school certificates for achievement in therapies, mobility and independence. A number of pupils have medical conditions that are progressive and the school is successful in helping these pupils to maintain a dignity and quality of life. Pupils' records show that, even though these pupils are regressing, they are still being challenged to make choices, interact and be as independent as possible. This enables the pupils to continue to achieve well despite the changes in their medical condition.

5. In the West of England College, students do very well in their college courses and are successful in gaining a wide range of vocational and academic courses that are effectively matched to their ability and special needs. Their achievements in 2001 range from, for example, one student attaining four GCE Advanced Level passes at grades B and C to students with more complex needs gaining vocational qualifications and accreditation in their life skills. These students are supported very effectively, with staff providing challenges to extend all areas of their learning at all times. For example, in a swimming session observed, the journey to the pool was used for discussion and speculation about water temperature. As students changed, they were encouraged to locate rails and steps by using auditory and positional cues. When in the water, students were encouraged to make large movements and be confident in the space provided. Individual needs were known very well and each student was given challenging tasks that led them to try hard and improve their personal swimming skills. Any aspect of swimming technique that could be improved was identified and staff used visual and tactile demonstration as appropriate so that everyone was learning very well.
6. In all departments of the school there is very good achievement in personal development and pupils and students make very good progress in developing the skills for independent living, achieving highly in their work experience, so that they are prepared most effectively for adult life. Pupils' achievements are high in their mobility training and many pupils gain the skills, for example, to go shopping in Exeter by themselves. Records show that pupils make very rapid progress in their Braille and reading skills and gain fluency in using computers to assist their learning. For example, one pupil was assessed to have 18 per cent Braille accuracy and very poor reading ability on entry to the school. Within three years this pupil has improved to 80 per cent accuracy and has similarly increased in reading age to a reasonable level of fluency. In addition, the school enables many pupils to be successful and achieve highly in sports, outdoor pursuits and other activities.

Promotes a culture of learning for its teaching and non-teaching staff so that the quality of teaching is very good and the pupils and students develop very good independent learning skills

7. Since the last inspection, the school has considerably strengthened its provision for continuing professional development. This is now coordinated very effectively by the Director of Care and staff training and development are effectively linked to performance management. Teachers are expected to undertake the training for the mandatory qualification for teachers of the visually impaired, and others are encouraged to gain the professional qualifications for teachers of pupils with multi-sensory impairment. Non-teaching staff are encouraged to gain qualifications appropriate to their own academic development and in areas relevant to their work. Regular training days are provided by the school for all staff and these are firmly linked to raising the quality of provision. In addition, every member of staff now follows an exceptionally good induction course that helps everyone employed in the school to understand the pupils' visual impairments and to be able to assist in meeting the pupils' needs at all times. These procedures and practices for professional development are exemplary and staff were keen to convey to inspectors their excitement and enjoyment at the way the school is helping them to develop and learn more about their work. A further example of the school's commitment to learning is seen in the current negotiations with other schools, local

universities and education authorities to play a part in providing a local centre for the mandatory qualifications for teachers of the visually and sensory impaired.

8. This emphasis on enabling adults to continue their learning has grown into a culture that is now evident in all areas of the school. Adults understand their own learning needs and have a greater awareness of the pupils' learning needs as a result. The outcome from this culture of learning is that the quality of teaching in the school has improved and is now very good in all departments of the school. In the lessons observed during the inspection, seven out of ten were judged to contain teaching that was very good or excellent, with a further two out of ten lessons being judged to be good. The remaining lessons were satisfactory and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Inspectors observed clear examples of specialist knowledge for example, in the staff teaching Braille and mobility skills. In lessons, teachers and assistants used different textures and sizes of print related directly to the pupils' visual needs. Staff understood when and how pupils should use their computers to enable them to take part more fully in lessons. Teachers clearly understood the aims and learning objectives set for the pupils by therapists and, in turn, the therapists clearly understood what the teachers were trying to develop in class. Residential staff were able to continue the work into the evenings and, at meal times, the assistants clearly knew the visual and social needs of the pupils. This high degree of shared knowledge results in teachers, assistants, therapists, care and other staff being clear about their roles and knowing the part each can play in helping the pupils to develop.
9. All staff are focused on the needs of the pupils and the very good quality of education provided leads directly to the pupils having very good learning skills. Inspectors noted how willing pupils are to take part in activities and extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. In lessons, pupils were often giving their utmost and concentrating really hard as they worked. For example, in a drama lesson in St David's House, the Year 10 pupils were absorbed in the dramatic impact of the lighting, smells, sensations and story of the Native American myth they were enacting. As the lesson continued, the pupils became totally focused on tracking light, repeating new vocabulary, appreciating musical and auditory cues, and learning concepts such as 'tall'. This, in turn, led the pupils to become more involved, aware and vocal than in other lessons and gave a clear message that learning can be fun. In a lesson for lower attaining pupils in Main School the teacher and assistants used their detailed knowledge of each pupil to provide support that was very well targeted to individual needs. As a result, the pupils concentrated for much longer than expected and gained an awareness of seasonal weather changes. The gains each pupil had made were carefully noted by staff and passed to the teacher so that future lessons could build on this assessment. Pupils themselves are aware of how well they are learning. For example, in an annual review, an older pupil was very clear about the progress she had made over time, knew the mistakes she had made, and gave gracious thanks to the school for the independence they had given her. Discussions with pupils and students also showed that they all enjoy learning things in school and residence and were particularly aware that the therapies they undertake are helping them to learn to be more independent and less reliant on others.

Has outstanding leadership and management from senior staff and governors that is successful in creating a positive and inclusive environment where teachers, pupils and students are happy to give of their best

10. The principal and senior management team work very effectively together to provide excellent leadership for the work and development of the school. Day to day operations and procedures run smoothly and there is very effective delegation of responsibilities so that everyone involved in the school has a part to play, is clear about their role, and does their best. This delegation enables the very complex workings of the school to run efficiently and the regular meetings within and between departments ensure that senior managers and the principal are able to continually monitor and evaluate the quality of provision. The governing body is comprised of highly qualified and experienced governors who hold the school, professionally, to account for all it does and ensures that the income from fees is used wisely and to the best possible advantage for the pupils. This emphasis on the pupils is the driving force behind the principal and senior staff and is now firmly embedded as the reason for any action and development. The governors, principal and senior staff have worked exceptionally well to provide a strategy for ensuring the continued success of the school. They have,

rightly, anticipated a rise in the number of pupils with additional and complex educational needs and have steadily increased the range of medical and therapeutic care provided and helped staff to train and increase their teaching and care skills to meet the changing needs of these pupils.

11. School leaders have a very clear philosophy and very high expectations that:

- pupils will become as independent as possible;
- all pupils will be included as much as possible in the activities of the school;
- there is much to be gained from involving the school and pupils in the wider community; and
- staff and parents will talk positively about what pupils can do and focus on their achievements rather than their disabilities.

12. As a result, the whole school community functions as a team and everyone works hard to provide the pupils with the best experiences they can. Maintenance staff, for example, work hard to keep the site clear of low branches so that pupils can benefit from freedom of access to the grounds. Braille staff keep up to date with technology so that pupils can benefit from the communication devices best suited to their needs. Teachers volunteer to take pupils on visits and encourage them to take acceptable risks such as taking part in the 'Ten Tors' event. Residential staff give their free time to take pupils to the dentists and so on. These extra efforts and additional time are given freely and happily because adults want to do the best for the pupils, in response to the ethos and expectations promoted by the leaders in the school. In turn, the pupils value the relationships they have with adults in the school and appreciate how much the activities provided are helping them to learn. As a result, the pupils are also happy to give more and this, in turn, accelerates their learning.

13. Since the last inspection, the principal and senior staff have become very skilled in evaluating what the school does well and what should be improved. They now, routinely, praise and thank staff realistically for the quality of their work and involve everyone in determining the priorities that each department should work on to improve. As a result, staff feel included in developing the school and are confident in their skills and ability in their roles. This confidence adds to the positive ethos of the school and, in turn, is passed on to the pupils who develop considerable esteem and confidence. This was observed in a meeting with the College Council where students were mature, considerate and sensible in their contributions. They were not afraid to voice an opinion and spoke confidently to put across their point of view. The school also works exceedingly well in taking action to rectify any weaknesses they may perceive and is accurate in its evaluation of the quality of education provided and in full control of determining its future.

Provides an excellent curriculum with rich and varied experiences that prepares pupils and students most effectively for life after school

14. Throughout the school, the pupils benefit from the attention given to providing the National Curriculum as a foundation for learning. In the nursery, the activities for the children are very well planned and make sure that equal attention is giving to the children developing their knowledge and skills in all the areas of learning in the nationally recommended curriculum for the Foundation Stage. However, this curriculum is extended with very well planned assessment and activities designed to extend the children's visual, mobility and independence skills. This additional curriculum is very beneficial indeed and appreciated by parents as they can see the results it brings. One parent informed inspectors that this work in the nursery has "unlocked my child's brain and got it working so that he is a sociable little boy".

15. The curriculum in Main School is structured to meet the wide range of ability of the pupils. Those pupils with higher attainment follow the subjects of the National Curriculum and in Years 10 and 11 undertake a range of courses that provide them with nationally recognised qualifications. Pupils with lower attainment are grouped together for most subjects and the school provides high levels of teacher and assistant support so that lessons are adapted successfully to meet the individual needs of everyone in the group. Some pupils follow an individual curriculum that is designed specifically to meet their highly distinctive needs. All the pupils in Main School also benefit from a 'supplementary curriculum' that ensures they learn Braille, computer and mobility skills as appropriate to their

needs. This broad and relevant provision is very effective in ensuring the pupils make progress and achieve as highly as they do.

16. In St David's House, the pupils follow a curriculum that the school has adapted from the National Curriculum but at a level that is very appropriate to their needs. This is also added to with the 'supplementary curriculum', as in Main School, and is further extended by the inclusion of a wide range of therapies. For example, when two classes are scheduled to have physical education, the more ambulant pupils work together in the hall and the others meet as a group to follow their physiotherapy programmes together. In another lesson focusing on English, the speech and language therapist takes part with the teacher in helping pupils to extend their communication skills. This curriculum is also very effective in leading the pupils to good achievement over their time in the school.
17. As all pupils grow older they are introduced to the world of work and the school provides an outstanding range of work placements both outside and inside the school that are very effective in giving the pupils understanding and awareness of what they need to learn for later life. Residential pupils are also given the experiences that day pupils have at home to take part, for example, in shopping and preparing family meals and learning to make hot drinks and look after their own environment. These additional aspects of the curriculum are very beneficial and motivate the pupils to want to be as independent as they can.
18. For students over the age of 16, the College provides a high quality curriculum that is tailored to individual needs. For example, some students attend local colleges of further education and continue to receive support for their basic skills (including Braille and mobility) in the College during the evenings. Other students follow some courses provided by the College and go to other establishments for additional tuition. There is extreme flexibility, as a result of the outstanding links between the College and local establishments, that ensures that all students follow the courses of their choice that are preparing them most effectively for adult life.
19. Those pupils and students who are resident in the school receive tremendous benefit from the curriculum provided in the residences. Here, exciting activities are provided most evenings, as well as supported time for pupils and students to complete their homework and keep up to date with their courses. Discussions with the school council revealed that day pupils have full access to these evening activities providing they have permission from their parents and transport can be arranged. The school also provides an exceedingly wide range of additional activities such as tuition in sailing, visits to France, horse riding, musical tuition in instrumental skills and taking part in national sporting events. These activities are valued by the pupils and clearly add to their learning and achievement as they are very effective indeed in helping the pupils to gain self-esteem and confidence that motivates them to further learning.
20. The total curriculum and experiences provided by the school is outstanding in its variety, breadth and relevance to the pupils. It is valued and enjoyed by adults as well as children, pupils and students and contributes significantly to the high quality of education provided and the very good achievements made by the pupils over their time in the school.

Provides an outstanding level of care for its pupils and students so that their personal, social, medical and academic needs are met

21. The whole school community provides the highest level of care for its pupils and students. The academic and personal development of each individual is meticulously assessed, monitored and evaluated at all times. Pupils know how well they are doing and all staff involved with an individual share this knowledge and work together to help to move the pupils forward to higher achievement. For example, a pupil in St David's House knows he is trying to develop the physical skills to hold and carry objects. His physiotherapist is helping him to develop the necessary muscle tone and his teacher asks him to carry the register back to the office. This he does successfully and shows obvious pride in his achievement. Adults take a genuine interest in the personal development of individuals and provide support and guidance to help them develop further. During the inspection this ranged from helping pupils come to terms with their bereavement at the death of a friend, to helping a young adult cope with a hangover! Staff also informed inspectors how they feel valued members of the school community and are pleased to give more effort to their work because their colleagues and senior managers care about their personal and professional development.
22. A significant strength of the school is the outstanding provision for therapies and medical care. For example, local consultants are enabled to hold their out-patients' clinics in school which makes it easy for parents and pupils to attend and increases significantly the attendance of pupils at school. The high quality medical care provided enables pupils to keep learning when needing to follow particular regimes of medication that would otherwise require absence from school. Because the school employs highly skilled and well qualified physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and music therapists, the needs of pupils can be accurately and quickly assessed and remediation programmes are speedily put into place. A very strong feature of this provision is that all staff work very closely together to the considerable benefit of the pupils. For example, one pupil was observed having physiotherapy to assist with pain management. This enabled the pupil to relax sufficiently to attend and take part in the lesson by pressing the communication device on cue to repeat the lines of the story. After this, the pupil took part in music therapy which took her mind away from pain and enabled the further development of communication skills. All adults involved liaised fully with one another and, in this way, provided a learning experience of high quality.
23. Social services have recently inspected the residential provision and judged it to be of high quality. Inspectors endorse this judgement, particularly in the way staff provide care equivalent to that found in the best of homes. Child protection procedures in all departments of the school are excellent and there is outstanding provision to assure the health and safety of pupils at all times. Pupils are aware of the care they receive. For example, some College students informed inspectors that they value the help they get and that their careers guidance has made a significant contribution to their lives. The school council were very clear that the support from staff and from each other makes the school a special place to be and they valued the fact that everyone understands the needs of the other. A number of pupils informed inspectors that they are much happier than in their previous schools and are delighted that no one teases them about their visual impairment. The overall impact of the outstanding level of care provided is seen in the attitudes of the pupils. Inspectors judged this to be excellent and were delighted to note the high levels of involvement of pupils in their lessons. Pupils also demonstrate happiness in learning and clearly make lasting friendships among their peers. The behaviour observed in lessons and around the school is exemplary and informal observation of younger pupils after dark shows that they play together positively and cooperatively. The school is highly successful in bringing out the best in its pupils and staff and gives its heart to caring about the value and worth of every individual.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Students in St David's House should receive nationally recognised certificates for their achievements

24. Inspection shows that, over time, the pupils in St David's House achieve well for their degree of disability and special educational needs. As the intake of the school changes, and more pupils are admitted with significant additional needs to their visual impairment, the proportion of these students over the age of sixteen is set to rise. The school has identified that, as a priority for development, they ought to consider how best to provide for these pupils with additional needs when they pass the age of sixteen. Currently, good provision is being made and each individual student is being appropriately challenged to extend their achievements. These achievements are being rewarded with school certificates and each student has a comprehensive record of their achievement that shows clearly the progress they have made and what they are able to do. However, there are a range of nationally recognised awards and certificates already available for students with lower attainment and, in many other schools, pupils with similar needs to those in St David's House are gaining success in these courses. Rightly, the school has identified the need to implement these courses and provide its students with the same opportunities as those in other schools. Inspectors agree that this is a priority that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

The school should continue to develop and extend its provision for pupils with more complex educational needs in Main School

25. There is an increasing proportion of pupils who have additional and complex educational needs that require curricular provision in-between that currently provided in Main School and St David's House. The school is currently grouping these pupils (in Years 7 to 9) together in one class in Main School and providing a high level of additional support that is effective in meeting the needs of the pupils. However, as numbers increase, the school should continue to implement its plans to extend this provision and, while keeping the age range for pupils within Years 7 to 9, make additional provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 so that more age-appropriate activities can be provided. Also, the school should continue to develop the flexible arrangements for pupils from this class so that individuals have increased involvement in Main School lessons where appropriate, or take part in lessons in St David's House that are more closely matched to their needs. In addition, the school should continue to implement its plans for some pupils in Main School and St David's House to benefit from being included in lessons in these classes when that is more appropriate to their needs.

The school can do more to prepare the pupils and students for life in our multi-cultural society

26. There is good provision for pupils and students to learn about British culture and experience cultural events such as musical and theatrical performances. However, the majority of pupils and students are of white European origin and being educated in a predominantly mono-cultural city. Many of the pupils come from more culturally diverse areas and the school is highly successful in preparing pupils for an independent life. The curriculum for religious education, geography and for personal and social education includes appropriate reference to world faiths and the cultures of other countries. However, insufficient attention is given to preparing pupils for everyday life in our multi-cultural society. This is particularly important as the visual impairment of the pupils inhibits their ability for incidental learning and appreciation of the cultural wealth of our country.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

27. To further enhance the high quality of education already provided, the governors, senior managers and staff should now:

- a) *Recognise the achievements of pupils aged 16 and above in St David's House (paragraph 24) by:
 - reviewing the range of nationally recognised awards already available;
 - selecting those appropriate for the students;
 - implementing these accredited courses and awarding certificates as appropriate.

- b) *Continue to develop and extend the provision for pupils with more complex educational needs in Main School (paragraph 25).

- c) Prepare pupils more effectively for life in our multi-cultural society (paragraph 26).

**already identified by the school as areas for improvement. The school has also identified a need to seek accreditation for the existing courses followed by students in St David's House.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	14	6	3	0	0	0
Percentage	21	48	21	10	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	160
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A

English as an additional language

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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

PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN MAIN SCHOOL

Attainment of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6

There were too few pupils of these ages taking the national tests in 2001 for their results to be published.

Attainment of pupils in Year 9

Number of registered pupils in Year 9 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	9	6	15

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Numbers of pupils at each NC level	English	5	4		4	1	
	Mathematics	4		6	1		
	Science	4		4	4	2	

Attainment of pupils in Year 11

Number of pupils on roll in Year 11 in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Total
	2001	18

GCSE results		Grade G	Grade F	Grade E	Grade D	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	English Language	1	1	3	3	4		
	Mathematics			6	5		3	
	Science	1		3	6	2	1	2
	Art				2			
	Child Development		1	1				
	Drama	1		3	1	1		
	French			1	4	5	2	
	Geography					3		
	Information technology			1	4			
	Music		3		1	1		1
	History (half course)			1	2			1
	Food Tech. (half course)			1	4	8		
	Geography (half course)	1						

Certificate of Achievement results		Pass	Merit	Distinction
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	English			4
	Science		1	4
	Art and Design		1	2
	Child Care	2		
	Design and Technology		5	10
	Geography		3	3
	History			1

Main School pupils were also successful in gaining the following qualifications and awards:

- AEB Numeracy Awards
- AEB English Awards
- RSA Clait Stage 1 (Use of computers)
- RSA Text Processing
- Certificates for outdoor education and sporting activities
- School certificates for achievement
- School certificates for independent living skills
- Diana, Princess of Wales, Memorial Award (2001)

PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN ST DAVID'S HOUSE

Pupils have opportunities to gain and include in their record of achievement:

- School certificates for significant achievement
- School certificates for personal and social development
- School certificates for achievement in therapies, mobility and independence

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND COLLEGE

Attainment of students over the age of 16

College students were successful in gaining the following qualifications:

- GCE Advanced Level (one student was awarded 3 subjects at grade B and one subject at grade C)
- GCSE examinations
- GNVQ qualifications in Business; and Health and Social Care
- NVQ qualifications in Business Administration; Retail; Customer Services; Distributive Operations; and Care
- AEB Numeracy Awards
- RSA Information Technology
- RSA Business Administration
- RSA Text Processing
- RSA Word Processing
- ASDAN Towards Independence
- ASDAN Life Skills
- OCR National Skills Profile
- OCR Vocational Awards
- Operation Raleigh – Ghana (VSO)

Students also gain qualifications in a wide range of other vocational and skill based courses such as:

- Qualifications in first aid; horticulture; martial arts; outdoor and sporting activities
- School certificates for mobility and independence
- Nationally recognised certificates for community service

ACHIEVEMENT OF PUPILS AND STUDENTS WHO ARE BOARDERS

Pupils and students who are boarders have opportunities to gain certificates in:

- Significant achievements
- Musical skills
- Independent living skills
- Sporting activities and martial arts
- Scouting
- First aid
- Outdoor pursuits
- Community service

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	151
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	35
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5
Average class size	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: YN – Y14

Total number of education support staff	78.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	2518

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4,087,631
Total expenditure	3,752,190
Expenditure per pupil	25,547
Balance brought forward from previous year	601,285*
Balance carried forward to next year	936,726*

* This amount includes funding for current building projects and a carry forward to meet the requirements of the charity commissioners

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	167
Number of questionnaires returned	55

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	27	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	44	2	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	42	2	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	29	7	4	11
The teaching is good.	65	22	0	0	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	16	7	2	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	22	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	2	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	67	18	9	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	64	27	0	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	31	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	16	5	7	7

Please note that not all responses total 100 per cent as some categories were unanswered by parents

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The majority of parents who responded are supportive of all aspects of the work of the school. Additional written comments were received with 19 questionnaires, of which, 14 indicated that their children love school, are making good progress, and that staff are to be praised for their work.