

**HILL HOUSE SCHOOL
ROPE HILL
BOLDRE
LYMINGTON, HANTS SO4 1NE**

Reporting Inspector: Mrs J Giles HMI

Dates of Inspection: 14-15 March 2000

© Crown Copyright 2000. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Further (single) copies can be obtained from the OFSTED Publications Centre, PO Box 6927, London, E3 3NZ, telephone: 020 7510 0180.

Information about the school

Type of school:	Pupils with severe learning difficulties associated with autism
Type of control:	Independent (part of the Hesley Group)
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Rope Hill, Boldre, Lymington, Hants SO4 1NE
Telephone number:	01590 672147
Headteacher:	Ms Jenny Wright
Director of the Hesley Group:	Mr S R Lloyd
DfEE number:	850/6031

The inspection team comprised:

J Giles HMI (Reporting Inspector)

J Hosegood HMI

A Littlewood HMI

CONTENTS

[MAIN FINDINGS](#)

[KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION](#)

INTRODUCTION

[Characteristics of the school](#)

[Key indicators](#)

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

[Attainment and progress](#)

[Attitudes, behaviour and personal development](#)

[Attendance](#)

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

[Teaching](#)

[The curriculum and assessment](#)

[Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development](#)

[Support, guidance and pupils' welfare](#)

[Partnership with parents and the community](#)

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

[Leadership and management](#)

[Staffing, accommodation and learning resources](#)

[The efficiency of the school](#)

[Health and safety issues](#)

INSPECTION DATA

[Summary of inspection evidence](#)

[Appendix](#)

MAIN FINDINGS

Hill House School makes sound provision for students with severe learning difficulties associated with autism. The school is developing and improving and it has many strengths. Members of the senior management team have positively used and responded to comments received from previous inspections in order to improve the quality of education and care. All students are appropriately placed.

Students make recognisable, small steps of progress over time. They are slowly consolidating their learning in the areas of communication, early cognitive skills, self awareness and socialisation. The school has appropriate systems in place for recording pupils' and students' progress over the years. Staff need to be vigilant about providing suitable challenge and expectations for the whole range of ability, including the most able.

Pupils and students are very dependent on adult support, but they are given frequent opportunities to make choices and express their wishes. They are encouraged to sustain attention; more reluctant pupils and students are generally drawn into activities by adults, using a range of positive strategies. Where restraint is needed this is managed calmly, to avoid wider disturbance.

The quality of teaching is consistently satisfactory and is frequently good or very good, particularly at the post-16 phase. Lessons are well planned and adults, working with the pupils and students, use Makaton signing and symbols to develop language and communication. In most lessons adults are very effectively deployed. Occasionally the need for a teacher to support a disturbed pupil means that general oversight of the lesson is lost.

The curriculum is suitably broad, balanced and relevant for pupils and students at Key Stages 3, 4 and post-16. It includes the National Curriculum (NC), religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Where appropriate students receive sex education and training in drugs awareness. Good use is made of the opportunities for developing the curriculum across school and care, with collaboration between teaching and care staff.

Senior managers promote a strong, caring ethos which is evident throughout the school. Assemblies and collective acts of worship provide rich experiences; pupils and students are encouraged to share what they have achieved and enjoyed. Art, music, trips and walks in the locality provide regular opportunities for developing a sense of awe and wonder. Adults provide good role models and relationships between all staff and students are a great strength of the school. Staff encourage students in their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

Staff are aware of the need to keep parents fully informed and parents are generally very positive about the school. Senior managers will need continually to seek ways of improving home/school links and ensuring that parents' views and opinions are valued. The school makes good use of the locality and is endeavouring to forge stronger links with the local community.

The senior management team gives strong leadership and drive for improvement. The monitoring of the quality of teaching is taking place on a regular basis and an unqualified teacher is being given the opportunity to gain teacher status. The school

development plan contains much detail, but would be improved by the inclusion of more information as to how the proposed developments are to be implemented. Senior staff will need to continue their efforts to extend and improve methods of communication with such a large staff group.

There are sufficient and suitably qualified teachers and care staff when all are present. Senior managers are striving to recruit and retain staff but there are still times, both in respect of education and care staff, when timetables and activities have to be modified, due to staff absences. The school is too dependent on agency and bank staff. The induction and foundation programmes and guidance to staff are good.

Accommodation is suitable, well maintained and well used. Residential accommodation has improved significantly in recent times as a result of redecoration and the provision of new floor surfaces.

Although resources are being developed and improved, these are still limited in several subject areas.

Residential provision is good; it links well with education. Care staff are used very effectively in classrooms.

Some minor health and safety issues were pointed out to the headteacher who agreed to look into them. The greater concern about the lack of a locked gate across the entrance to the school by the college needs serious consideration and attention.

Financial planning and accounting is sound. It has been beneficial to a new headteacher to have budgetary planning moved to a later period in the year, to link with a delayed and recently agreed school development plan. However, the budget will need to be completed in good time for the next and subsequent school years.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve further the quality of education at Hill House School, the headteacher, senior staff and directors of the Hesley Group should:

- continue to monitor the quality of teaching and training of all staff who work in classrooms, with a view to ensuring that the teaching quality is consistently good throughout the school;
- ensure that there are sufficiently raised expectations for all students and that as many students as possible have access to externally accredited courses;
- continue to develop parental and community links;
- maintain and accelerate the speed of staff training and continue to give a high priority to recruitment and retention of regular staff, with less dependency on agency and bank staff;
- give consideration to placing a locked gate at the college entrance to the school to ensure the safety of students.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

Hill House is an independent special school, making provision for 22 pupils aged 11-19. It has been finally registered with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and it also has dual registration as a children's home. Since its inception in 1992, the school has refined its definition of the special provision which it makes. It now states that it provides for students whose severe learning difficulties are associated with an autistic spectrum disorder and who require 52 week residential education and care. It is one of nine establishments around the country which together comprise the Hesley Group. A range of recognised behaviour management programmes are used which are explained to parents. All students reside in the school for 52 weeks each year.

At present the school has three girls and 19 boys on roll. The school consists of two classes for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 and two classes for students who are over 16 years of age. There is an independence unit for students to progress to as they prepare to leave the school.

The school is situated in a pleasant area of the New Forest. Its location does, however, create some difficulties in the recruitment of staff. In general terms the area has little or no unemployment, with a seasonal surfeit of jobs in the tourist industry, and, specifically, there is direct competition for staff from several care homes in the vicinity. The work itself is demanding and the combination of these factors limits the number of available applicants and has an impact on staff retention. These difficulties are being addressed by offering higher salaries and improved training opportunities.

Most of the students need at least one, and sometimes two or more adults to support them.

The mission statement of the Hesley Group is "to enable people with special needs to achieve their full potential". The school seeks to establish a safe and predictable environment for its students and to focus on the core areas of communication and social skills. The Hill House Education Manual describes the school's curricular provision as being broad, balanced and relevant, including "where appropriate a suitably modified National Curriculum and RE". In this way staff aim to promote and maximise full personal development in the following areas:

- physical health and well-being;
- independence and self-help skills;
- social acceptability;
- communication skills;
- relationships with peers and adults;
- the ability to make informed choices and decisions;
- intellectual development and problem solving;
- spiritual, cultural and emotional development;
- positive self-esteem, self-awareness and self-confidence;
- leisure and self-occupation skills.

From April 2000, the fees are £28,691 per quarter.

Key indicators

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions.

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	38
Satisfactory or better	100
Less than satisfactory	0

No students have been entered for National Curriculum tests and tasks at Key Stage 3.

No evidence was seen of formal teacher assessment at Key Stage 3.

Students are working towards modules of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards: Towards Independence and Transition Challenge.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

It is inappropriate to judge students' attainments against age-related national expectations. Judgements are based solely upon progress in relation to prior attainment.

The progress that students make in lessons is at least satisfactory and sometimes it is good. They make very small steps of progress over time, but this is well consolidated. By the time they leave the older students are learning to modify their behaviour, to improve their self awareness and socialisation skills and to cope as much as possible in situations outside the security of the school.

There is evidence that students' behaviour becomes less challenging over time as detailed programmes are consistently managed by staff. With structures which are understood by students, and with tasks which follow a regular pattern, students become more confident and feel more secure.

Several students use speech with growing confidence and accuracy; a few have a useful sign vocabulary and all respond to simple instructions. A few students enjoy looking at books and listening to stories and staff are encouraging them to recognise

simple, common words in print. Some use is made of computer programmes to introduce a wider range of communication opportunities. Developments in this aspect of the work are still in the early stages.

Plenty of opportunities are provided throughout each day for the students to rehearse their communication skills. They are making steady progress and are consolidating what they already know and can do and are making small but significant advances which are noted by staff and practised when a suitable occasion arises. A few students are able to copy simple text which has been written for them, to identify letters on a keyboard and to understand cause and effect in computer controls.

The work in communication is soundly based on the National Curriculum English programme of study with targets set around Level 1 and 2 standards.

The school gives priority to the development of communication skills and has sought the assistance of a communication specialist to advise on the most suitable strategies to adopt to provide support for each student. The use of signing, symbols, photographs and objects of reference, to aid meaning and reinforce speech, are used extensively and effectively by nearly all staff. Those who have joined recently are able to improve their signing skills through the training which forms part of their induction.

The quality of teaching is generally good throughout the school. All adults are skilful in their questioning and ensure that they do not confuse students by presenting more than one or two ideas at a time. The practice of ensuring that each student works closely with either a teacher, learning support assistant or carer during their lessons is of considerable benefit to their language development. As a result, all communications are given due attention and are followed up by the adults involved.

Students make small steps of progress in mathematics. Some are counting to ten while most pupils under the age of 16 are matching and sorting. By the time they leave the school several students are able to understand the idea of exchange of money for goods; many are beginning to handle coins more confidently and they attempt simple weighing of quantities of food items when cooking snacks.

The teaching of mathematics is invariably sound, with individual targets planned within workbox sessions. The school uses a small steps' programme of activities as a basis for planning. In addition, students have opportunities to extend mathematical skills and understanding in shopping trips and use of games involving counting. During snack time they are helped to understand one-to-one correspondence when giving and receiving food and drinks. More use could be made of computer programmes to increase mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding.

Students are frequently given opportunities to explore their senses and the physical properties of matter. Science planning, at Key Stages 3 and 4 includes sorting materials by touch, and appearance, as well as exploring the reflective qualities of different materials. There is a rolling programme of scientific experiences planned over the five years of key Stages 3 and 4 which draws from an earlier key stage programme of study. Aspects of science are included in the planning at the post-16 stage.

Students clearly enjoy their music and their music and movement sessions. Some students also receive music therapy. They are developing listening skills; they respond to requests to 'stop' and 'go' when a piece of music is played to them and older students show some understanding of loud and soft in their own compositions. Regular opportunities are provided for students to make choices in assemblies as to which song they would like to sing and sign. Music and movement lessons encourage students to be more self-aware about the parts of their bodies. Staff are skilled at getting students to be active and to respond to music with a variety of body movements.

In design and technology students are encouraged to use constructional toys for building; some attempt simple cutting with scissors, but many are dependent on adult help. A specialist room for this work is used by older students, but access to larger tools and equipment is limited, due to the nature of the students' learning difficulties and unpredictable behaviour. In food technology older students are using graters and knives when preparing sandwiches and soup, with adult assistance and support.

Limited progress is made in using computers. Students are understanding cause and effect, with the use of buttons and switches; some older students can recognise letters on the keyboard, to type up text which is spelled out to them.

Other subjects, such as history and geography, are taught within the classroom, but also when students go out into the locality on regular walks and trips. There is evidence in teachers' planning that includes aspects of direction, learning about human and physical features and developing an awareness of differences between past and present. Photographs are used, back in the classroom, to help students to recall what they have seen.

Older, post-16 students engage in household tasks and projects in the school grounds. Some manage to do supported work experience with the local council's parks and maintenance department.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

Students are very dependent on adult support, but they are given frequent opportunities to make choices and express their own wishes.

The school has a helpful behaviour policy which emphasises the need for staff to plan very detailed objectives for individual students to modify behaviour. Adults know students well and they learn how to respond to early indications of distressed behaviour in students' reactions and moods. Calm, but firm adult responses ensure that disruptions in lessons are kept to a minimum. Restraint is well managed as adults are fully aware of the need to ensure the safety of students.

There is evidence of excellent relationships between staff and students. Staff are generally expert in understanding when to provide support and when to stand aside, giving encouragement to students to develop some independence skills and to sustain attention in class. Students who are more reluctant to participate are usually encouraged to get involved by adults who use a range of positive strategies.

Attendance

Registers are completed by staff to record attendance in education. Appropriate symbols are used to explain authorised absences but not all registers are completed with totals for monitoring purposes.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

The quality of teaching is consistently sound or better. In 38 per cent of lessons it is good or very good, particularly in the post-16 phase. Lessons are well planned, with a range of activities to motivate, attract and gain students' attention. The best lessons have a lively pace and resources are designed to provide regular routine and security as well as to introduce new concepts. In most activities these resources are age appropriate. Students are encouraged to collect their own workboxes and tasks are set to match the current targets within individual education plans.

Teachers' planning includes identified learning objectives and some of these link across care and education. Supporting adults, both classroom support assistants and care staff, are generally very well deployed. However, on some occasions, when a student becomes very distressed there are insufficient staff to ensure that all students continue to receive individual support and to ensure that the teacher is still able to retain general oversight of the lesson. Most supporting adults are skilled in developing communication with the use of signing, symbols and speech, but not all of them are clear about how to get the best out of learning opportunities. All adults are consistent in their responses to students' behaviour; they develop good strategies for engaging students and trying to ensure that disturbances are kept to a minimum. Where a student needs to be restrained this is done with as little disturbance to the lesson as possible.

In two very good music lessons the planning included periods of listening, performing and reflection about the compositions of others. Students were encouraged to think about rhythm and pitch and to enjoy the sounds made by a variety of instruments. Students in cookery sessions in the post-16 phase are given carefully sequenced instructions to attempt tasks, with a reducing level of support. Nothing is rushed and the timing of activities is good.

Assessment is ongoing, as adults record students' responses in lessons.

The accumulated records are used to aid planning at the next six-monthly review meeting. Individual education plans are detailed and include targets for communication, behaviour, social awareness and aspects of personal development.

The curriculum and assessment

The school provides a suitably balanced programme of study for all students which, for several, leads to accredited achievements by the time they leave.

The curriculum for students aged between 11 and 16 includes suitably modified subjects of the National Curriculum, RE and PSHE which encompasses sex education and drug awareness when appropriate. Information technology is not well developed at present across the curriculum.

The post -16 students follow a well planned course, tailored to their individual needs, which focuses on independence and leisure skills and has been accredited ASDAN.

In addition, some students have regular music, occupational and/or speech therapy where appropriate.

For all students, work to improve their communication skills, self esteem and behaviour is given priority by all concerned in both their care and education.

The school has recently introduced a careers education and guidance programme with the support of a specialist careers adviser, and is developing suitable opportunities for periods of work experience for some students, initially within the school and then in liaison with Hampshire County Council parks and maintenance department. The specialist careers adviser plans to attend all reviews and to talk regularly with groups of students about the world of work.

The school has appropriate policies and schemes of work for all subjects, which are well used for the preparation of each term's work. Lessons are effectively planned in line with the termly forecast and with careful reference to each student's personal targets, which have been agreed between teaching and care staff, parents and, if possible, the students themselves.

As both care and teaching staff collaborate to help the students achieve their targets, opportunities to reinforce and advance progress toward them are planned throughout the day and occur during lessons, mealtimes and during each evening when a range of suitable extra curricular and leisure activities is provided. This close liaison and co-operation between care and education staff is a strength of the school.

The assessment and recording of each student's progress is well organised. The outcome of each lesson is carefully noted by the adult working with the student and daily discussions are held with all involved to assess their progress. Good examples are occasionally recorded on videotape. Greater use could be made of this medium as a means of recording progress and could be made available to parents. Records of Achievement include photographic evidence and text with symbols.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school's strong ethos, which is effectively promoted by the head teacher and senior staff and permeates all aspects of school life, does much to support the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The daily assemblies and acts of worship contribute strongly to the students' spiritual development. In addition, there are many other opportunities during each day which are effectively used to reinforce this development. These include the walks around the locality, the quiet periods when the students are encouraged to listen to well chosen

pieces of music and the acknowledgement and celebration of individuals' successful achievements.

Particular emphasis is placed on promoting and encouraging the students to respond appropriately in social settings. While promoting what is correct or right, all staff are very careful not to confuse the students; they skilfully provide them with suitable alternative activities to choose rather than being negative about the unacceptable one. There are high quality relationships between staff; they set good role models for the students.

All staff satisfactorily promote the students' cultural development through the thoughtful presentation of a range of activities. These include the regular visits to places of interest in the neighbourhood, opportunities to listen to a variety of different styles of music, observing and studying the work of different artists and preparing and eating food from different countries.

Support, guidance and students' welfare

All staff work hard to support the students at all times. Students are treated with respect and every effort is made to establish good friendly relationships. Child protection procedures are given due priority by the school and are well known to all staff. The close liaison and working partnership between the care and education staff ensures that the students' welfare is properly addressed at all times. Photographs of independent, listening adults are displayed in the entrance hall.

Partnership with parents and the community

The school keeps parents informed of their son or daughter's progress, mainly through telephone calls or in reports prepared for reviews. Parents are encouraged to contact the school at any time and several visit regularly. Those parents who responded to the questionnaire, circulated prior to the inspection, were generally pleased with the level of contact they had with the school. However, the school recognises that this is an aspect in which improvements can be made and it is currently seeking ways of extending and strengthening these links.

The school makes good use of some facilities in the neighbourhood and is endeavouring to extend its links with various community groups. Several students attend a local weekly youth club and, last year, the school's carol service was held in a local church. Students use the local swimming baths and regularly make trips to the local shops as part of their independence training. All staff are very well prepared to cover all eventualities when taking the students out on visits. A particularly useful practice is the use of cards with simple explanations of the routines the staff use to support the students should they become distressed. These are distributed to those members of the community who may be anxious or want to help. This practice almost invariably alleviates the concerns of members of the public and helps to establish greater contact and understanding.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior management team provide strong leadership to drive improvements. The recent introduction of a teaching management team comprising deputy headteacher, and two senior teachers for each of the pre-16 and post-16 departments, is working well. New staff feel well supported; the structure enables senior staff to monitor regularly the quality of teaching and to review curriculum planning for individuals and groups. There is evidence of good liaison across the three phases of the school.

The school has clearly stated aims, which are understood by all staff, both in education and care. A strong ethos pervades the school and there is good evidence of consistent application of values and policies. Students' welfare and well-being has the highest priority and this is recognised by all staff when they are working with students.

Senior managers recognise the difficulties involved in bringing staff together for consultation meetings. The headteacher personally meets with all staff groups, who are consulted about priorities for the school development plan. When this is completed and agreed by the directors of the Hesley Group then action planning meetings are arranged. Whilst the school development plan is detailed, with a long list of proposed developments, it does not explain how staff are intending to implement them.

There are effective systems in place for regular communication within and across teams, though senior managers readily admit that these could be further improved. The overlap time between care shifts early in the afternoon provides opportunity for teachers to liaise with personal tutors on the care side on a regular three-weekly cycle. This is an example of the effective management strategy.

Structures and procedures are in place for the appraisal of all staff. This has not been rushed in order to ensure that senior staff are suitably trained and all staff feel well prepared. All teaching staff are given some non-contact time to develop their subjects within their departments. It is difficult, however, for one teacher to be responsible for as many as three or four subjects. Senior managers may wish to consider how specialist subject teaching skills could be used more effectively across the whole school.

The school has effective systems for recording incidents, both of a regular and more serious nature. The nature of the students' frequently challenging behaviour means that the school has developed three different levels of recording. The headteacher oversees and monitors the records, which provide evidence for annual reviews and requests for information from placing authorities. This system works well.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

The school has sufficient qualified and experience teachers; it has been arranged that the only unqualified teacher, who has previous experience in the school as a care worker and team leader, will become qualified during the next 18 months. Teachers are supported in the classrooms by learning support assistants and residential care

workers. This arrangement is well planned and helps to maintain good links between the residential units and the school. It aims to ensure that there is always an adult with each pupil. Co-ordinating this is a difficult task but the present system works effectively. Senior teachers liaise with the head of care and team leaders on a regular basis to ensure smooth working arrangements. The deputy headteacher is responsible for all staff professional development.

The head of care has recently obtained additional qualifications and leads a large team of residential workers. The revised management structure within the care teams is sound and there is a balance between male and female staff. Most of the residential care workers are young and enthusiastic and there is good teamwork.

Both the school and the Hesley Group know that there is a major problem in the recruitment and retention of residential care staff, especially as the school is open for 52 weeks each year. The school is too dependent on the use of agency and bank staff as well as existing staff working overtime, to ensure that a full complement of staff is on duty. However, several of the bank staff are experienced staff who once worked full-time in the school. This heavy dependence on staff other than those who are full-time is a concern.

The school has worked with the Hampshire social services department (SSD) inspectors to develop satisfactory policies for the use of agency staff and for monitoring the amount of overtime that staff undertake.

The school and the Hesley Group have worked hard to promote the work of the school locally and to arouse interest from people who might wish to work in the school. There has been a well-planned, comprehensive recruitment drive. This has been supported by the establishment of a two-week period of induction for all staff and the comprehensive Foundation Training Programme, run in partnership between the school and the Hesley Group. This is much valued by staff. The impact of this initial training will be beneficial if the school is able to retain its trained members of staff.

Whilst many residential care staff have a range of previous experiences it is essentially an unqualified staff. The Hesley Group has made a pledge, in the school prospectus, that all care staff will achieve a minimum National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) (Care) level 2. Two of the senior staff are trained as assessors and a further three members of staff are in the course of training; a rolling programme of NVQ training is beginning. This will need to be given a higher priority in the subsequent school development plan if the Hesley Group target is to be met within a realistic period of time.

Accommodation

The school buildings have been recently painted and there has been extensive redecoration and refurbishment of all bedrooms, social and dining areas and classrooms. School facilities are separate from the residential units but they are integrated as a whole campus. The post-16 students have two bases and are separate from the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 classrooms. There is sufficient suitable classroom accommodation.

There are three separate play areas for students; and they are stimulating and attractive. Specialist facilities are limited but there is a small craft room, a large soft-play area, a library, a small darkroom and a snoezelen. There is no hall but key stage assemblies can be held in the college which is the base for some of the post-16 students. The school can use a neighbouring community facility if needed.

The school makes good use of both the immediate area for planned educational walks, as well as the cultural, social and recreational facilities in the wider area. The minibuses have been suitably adapted for transporting the very demanding students.

Students have single bedrooms, either in the main house or in the Beeches, which is a separate house within the school grounds for some of the post-16 students. The only double bedroom is being converted into two rooms in the coming months.

Each of the four living groups have their own lounge and dining areas which are conveniently situated. Students' bedrooms have a range of pictures, posters, photographs or collages and have an individual identity. Some are more sparse than others but this reflects the behaviour of the students on certain occasions and the staff have ensured that even here the rooms are attractively decorated with some personal effects. All floor surfaces are now washable or are carpeted. The standard of cleaning is very high and the custom of allocating domestic cleaning to specific living areas is an excellent idea.

Some students have washbasins in their own bedrooms but for others all washing and bathroom facilities are nearby. These are sufficient in number but the school has yet to provide shower facilities for all students who wish or may need to use them. Ventilation in a few of the south-facing bedrooms is poor.

The medical room has been moved and rearranged and has appropriately secure cupboards for medicines. Toilet facilities are nearby.

There is a most attractive feel to the house and the whole school and it is both welcoming and secure. Facilities for residential staff have taken second place to those for students; some improvements in this area might assist recruitment and retention of residential staff.

Learning resources

Learning resources are limited and this may reduce access to the National Curriculum and other areas of learning. Some additional funds have been made available recently for the purchase of books, but there are limited resources for mathematics, science, physical education and humanities. Resources for music, environmental studies and for food technology are better. The school has a sufficient number of computers but their use is not extensive.

The efficiency of the school

Financial management is overseen by a financial manager within the Hesley Group, but responsibility for day-to-day spending and accounting, within budget headings, is passed to the headteacher and bursar.

There is good financial planning and accounting; heads of school departments have to account for any overspend on the budget each month. Some costs, which include insurance, depreciation and major requests via the school development fund, are met centrally. Directors of the Hesley Group have recognised the need for enhanced salary scales at the school, in order to attract and retain staff. The salaries of teachers reflect the fact that they work a longer school year than mainstream colleagues.

Effective use is made of the teaching and care staff. They all gain useful experience as care staff support in classes and teachers come on duty later on one day each week, in order to spend one evening in a residential unit. Accommodation is fully used. Some consideration will need to be given to increasing the budget for activities and classroom items and ensuring that sufficient funding is ensured for ongoing staff training needs.

Whilst it has been beneficial for a newly-appointed headteacher to have a period of time to consider school development planning needs and the delay in receiving budget figures this year has been opportune, the Hesley Group will need to ensure that the budget for the next and each subsequent school year is known to senior staff in time for each new academic year. This will support planning and further improve financial control and monitoring.

Health and safety issues

Some minor issues were brought to the attention of members of the senior management team during the inspection.

A more major issue is the safety of students near the college building, as there is no locked gate to the perimeter fence and drive in this area. This will need serious consideration by senior managers and directors.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

Observation of:

- Sixteen lessons, with a total observation time of over 16 hours. Some lessons were observed in locations away from the school premises;
- assemblies and acts of collective worship;
- evening activities and handover meetings;
- videos provided by the school to show students' involvement in past activities.

Scrutiny of:

- documentation provided by the school;
- students' files, which included annual reviews, transition plans and individual education plans;
- incident and accident books and records of compliments and complaints;
- attendance registers.

Discussions with:

- members of the senior management team and other staff, both in education and care;
 - the finance and facilities director of the Hesley Group.
 - Inspection of:
 - school and home accommodation and resources.
-

Appendix 1

Pupil and teacher numbers

Number of full-time students	Girls: 3; Boys: 19; Total: 22	
Number of part-time students	0	
Number of pupils on roll	22	
Number of students with a statement	21 (1 student is from Guernsey)	
Full-time qualified teachers	6	
Full-time unqualified teachers	1	
Part-time qualified teachers	1	
Other Staff		
Full-time care staff (permanent)	44	
Bank care staff *	33	
Night care staff - 21 hours	3	
Night care staff - 42 hours	8	
Special support assistants	5	
School secretaries	3	
Domestic bursar	1	
Premises maintenance staff	2	

Catering and domestic	7
Part-time speech and language therapist	1
Part-time art therapist	1
Part-time music therapist	1

*These are staff who work flexible hours, without a permanent contract.

Appendix 2

Student numbers according to National Curriculum years

		Boys	Girls	Total
Secondary	Year 7 (age 11-12)	-	1	1
	Year 8	2	-	2
	Year 9	2	-	2
	Year 10	1	-	1
	Year 11 (age 15-16)	6	1	7
Post-16	Year 12 (age 16-17)	1	1	2
	Year 13	2	-	2
	Year 14 (age 18-19)	5	-	5
	Overall total	19	3	22

Appendix 3

Placing authorities

One student unless otherwise stated

Brighton and Hove Council
East Sussex County Council
Hampshire County Council
London Borough of Barnet
London Borough Bromley (3)
London Borough of Croydon
London Borough of Ealing
London Borough of Enfield
London Borough of Haringay
London Borough of Harrow
London Borough of Southwark
London Borough of Sutton
London Borough of Waltham Forest
Reading Borough Council
London Borough of Kingston upon Thames (2)
States of Guernsey
Surrey County Council (2)
West Sussex County Council

Appendix 4

Other accredited course results

Two students completed modules for ASDAN 'Towards Independence' accreditation in the previous academic year.

Appendix 5

Student funding

Income

Income	Last financial year (£)	Forecast this financial year (£)
Basic budget	2,110,443	2,255,985
Grants	-	-
Income from facilities and services	-	-
Donations/private funds	-	-
Other income	-	-
Total income	2,110,443	2,255,985
Income per students	95,929	102,545

The income included above as "basic budget" comprises all fee income relating to the school.

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	22
Number of questionnaires returned:	16

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES:

	Agree	Disagree	Comments
I am happy with the school my child attends.	15	1	
I think this school meets my child's special education needs.	15	1	
I believe that the school helps me to understand what my child is taught.	15	1	
I think that the school keeps me well	15	1	

informed about my child's progress.			
I am happy with the standards of behaviour at this school.	15	-	Not completed on one form.
I believe that this school helps my child have positive attitudes to school work.	13	3	Not completed on two forms.
I believe that this school helps my child to mix well with other children.	9	3	Not completed on four forms due to the nature of pupils' difficulties.
I believe that this school promotes the personal and social development of my child.	14	2	Two parents disagreed due to the nature of students' difficulties.
I think that this school prepares my child for the next stage of education and training.	12	-	One parent dissatisfied with SSD contribution. Not completed on three forms.
I feel supported by the school.	16	0	
I feel that my child is safe at this school.	16	0	
I believe my child likes this school.	15	1	

Summary of responses

In addition to 16 returned questionnaires, HMI received a further letter and a telephone call.

Positive points raised by parents

- Excellent staff attitudes towards parents, with good communication.
- The school ethos focuses on success, rather than failure.
- The school strives for excellence.
- Parents feel that their children are safe and secure.

Issues that concerned parents

- Insufficient communication about what is going on in class.
- More able students may be held back.
- The high turnover of staff.
- Some concern that senior staff do not listen sufficiently to parents and value their contribution.
- Some concern about a possible shortfall of funding for activities, which may affect the range which can be offered.