

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Barndale House Special School**  
Alwick

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique Reference Number: 122384

Headteacher: Mr J Chappells

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Reporting inspector: Mr R Thompson

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708459

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special: Severe Learning Difficulties
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	4 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Howling Lane Alnwick Northumberland NE66 1DQ
Telephone number:	01665-602541
Fax number:	No fax
Appropriate authority:	Northumberland Local Education Authority
Name of Chair of Governors:	Mr A Bell
Date of previous inspection:	March 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

<b>Team members</b>	<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
Robert Thompson, Registered Inspector	Mathematics Modern foreign language Under Fives	Main findings Key issues for action Characteristics of the school Leadership and management
Ann Longfield, Lay Inspector	Support English, mathematics, science	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Bernice Magson	English Religious education	Curriculum and assessment Special educational needs Equal opportunities Sixth Form
Ray Cardinal	Science Humanities	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Integration
Trevor Watts	Design technology Information technology	Attainment and progress Staffing
Helen Maskew	Physical education Music Art	Personal and social education Teaching Accommodation and learning resources Residential

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## **MAIN FINDINGS**

### **What the school does well**

- Pupils' and students' attendance is very good.
- Pupils and students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall.
- Pupils' and students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.
- The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Teaching, which is predominately good, is very well supported by the support assistants, and has a significantly positive effect on pupils' and students' progress.
- Curriculum and assessment are good. Good use is made of assessment to inform future planning.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- The school's literacy strategy is very effective.
- The school's numeracy strategy is in its early stages and is developing well.
- The moving, positioning and handling of pupils and students is very good.
- Support and guidance given to pupils and students is good.
- Residential provision within the school is good.
- Provision for pupils' and students' spiritual and cultural development is good; provision for their moral and social development is very good.
- Pupils and students progress in personal, social and health education is very good.
- Partnership with parents is good. They are effectively involved in their children's learning.
- Links with the community are very good.
- The school is well led and managed; financial planning and controls are very good.
- The ethos of the school is very good.

### · **Where the school has weaknesses**

- I. Religious education is not taught to the agreed local syllabus across the school.
- II. There is lack of learning resources and artefacts for religious education.
- III. There is a lack of access for non-ambulant pupils and students to the residential area.
- IV. There is a lack of access for non-ambulant pupils and students in the school mini-bus.

Barndale House School is a good school. The many strengths of the school far outweigh the few weaknesses of the school. The governors' action plan will set out how these weaknesses are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of the pupils and students at the school.

### · **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

The school has made very good progress since 1996. Pupils' and students' attendance has improved. The school is well led and the financial controls are very good. Provision for pupils' and students' spiritual and cultural development is now good. Provision for their social and moral development is now very good. The pupils' and students' individual education plans are better written and more closely related to National Curriculum targets. English and mathematics targets are particularly good. The higher achieving pupils and students in school were under-achieving; they are now being challenged more and making good progress. Progress in information technology was unsatisfactory, this is now satisfactory and developing well. Pupils' and students' attitudes to learning, their behaviour and personal development are now very good. The quality of teaching is now a strength of the school. The

teamwork between teachers and support staff is very good, and enhances the progress pupils and students make. The school has made good progress in the way in which it has developed the curriculum.

Very good progress has been made in assessment and it is used well to inform future planning. The way in which the school has developed its classrooms to reflect the age and aptitude of the pupils and students is good. Information technology facilities have been developed and distributed throughout all classrooms, improving access for all pupils and students. Learning resources are generally good across most subjects of the National Curriculum. The school has developed a new library area, and this impacts positively on the progress pupils and students make. The school is well led and managed; financial planning and controls are very good. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

• **Whether pupils are making enough progress**

Progress in:	By 11	By 16	By 19	Key	
Targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	<i>very good</i>	A
English:	B	B	B	<i>good</i>	B
listening and speaking	B	B	B	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
reading	B	B	B	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D
writing	B	B	B	<i>poor</i>	E
Mathematics	B	B	B		
Science	B	B			
Personal, social and health Education (PSHE)	A	A	A		

\*IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs

Most pupils and students make good progress in English, humanities, mathematics, science, physical education and very good progress in art and personal, social and health education. They make satisfactory progress in music, French, information technology and design and technology, but unsatisfactory progress over time in religious education. No unsatisfactory progress was seen in lessons.

In 76 per cent of lessons, progress was good or better. In 29 per cent of lessons, progress was very good.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
5 – 11 years	Good	Art, Science, Humanities	Religious education, Music
11 – 16 years	Good	Art, Science	Religious education, Music
Post-16	Good	English, Mathematics	
English	Good	Post-16	
Mathematics	Good	Post-16	
Personal, social and health education (PSHE)	Good	Post-16	

Teaching is a strength of the school. It is predominately good, often very good and occasionally excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. 80 per cent of teaching was good or better, 41 per cent was very good or better, and 6 per cent was excellent. Examples of very good teaching were seen in art, English, humanities, mathematics, physical education, science and personal, social and health education.



Examples of excellent teaching were seen in English, science and art. Teaching in music and religious education was less effective than other subjects, but satisfactory.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Pupils and students behave well in school and when they are out in the community.
Attendance	Attendance has improved and is now good. Pupils and students like coming to school.
Ethos*	There is a very good ethos in school. Pupils' and students' attitudes and relationships are very good, staff have high expectations of pupils and students and are committed to high standards.
Leadership and management	The school is well led and managed. The governors and senior management team of the school give clear educational direction to the school.
Curriculum	The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum is good, apart from a lack of religious education. Assessment is good and used well by staff.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for pupils' and students' spiritual and cultural development is good. Provision for their social and moral development is very good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing is adequate, learning resources have improved and are generally good, except for religious education where they are poor. Accommodation, including the school's use of the community, is good. Accommodation for the residential provision is good, although inaccessible for non-ambulant pupils.
Value for money	The school gives good value for money.

*\*Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

· **The parents' views of the school**

**What most parents like about the school**

- V. The school is very approachable.
- VI. The school encourages pupils and students to join in all activities, not just daily lessons.
- VII. The school instils positive attitudes and values.
- VIII. Children like coming to school.

**What some parents are not happy about**

18 parents attended a meeting held before the inspection and were very supportive of the school. 21 questionnaires were returned by parents, analysed and found to be very supportive of the school. The inspectors support the very positive opinions of the parents.

## · **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to improve the high standard of education further, the school and governing body should ensure:

IX. that the agreed syllabus for religious education is taught consistently across the school and that there are sufficient learning resources and artefacts; (*paragraphs 14, 33, 65, 74 and 113*)

X. that access is provided for pupils and students to the residential unit; (*paragraphs 65, 71 and 164*)

XI. that access is provided for pupils and students to the mini-bus. (*paragraph 65*)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. Barndale House School is a maintained special school for day and residential pupils with severe learning difficulties. The age range of pupils is from 4-19 years. There are 35 pupils on roll, 20 boys and 15 girls. Up to 25 pupils board each week.
2. The catchment area for day pupils for the school is wide and overlaps with other similar special schools in Northumberland. For residential pupils, the catchment area covers the whole of the county, in addition to taking in pupils from neighbouring Local Education authorities. All pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need.
3. Just over ten per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Authorised absence is low and there are no unauthorised absences. The school population is entirely white; there are no pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. The school operates four class groups covering; Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stages 3 and 4, and Post-16 provision. The needs of pupils have changed markedly over the past three years. Several pupils now have what has been determined as 'acute medical needs' and these admissions have resulted in the creation of a nursing post at school, jointly funded by the Local Education Authority and the Health Trust.
4. One pupil currently has support in the adjacent First School. Pupils in the leavers' group attend day release courses at Northumberland College, with support from Barndale staff. No pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum; however, named pupils are increasingly having their needs met through the Equals Baseline Assessment Structure and through individually focused strategies such as TEACCH.
5. Staffing has been very stable over the past eight years. The senior management team of the school consists of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, who are joined by the acting head of care, when appropriate. The school has recently been awarded the Investors in People award for its work on appraisal of staff.
6. During recent months the residential block has been completely rewired under the Fair Deals for Schools initiative. Redecoration is almost complete.
7. The school has an appropriate number of well-defined aims:
  - to provide a broad and balanced curriculum;
  - to develop pupils to their full potential;
  - to develop a sense of worth, self-esteem and personal responsibility;
  - to prepare pupils for citizenship;
  - to develop individual staff expertise;
  - to provide and maintain an environment in which all pupils and students feel secure and happy, and their views are valued.

## · KEY INDICATORS

### Northumberland Units of Accreditation: Mathematics

TITLE	Number of pupils achieving Accreditation for Unit
Coin sorting and matching	5
Coin Recognition	4
Understanding and using money	2
Basic skills - money	3
Money management	2
Number (1)	2
Working with numbers	2
Time, Days, Weeks and Months	2
Basic skills - time	2
Money - addition/subtraction	1
100s/10s/units - number squares	1
Learning about multiplication tables (1)	2
Time, hours and minutes	2
Time, using the 24 hour clock	1
Time - using timetables	1
Sorting and classifying	1

### Other Curriculum Areas:

TITLE	Number of pupils
Making coffee	9
Using a Microwave	3
Making and serving a pot of tea	6
Making a sandwich	8
Clearing away after food preparation	3
Basic cooking methods	1
Water skills	1
Water confidence	1
Information Technology Unit 1	5
Information Technology Unit 2	2
Recognition and use of nouns	2

- **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised absence	School	7.0
		National comparative data	8.0
	Unauthorised absence	School	0
		National comparative data	1.0

- **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	1
	Permanent	0

- **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	41
	Satisfactory or better	100
	Less than satisfactory	0

- **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**
- **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**
- **Attainment and progress**

*The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge attainment against age related national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils and students know, understand and can do. Judgements about progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' and students' statements, individual education plans and in annual reviews.*

1. Overall, pupils and students make good progress throughout the school in the long term. In lessons in Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, progress was always at least satisfactory, and was good overall. It was good or better in three-quarters of lessons, and very good in almost a third of lessons. Similarly, in Post-16, progress is good overall. In only one lesson was the students' progress satisfactory, and in all the others it was good or very good, in equal proportions. The progress made by pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good at all key stages and at Post-16.
2. At the time of the previous inspection, it was reported that there was some underachievement by the more able pupils in the school. Also, progress in information technology was reported to be unsatisfactory. Both situations have now improved significantly: the higher attaining pupils and students are making progress at a rate that is good in the long term, and progress in information technology is now satisfactory. Also in response to the previous report, the school has made good improvements in the way pupils' individual education plans are set with targets that are based on National Curriculum subjects. These are most notably English and mathematics, along with personal, social and health education. Pupils make good progress against the targets set in these plans.
3. In **English**, pupils and students make progress that is good overall. In Key Stage 3 and at Post-16, progress is very good. Progress is often very good in individual lessons throughout the school, and was never less than satisfactory during the inspection. The school's introduction of the literacy strategy has been a major benefit to the teaching and learning that take place. Pupils are doing well in all of the relevant areas that make up the subject. Lower attaining pupils in the lower part of the school are non-verbal, and have difficulty making eye contact with adults. Some are, however, beginning to make deliberate choices, and to understand the meaning of some questions and instructions, and will recognise the names of classmates. Other pupils are learning to recognise Makaton signs and symbols, and are beginning to use them in lessons. Higher attaining pupils can understand a story such as "The Three Little Pigs", and will respond with appropriate actions. They make pre-writing marks on paper with felt tip pens, and recognise their own name and photograph. Through Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils continue to develop well in their communication skills against the targets that are set for them in their individual education plans. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils respond to questions and add comments of their own, sound out the alphabet, and read simple sentences that have direct meaning to them. Some pupils can add the missing words in short sentences, and others write short sentences, sometimes without direct assistance. Pupils' reading skills vary from pre-reading recognition of pictures and symbols to the ability to read sentences from books. At Post-16, the English work has an increased emphasis on practical and independence skills, and students learn to recognise signs around the community, and to read simple instructions, shop signs, and food labels.
4. In **mathematics**, pupils make good progress in the long term through all of the key stages. In lessons during the inspection, pupils made progress that was at least good, and was sometimes very good. Pupils' progress is well spread across the different elements of mathematics. In Key Stages 1 and 2, they begin their number and shape awareness. By the end of Key Stage 2, the

higher attainers recognise and match shapes and colours, and sort shapes out by size and colour. They are beginning to count reliably, and understand the concepts of 'more' and 'less' as a start to arithmetic. In Key Stages 3 and 4, many higher attaining pupils are able to recognise numerals, count up to ten without assistance, and add numbers under ten. They recognise a greater number of shapes and colours, and the higher attainers recognise coins up to £1. With help, they use money in the classroom and in their shopping for their meals within the personal and social courses. Students in Post-16, also make good progress both in the long term and in lessons. They have better experience with money both in school and in their shopping expeditions. They are developing a good vocabulary of the correct language to use in mathematics, and can recognise several three-dimensional shapes, such as a cube and a sphere.

5. Progress in **science** is good through all four key stages. Progress in lessons is often very good. Pupils are learning their science well across all of the required elements, including the approach through investigations. This approach is particularly well developed in Key Stage 1, where pupils have recently been investigating different materials such as sellotape, cork, plastic, twigs, fabrics and Lego bricks, in an integrated cross-curricular project. This good rate of progress has continued in Key Stage 2, along with work on animals, their food and their young, especially with cats and kittens. This also continues through Key Stages 3 and 4, with good progress in learning about reproduction in plants and animals, including frogs and humans.
6. In **information technology**, pupils and students make satisfactory progress in the long term throughout the school. They make a sound start in Key Stage 1, where they learn how to operate single-touch switches to activate audio and visual rewards, screen displays and a range of peripheral equipment, such as an air fan, a tape player and a lighted bubble tube. Lower attaining pupils who need this kind of work make good progress through the school. As pupils develop through Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, they learn to use the computer keyboard in simple ways to input their names. The higher attainers use a mouse to select, drag and drop screen items, and to change the options on a screen. Some learn to use simple switches, touch screens or concept keyboards. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils make simple graphics shapes on the screen and print them out with help; they play simple computer games; and can use computers to gain information about different topics, with close assistance. Post-16 students follow the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) scheme, which includes a range of skills from playing computer games and inputting text, to manipulating graphics and gaining wider information from the computers.
7. In **religious education**, pupils and students made satisfactory progress in lessons during the inspection, but their long-term progress throughout the school is unsatisfactory because the subject is not being taught according to the agreed syllabus. The school recognises this, and has plans to fully implement the teaching of the religious education Locally Agreed Syllabus across the school immediately.
8. Pupils and students make very good progress in their **personal and social** skills throughout the school. Progress in individual lessons ranges from satisfactory to very good, but pupils and students are learning their self help, independence and community skills over such a wide range that this amounts to very good progress overall. This is reinforced by the good emphasis on the integration of targets between school, day and residential staffs.
9. **Art** and **design and technology** are very inter-twined, with much overlap in lessons. Progress in art is very good in lessons and in the longer term. In design and technology, progress was good in lessons and is satisfactory in the long term. Progress is good overall in history and geography, which are taught together as **humanities** in the lower part of the school. Pupils and students make good progress in **physical education** through a range of activities such as games, gymnastics, swimming and outdoor pursuits, often well co-ordinated with physiotherapy targets. Progress in **music** is satisfactory in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. In **French**, progress is satisfactory in lessons and



in the long term for pupils in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.

16. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

10. Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. Parents say their children love coming to school, and miss it during the holidays. Despite their difficulties, the pupils try very hard and are proud of their efforts and delighted to show others. Most pupils concentrate on their tasks and present their work as neatly as they are able. They are willing to join in and participate fully in group activities. Pupils respond willingly to staff management of their behaviour, and their behaviour in lessons, as well as at lunch-time and recreation, was very good. This is commendable, considering some of the pupils' complex difficulties. The response of pupils to the lessons observed was good in over three-quarters of lessons. There has been one temporary exclusion during the past year. Attitudes and relationships have improved since the last inspection and are now very good.
11. On visits out of the school, pupils' behaviour is very good; they know what is expected of them, and with close supervision and support they respond very well. Parents are appreciative of this. Pupils know clearly what is right and what is wrong and are able to act on principles based in being kind to each other. Pupils are polite; they greet teachers and visitors appropriately and show courtesy to adults around the school.
12. Relationships throughout the school are very good, and this is a strength of the school. Pupils look up to, and respect all the staff, and see them as their friends. Pupils help and care for each other, and show consideration for each other's feelings and difficulties. The high quality of relationships enables staff to include all pupils in class activities, visits and school events.
13. Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils willingly undertake small responsibilities around the school and in the residential unit. Pupils make a very good contribution to the life of the local community and there are good links with the adjacent mainstream first and high schools. Older pupils successfully undertake courses at the Northumberland College.

20. **Attendance**

14. Attendance is very good. Pupils are happy and willing to attend school and many have achieved 100 per cent attendance at this point in the current school year. There is no unauthorised absence and only a small number of pupils are regularly absent due to serious illness. Each pupil represents a large percentage of the total and therefore the absence of just one pupil has a very significant effect on the overall percentage figure.
15. Almost all the day pupils are brought to school by taxis provided by the Local Education Authority, and, due to traffic and other understandable delays, sometimes pupils arrive several minutes late. However, once school is in session, punctuality is good, with lessons starting and finishing on time with little time wasted throughout the day. There is a very effective hand over of residential pupils and students to teaching staff at the start of the day.
16. Pupils' and students' attendance has improved to very good since the last inspection, and this has a positively beneficial effect on the progress they make in school.

23. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

23. **Teaching**

17. Since the previous inspection there has been an overall improvement in the quality of teaching. It is now a strength in the school and makes a significant contribution to the progress of pupils and students. The achievement of the Investors in People Award has played an important part in this improvement.
18. Of the 89 lessons observed, 35 per cent were very good, 39 per cent were good and 20 per cent

were satisfactory. Six per cent of lessons were excellent. These were in English, science and art.

19. Teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2, and is good overall. Four out of ten lessons are satisfactory. Six out of ten are good and very good. In these lessons teachers' expectations of pupils are high. Good use is made of the learning support assistants and planning is very effective. Good teaching was evident in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and history, physical education and personal, social and health education. Very good teaching was seen in art.
20. At Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is good overall. Lessons ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Seven out of ten lessons seen were good and very good, with some excellent teaching in almost one in ten. Two out of ten were satisfactory. The characteristics of these lessons are the very high expectations of the pupils, which stretches and challenges them, and the use of stimulating resources. Planning is also very good and designed to cover a wide range of abilities, with very effective use of learning assistants. Good teaching was seen in mathematics, science, design technology, geography and history, personal, social and health education, physical education and information communication technology in Key Stage 3. Some very good teaching was seen in English, and in art across all key stages. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in science and art.
21. Teaching in Post-16 lessons is good overall. Three out of every ten lessons are good; four out of ten are very good, with some excellent teaching in English. Lessons are well planned and very good use is made of assessment and recording. Expectations are high and relationships between the teachers and students are very good. Teachers extend learning opportunities and build on the very good links with the local college.
22. Where teaching is of a very high standard there is very good understanding of the subject and the specific needs of the pupils. The pace of lessons is very good and every pupil is engaged most of the time. Work presented to them is stimulating and challenging. Teachers have a very good relationship with the pupils and use imaginative techniques to interest and challenge them. Higher attaining pupils are given many opportunities to extend and develop their learning skills. In physical education lessons, they are challenged to improve on previous best in stamina exercises. In geography, skilful questioning by the teacher extends the pupils' understanding of simple maps.
23. All teachers are aware of the specific needs of the pupils and students. Opportunities are taken to reinforce physical and social needs in lessons as part of overall care planning. Resources are well chosen and used effectively. In art very good use is made of the display of pupils' work. Photography is used in many lessons for assessment and recording, with good effect. Emphasis is placed on stimulating experiences, such as touching and then describing textures and properties of different materials in science and art. In personal, social and health education lessons, good strategies are used as a guide to independent learning.
24. Where lessons are satisfactory, expectations are not so high, and pupils are occasionally not fully engaged at all times. Materials and resources are not used to full effect. This is often because the teacher is not a subject specialist or does not have sufficient time for preparation.
25. In all lessons, the relationships between teachers, pupils and students are very good. The high quality of teaching means that pupils and students reactions are always positive. The inclusion of every pupil and student in all aspects of lessons, regardless of ability, makes a significant contribution to their progress. Good liaison is maintained between teachers and their mainstream colleagues to support pupils who are being reintegrated. Homework is provided in some lessons, but all pupils have a home-school diary through which they are encouraged to pursue activities at home which they have started in school.

32. **The curriculum and assessment**

26. The school has undertaken much development work since the last inspection to produce a curriculum which is broad and balanced and meets all statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The school now has a curriculum in place that is of good quality and makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress and achievements. However the school does not meet statutory requirements in religious education. Insufficient time is given to deliver appropriately the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
27. Arrangements for education of students in Post-16 education are good, and remain of the same good quality as reported at the last inspection. The curriculum effectively prepares students for the next stage of education. Work experience opportunities are satisfactory; college placements are good.
28. The school curriculum overall effectively promotes pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. Literacy, numeracy and personal and social development are given a high priority. The school has developed a good strategy for literacy in timetable lessons and has been congratulated by the local authority for its positive approach to this new initiative. The recently introduced numeracy initiative is also in place and is proving effective in providing a common structure to lesson planning. The well-developed scheme of work for personal and social development includes arrangements for health, sex, and drugs education.
29. Careers education formally begins in Year 9. A new service contract has recently been agreed. As a result, careers education will now be delivered as part of personal and social education for this younger age group. Initiatives in career education have previously been an important focus of Key Stage 4 and Post-16 provision. Direct teaching and work experience have been undertaken so that pupils have opportunities to consider their lives beyond school. Part-time attendance at local colleges of further education are used as a valuable additional or alternative course of provision. Pupils study one day a week on a range of pre-vocational courses, which have been recognised as extremely valuable in raising self-esteem and creating good links with the community. Other initiatives have included an introduction to a local residential college, and a Funding Council project for day-release and twenty-four hour residential further education.
30. Equal access to the curriculum is produced for all pupils. The school has a policy for special educational needs, which pays due regard to the Code of Practice. Arrangements for annual reviews are very good, giving good attention to inclusion of all agencies involved in the twenty-four hour provision for each pupil.
31. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities which enrich the curriculum. These include day visits to places of local interest, theatres, and cinemas as well as a good range of sporting activities. An annual residential visit to the Lake District is very popular, increasing opportunities for social integration. Pupils in the residential unit attend a local youth club and swimming baths where they have good opportunities to meet with other members of the local community.
32. The school has produced policies for all subjects, and effective subject guidance for all subjects except religious education and music. Schemes of work are of good quality, identifying how pupils will gain in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school. Attainment targets are incorporated effectively in all curriculum plans. Teachers give very good attention to ensuring all pupils are challenged in each subject and especially in literacy and numeracy.
33. Subject co-ordinators have responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the teaching of their subject and auditing resources to ensure suitable materials are available to enrich the curriculum.

School development plan priorities include additional funding to ensure resources match any identified area of development. Local businesses are active in supporting provision for additional resource spending; for example, a local bank has made several grants to update library resources.

34. The school has effective arrangements for assessing pupils' achievements. These are very good in English and personal and social education and good in all other subjects except religious education. Assessments are under constant review by the teaching staff and are automatically incorporated into all teachers' planning. There is increasing evidence of the positive effects of self-assessment particularly in the upper school.
35. External accredited schemes for baseline and small steps assessment give a thorough indication of pupil progress in each key stage. From Key Stage 4, and throughout Post-16 education, pupils and students are introduced to a programme of modules which form part of a scheme of competences culminating in a nationally accredited award. The work undertaken in daily living skills is accredited by the nationally recognised scheme and students receive awards to demonstrate their increasing competence. Accumulated accreditation certificates are used in Post-16 education to become the basis of each student's National Record of Achievement.

42. **Integration**

36. The school has a very strong commitment to the integration of pupils into mainstream schooling, where this is appropriate. Individual cases are looked at with great care and there is very good liaison with the target school. In one example of very good practice, a young pupil spends the first half of each morning in a local mainstream First School for lessons, including literacy and numeracy, plus two afternoons every week for art and physical education. On each occasion he is accompanied by a support assistant. Integration has been very well planned, with the pupil concerned well known and accepted within the class group. The arrangements that have been put in place enable him to make good progress in lessons in the mainstream school. The support assistant gives appropriate one-to-one support in group and individual work, as well as intervening appropriately to give support in whole-class activities. Other examples of good practice include four recent school leavers who successfully completed units of their course at the local high school. The school has established very good procedures for supported day release for older pupils at the local college of further education, with school and college staff working together to support individuals on a variety of vocational courses. The school also establishes good links with other colleges who will subsequently receive school leavers.

43. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

37. Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
38. Spiritual development is good. Assemblies provide good opportunities to develop spiritual awareness. Prayer is emphasised, and is a prominent part of the assembly programme with pupils actively involved in responses, and on occasions, leading prayers. Assemblies have clear themes such as helping poor and homeless people. Opportunities are provided for pupils to be actively involved in assemblies, for example by answering questions and handling religious artefacts. Posters and artefacts from different religions, although insufficient in number across the school, are used well in some assemblies to illustrate different religions and their beliefs. Prayer is a regular feature at meal times with all pupils actively involved in saying grace. The school is very effective at promoting spiritual development with its consistent approach to developing awareness and knowledge of oneself. There is a consistent approach by all staff to promote confidence, self-esteem, a sense of succeeding and an awareness of other people and their difficulties.
39. Moral development is very good. Staff are excellent role models for pupils. They lead by example with high expectations that pupils will regulate their own behaviour. The personal, social and health education programme is specifically designed to equip pupils with their own moral code

for behaviour, and it reinforces the high expectations set by staff. The programme is very effective in giving pupils a secure foundation of knowledge and values, so they know how to conduct themselves in a variety of settings. They learn about taking turns, how to listen, joining in a conversation, how to behave in shops and other public places, and sensible behaviour in relation to public roads. The school's residential provision is very effective in reinforcing what is right and wrong behaviour within the context of living in close proximity to others. Moral issues are covered in some curriculum areas, including pollution and war, in humanities.

40. Social development is very good. Staff set a very high standard in relating positively to pupils, and consequently, relationships are very good. Pupils respond accordingly: they greet staff and familiar visitors by name, and they show very good awareness of the needs of others when moving around the school buildings. Pupils show very good awareness of others at meal times, with appropriate behaviour and conversation. The residential provision is very effective at promoting positive, social relationships through staff providing excellent role models. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, including serving food at meal times, preparing a meal to eat with an invited guest, and acting as a monitor to assist with school routine procedures. There are regular visits to a local youth club with opportunities to participate in a variety of competitive activities including team and board games and quizzes. There are very good opportunities for older pupils to work off-site on day release vocational courses at the local college of further education. The school makes very good provision for pupils to see themselves as part of the wider local community, with pupils regularly visiting different community facilities including shops, the sports hall and county library. There are good opportunities for pupils to demonstrate initiative through such activities as riding and canoeing.
41. Cultural development is good. There are good curriculum opportunities for pupils to appreciate other cultures, including a study of the ancient Greeks in humanities and a study of African and Asian art. The school leavers' course provides a very good opportunity to study Chinese culture in depth, including shopping for and preparing a Chinese meal. The school makes good provision to raise awareness of local culture with regular trips to places of interest including local castles. The visits programme provides good opportunities for wider cultural experiences, including visits to theatres, art galleries, and museums. Pupils and students are able to extend their cultural development through participating in activities including theatre and dance workshops. In one example of participation, pupils acted out aspects of ancient Greek life as part of a talk given by a visiting speaker.
42. At the time of the last inspection, spiritual and cultural development were identified as relatively weak areas; both have been substantially improved.
49. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**
43. The school provides a good level of support and guidance for all its pupils and students and provides them with a high standard of welfare. The parents' views that their children receive a high standard of care and understanding are entirely justified. All staff know the pupils well; they know what they can do and cannot do, both academically and personally, and they have clear records, including good quality individual education programmes to support their teaching. This results in pupils being given the opportunities and experiences they need in order to progress. In addition, the school successfully liaises with a range of medical staff and special support agencies, including physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and others.
44. There are well-established routines at the start of each day, both in the school and in the residential unit. These help the pupils to feel confident and secure in being at school. There are very good relationships throughout the school and staff successfully promote good behaviour, consideration for others and social skills. Pupils take part in the annual Crucial Crew days organised by the emergency services. Any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with on

an individual basis, with good support for staff. Good records are kept to make monitoring easy. There is no sign of pupils being bullied within the school.

45. The school's arrangements for child protection are good. There is a trained, named person with responsibility for co-ordinating this aspect, and staff have a clear understanding of the symptoms of abuse and the school's recording and reporting procedures. There is a fully qualified nurse on site who provides care on a daily basis for those who need it. The administration of medicine is done carefully. Pupils receive good guidance in life skills, such as healthy eating, road safety and safety in the home. Good levels of hygiene are promoted throughout the school.
46. The whole ethos of the school is one of care and understanding for every pupil. Pupils are treated with respect by the staff at all times and pupils afforded a high level of dignity. Mealtimes and recreation times are well organised and pupils are well supervised. The atmosphere in the dining room is very pleasant. Staff are always aware of potentially hazardous situations and all staff are very familiar with the correct method to lift and handle pupils who need it. The school is kept extremely clean and the inspection team identified no health and safety concerns.
47. The school has maintained the good levels of support and personal and social education since the last inspection.

54. **Partnership with parents and the community**

48. The school's partnership with parents and the community is good. Parents feel welcome in school. They are appreciative of the care their children receive and of the support and understanding given by staff to parents and families. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents said there was nothing that they were unhappy with about the education and care provided for their children.
49. The quality of information for parents is good. Parents are fully involved in the annual review process. Annual reports provide good information about how their children are progressing. Statutory requirements are met in full. Home-school diaries are used very well throughout the school and parents are particularly appreciative of this form of regular communication.
50. Parents are invited to share in special religious festival services at the local church. There is no parents association due to the distance that some pupils live from the school, but they do have a Parents Forum which meets once a term to discuss relevant issues often with a specialist talk. Some parents support the school financially by taking part in the Great North Run.
51. The local and wider community is used very well to enhance what is being taught in lessons. There are regular visits to the local supermarket and leisure centre, all of which help pupils to develop their social and life skills. Staff from a local bank sponsored the school library through sponsored walks in the Cheviots, and the members of the Royal Air Force at Boulmer ran along Hadrian's Wall to raise money for specialised equipment. The pupils take part in the annual Alnwick Fair, Northumberland in Bloom art competition, riding for the disabled, Shore Base Trust and Local Council leisure activities.
52. The school has good links with the first and high school on the adjacent sites. There are good links with the local colleges which enable the older pupils to gain access to a new range of courses.
53. The good links that the school had with parents and the community at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

60. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

**60. Leadership and management**

54. The quality of leadership and management of the school has improved since the last inspection. The school is well led and managed. There is a strong sense of purpose and direction. This is clear in the commitment from all staff to achieve and deliver the best quality of education for all the pupils. All staff, teaching staff, support staff, care staff and administration staff work well as a team, and have developed a strong positive ethos to raise achievement in the school. There is a very good ethos in school and in the residential unit. All staff have high expectations of all pupils and students and are committed to high standards.
55. The school has an effective three-year development plan which is fully understood and contributed to by staff and governors. The action plan following the last inspection report has been reviewed, evaluated and completed, and the results have formed part of the existing management plan and targets. Considerable progress has been made in developing the range of the curriculum and assessment to meet the needs of all pupils and students, and to fulfil national requirements across all key stages, the in-service training of teachers and support staff, and in curriculum planning and assessment since the last inspection.
56. The headteacher, well supported by the enthusiastic deputy headteacher and effective governing body, gives clear strategic direction to the work of the school. The headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, communicate on a regular basis and the various governor sub-committees report to the full governing body. Both the chair and vice-chair are active and committed to the school. All members of the governing body bring with them expertise in specific areas which are used well to monitor and evaluate particular areas of the school. Individual governors are effectively linked to areas within the school. These activities are valued by both staff and pupils, and provide the school with good role models and enables members to monitor developments and to discuss with staff any issues that they might have. This has effectively contributed to the strong sense of community which pervades the school. The Governors' Annual report to parents and the school's prospectus fully meet statutory requirements.
57. There is a well-planned series of meetings for teaching and support staff, and communication within the school is effective. The role of the subject co-ordinator is understood and well implemented by staff. This role has enabled staff to gain a greater understanding of subjects across the key stages, and so helped them in making sure that teaching, the curriculum and resources are planned for each pupil as they move up the school. This has been particularly well implemented in the school's literacy and numeracy strategies. Job descriptions are in place for all staff.
58. All statutory requirements relating to the National Curriculum are met. However, religious education is not firmly established on the timetable. The school recognises this, and has plans to fully implement the teaching of the religious education Locally Agreed Syllabus across the school immediately. All pupils and students have full access to the curriculum offered in school. However, non-ambulant pupils and students do not have access to the residential unit, and cannot access the mini-bus to pursue activities out of school. Arrangements are made to transport pupils by ambulance to hydrotherapy when necessary.

**65. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

59. There is a sufficient number of qualified teaching staff to deliver the curriculum. There is a gap, however, in staff expertise in music, where no teacher can play an instrument or teach music with a good depth of knowledge. Teachers are well experienced. They all have at least eight years experience in this school.
60. There is a good provision of non-teaching staff, both as support assistants and classroom auxiliaries, with somewhat differing roles, particularly with regard to their involvement in



planning pupils and students' work. They fulfil their roles in supporting individual pupils or small groups of pupils and students very well. They are very capable and give much to the school. All staff have current job descriptions and a clear role in school. Non-teaching staff include a very capable secretarial assistant, who manages all of the school's clerical, typing and administration needs. She is very well qualified, and is an asset to the school. The school caretaker is also very capable, pleasant and friendly with pupils; he runs a clean school, and does the routine maintenance tasks as well. The head of care post is currently very ably filled by a deputy who is acting in absence of post-holder. Residential care staff are well qualified, and they work together very well with classroom staff on programmes for the pupils, especially with regard to personal, social and health education. The site cook is also very able, and is responsible for meals for pupils, students and staff throughout the day and evening.

61. Induction arrangements for new staff are satisfactory. There is a comprehensive programme of support for new staff, which includes having a mentor to offer guidance.
62. The school's appraisal system meets requirements. It involves classroom assistants as well as teachers. The headteacher's appraisal has not yet been completed, although he has been appraised by the governing body. There are good links between the subjects that arise from the appraisal discussions and the school's development plan, and from this to the budget to support training needs.
63. Staff training is good. Much of it is organised within school, and it is very wide-ranging. It has a positive impact on classroom practice, for example in how to deal with challenging behaviour, or accidents, individual pupils at a new computer, or pupils with hearing loss. Recent training has also included raising awareness of child protection issues, and how to lift and move pupils and students who are not mobile. The teaching of subjects such as literacy and numeracy, physical education and information technology has also been improved by well-targeted training. The school makes a satisfactory effort to evaluate the effect of the training on classroom practice.
- 70.
64. Accommodation is good overall. Since the last inspection, classrooms have been modified appropriately to suit pupils and students of different ages. The residential wing has been newly decorated and rewired. The library has been developed with support from local sponsorship and is well stocked. Changing room facilities are now in place. Through local sponsorship, pupils with profound and multiple difficulties now have access to a multi-sensory environment which contributes to their learning and progress. The school has been unable to address the issue of access for non-ambulant pupils and students to the upper floor, residential wing.
65. The buildings continue to be well maintained by the caretaker and staff. The pupils respect the building and there is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism. Pupils' and students' work is attractively displayed. Accommodation in most curriculum areas is good, and satisfactory in others. Although the school has no facilities for physical education, the use of the local leisure centre ensures pupils' and students' involvement with the community is increased.
66. The absence of a hall for assemblies and communal events means that pupils and students have no large area to come together in comfort. The sitting room in the residential block, which is used at present, is not large enough to accommodate easily pupils and students in wheelchairs and standing frames.
67. Resources are good overall. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies has resulted in a very good supply of resources. In art and physical education, new resources have been added and make a good contribution to learning. In information technology, resources are improving. New computers and software have been purchased. The library contains a very wide selection of appropriate books. Some have been purchased through donations by parents and a local bank. Resources for science have been developed satisfactorily since the last inspection. However,

resources for religious education are poor.

68. Resources are also enhanced by the use of a wide variety of external venues, including local museums, the leisure centre, swimming pools, theatres and visits to local schools.

75. **The efficiency of the school**

69. This is an efficient school which prudently makes very good use of all available resources to achieve the best educational outcomes for all of its pupils and students. The governing body is very involved in the life of the school, fully understands its responsibilities for oversight of financial management and is effectively involved in all planning, budget setting and the monitoring of expenditure.
70. The staff and governors work together to develop the school development plan which is becoming an increasingly effective tool, underpinning all aspects of the school. Needs are audited, plans are prioritised and costed, and success criteria are identified.
71. Very effective use is made of all staff, accommodation and learning resources in order to create a positive learning environment in which most pupils and students are able to make good progress. Staff are particularly effectively deployed to ensure the development of communication skills, the literacy strategy and numeracy strategy.
72. There are very efficient financial controls and the school's efficient secretary ensures the smooth running of day-to-day organisation. Administration gives positive support to the main purposes of the school ensuring that teachers are free to focus on their work with the pupils and students. School accounts and school fund are regularly audited and recommendations implemented promptly, reflecting the school's positive attitude to the efficient running of the school. The day-to-day administration by a hard working and able secretary is very efficient, and financial procedures and practices are effective and contribute significantly to a well-ordered school. Very efficient use is made of specific grants, voluntary funds and community resources in order to enrich the curriculum experiences of the pupils and students.
73. Staff have clear roles, current job descriptions and delegated responsibilities. Teaching staff are deployed well, and the use and deployment of support staff are particularly good. The teamwork between teachers and support staff is a strength of the school and supports the progress of the pupils and students. The school makes very good use of its accommodation. Resources, which have been improved, are now generally good across the curriculum, with the exception of religious education which lacks resources and artefacts. They cover all areas of the curriculum, are generally good in range, quantity and quality, and are well used and maintained. The school has achieved much in improving its facilities, resources and curriculum it offers its pupils, reflected in the high educational standards achieved by the pupils and students.
74. The school successfully achieves its stated aims and provides a facility much valued by parents, pupils and students.
75. Many pupils and students enter the school with significant and complex learning difficulties, severe medical difficulties and undeveloped social skills. The quality of teaching is predominantly good, and as a result pupils and students make good progress. The good leadership and management ensure prudent and efficient financial management in spite of relatively low unit costs. The school gives good value for money.

82.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **82. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **82. English**

76. Progress in English is good throughout the school in all key stages, and for students in Post-16 education. There is an improvement on the last inspection throughout the school in speaking and listening, in reading, and in writing.
77. Many pupils enter the school with severe and complex learning difficulties. Individual educational plans are prepared for each pupil, which address physical, emotional, academic, and social needs. A minority of pupils enter the school in class one where specialist equipment is available, whilst other pupils move into other classes throughout the school.
78. Progress in speaking and listening is good in Key Stage 1, 2, 4 and at Post-16 education. Progress in Key Stage 3 is very good. By the end of Key Stage 1, speaking and listening skills are varied. Higher attaining pupils listen to a story with interest and speak with adults and friends about their experiences. These pupils can listen to instructions and ask questions. Other pupils in this key stage make good progress in communication by focusing on an object, picture, or person. They use facial expression, press a button or switch to show their understanding of the spoken word, for example when rustling paper or when touching sticks, straw, or bricks belonging to the “Three Little Pigs”. Good progress is maintained in Key Stage 2. Pupils respond to their name, take turns, and are beginning to use more specific vocabulary in their sentences. They listen to a set of two or three instructions, and complete the task in the correct order. Progress in Key Stage 3 is very good. Although some pupils lack confidence in this key stage, most are willing to participate speaking to adults. Most will talk about their reading books, and some are expressing preferences about characters or pictures. In this key stage, many pupils make very good progress in developing good listening skills and a comprehensive vocabulary. During the inspection, very good progress was observed by a group of pupils in class 2. They read the book “Little Cloud” by Eric Carle, and then discussed their favourite part of the story using good, specific vocabulary or using accurate signing to explain their ideas. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 make good progress. They listen to a set of instructions, undertake messages around the school building, and demonstrate a growing maturity in maintaining a conversation. Good links are now being made supporting their progress in all areas of language development. For example, in word development work they use their knowledge of initial letters to identify new vocabulary, understanding meanings better by looking in a dictionary.
79. For students in Post-16 education communication skills are extended in their life skills classes, whilst using a telephone, or shopping in the local supermarket. Most of these students now recognise their first name and those of their friends; some also give details of their surname and address. Higher attaining students are demonstrating good attainment in use of descriptive vocabulary, such as “spicy, nutty, sour, or salty”, when describing Chinese food during a Chinese meal tasting session in class.
80. Progress in reading is good overall. All pupils enjoy poems, songs, and action rhymes. Some pupils learn to anticipate rhymes and associate activities, whilst others will determine rhyming words in favourite poems. In Key Stage 1, higher attaining pupils are making good progress with early reading skills, choosing words by their initial letters and building up a small vocabulary of key words. These pupils know how to use a book and understand book vocabulary, such as author, spine, and cover. Pupils with more complex needs use computer programmes and operate a switch to move a picture. At Key Stage 2, pupils consolidate their understanding of the purposes of print by listening and reading stories together, following the text of the book. By the end of Key Stage 3, some pupils know a number of phonic blends which come at the beginning and end of words and can give their own examples. Other pupils can match words and pictures and can

dictate a sentence using these words. They use letter sounds effectively to predict unknown words. Some pupils use punctuation to help them read. They read simple stories. Progress through the reading scheme is greater in this key stage. Throughout Key Stage 4, pupils maintain good progress, and by the end of the key stage are reading a wider selection of books. Higher attaining pupils choose books independently and have good recall of favourite stories.

81. Students in Post-16 education are developing their reading skills for use in reading everyday signs and symbols which are around them in their own environment. Visits into the local community have been used to good effect to recognise signs which warn, or advise. Following a visit to Chinatown in Newcastle, students have learnt that recording can be presented in different forms for different audiences, perhaps as a menu in a restaurant, or as a tabulated list of ingredients in a supermarket.

82. Progress in writing is good overall. Early writing skills are being acquired with some pupils able to trace letters with their fingers. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 are able to write sentences with help or add a phrase of their own to a given opening, such as "The spider has eight legs", adding "and a web". These pupils copy from the teacher's script. Other pupils make marks or signify by pointing to identify their needs. At Key Stage 2, progress in writing remains good. They hold a pencil correctly. Some write single letters and copy words. Others make marks, which resemble letters. Particularly popular is the word processor to spell words or learn phonic sounds. By the end of Key Stage 3, very good progress has been achieved. Many pupils are able to write a sentence and some construct several sentences using dictionaries to aid their skill in spelling. Lower attaining pupils make shopping lists using pictures and word symbols, before making pizza or angel delight in a food technology lesson. By the end of Key Stage 4, good progress has been maintained. Pupils write simple sentences, a few using a joined script. Spellings and punctuation are becoming more accurate. Other pupils make good gains in simple sentence construction and word building.

83. Students in Post-16 education make good progress. These students have produced a trail around Barndale School with written instructions and directions. Other pupils use varied vocabulary to create their own menu.

84. Pupils throughout the school have good attitudes to learning and enjoy English lessons. They concentrate particularly well, co-operate consistently together, and are developing greater independence in organising their own work. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils applaud and appreciate the achievements of their peers. By Key Stage 4, pupils are able to settle to their work promptly, work at a reasonable pace, and try hard to improve their own standard of work. Pupils show interest in their topic work and ignore distractions in order to achieve their own targets.

85. Teaching is good in over 90 per cent of lessons, with some very good and excellent teaching in 40 per cent of lessons. This good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' progress. All lessons are planned well and have a clear purpose. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils' potential for each lesson. All staff, including support assistants, have a good understanding of the National Literacy Strategy, and use the process effectively to give structure to literacy lessons. Suitable support is provided for pupils with additional special educational needs. Tasks are separated into small achievable targets in all lessons, in line with the recommendations of the individual educational plans of all pupils. Very good assessment takes place during and following lessons to record progress and to ensure each lesson stimulates pupils by providing a suitable challenge. There is a very good emphasis on the development of independent learning skills. Whenever possible, pupils are encouraged to organise their own resources.

86. The English curriculum is very well led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. The scheme of work is well planned, meets statutory requirements, and enables pupils to experience a wide range of literacy opportunities. Planning and assessment are a particular strength of the subject. Recording is thorough. The curriculum is enhanced by the introduction of new reading material in the library. Resources are plentiful with a good supply of books in all classrooms and common areas of the school. Visits to the local theatre and cinema provide good additional impact to favourite stories, such as “Pinocchio”, or “The Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe”. There is good evidence of the increasing use of information technology in the curriculum to support reading and writing. English has a positive impact on the social, moral and cultural development of pupils and students.

93. **Mathematics**

87. Pupils and students have improved their progress in mathematics since the last inspection. Progress is now good across all key stages and at Post-16.

88. At Key Stage 1, low attaining pupils, many on cocktails of medication and complex learning difficulties, indicate choice from two flat objects. This is sometimes by body language, eye contact, eye pointing or by hand. They push shapes into play dough and then try to guess which shape made the impression in the dough. They feel round the perimeter of shapes in an attempt to identify the shape, occasionally verbalising with one word or an utterance. They use triangles, squares, circles and rectangles. They print patterns with sponge shapes reinforcing their knowledge of shape. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils successfully use large switches, fitted with squares, circles, triangles and rectangles, which they can feel, to activate lights, fans and music. They continue to print patterns using a variety of materials and shapes.

89. By the end of Key Stage 3, lower attaining pupils match and name colours, sequence colours and make repeating patterns with colour beads and stickers. Using two-dimensional shapes they plan and build houses. Higher attaining pupils repeat patterns and predict and name next in sequence. They count up to 20, and identify attributes of shapes, such as big, small, thick and thin.

90. By the end of Key Stage 4, lower attaining pupils identify coins, and add up to ten. Higher attaining pupils take part in mental arithmetic, using hundreds, tens and units, adding and subtracting. They can add money, and work out prices of items in the class shop. Some estimate prices and work out bills for the food they buy in a local supermarket for food technology and personal, social and health education.

91. At Post-16, lower attaining students match, sort and name colours, thread beads in sequence, follow patterns, and count spoonfuls of tea and sugar into pots when making tea for each other. Higher attaining students count to 20, count on and count back, identify and name shapes, both two-dimensional and three-dimensional. They identify their properties, such as corners, faces, and sides. They give good examples of practical uses for shapes, such as cones for ice creams, cuboids for cartons, die or dice for games using cubes, spheres when playing snooker or pool, and good use of triangular prisms when eating Toblerone. They are good at recording their results of their work and interpret data they collect. They use mathematical language well. Students follow a realistic programme using their number skills to prepare for life and make good progress. Their money skills increase and they carry out practical shopping in the local super market. They use time well, and some can tell the time on the hour. They pursue the Award Scheme Development & Accreditation Network award (ASDAN), Independent Living Skills: Mathematics, and appropriate certificates from Northumberland Units of Accreditation: Mathematics.

92. Pupils’ and students’ attitudes to mathematics are very good. They are very well-behaved. They are interested in their work, co-operate well with staff and work in a constructive and positive manner. They respond well to praise and encouragement, and try hard at all times to please. They

take great pride in their work and are quick to show their work and explain to visitors what they are doing. They relate to staff and each other very well.

93. The quality of teaching across the school has improved since the last inspection and is good overall, and often very good. Five out of thirteen lessons were very good, seven good and one satisfactory. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. In the best lessons, there are high expectations of pupils' and students' work and behaviour. Pupils and students are challenged. Planning is good, extra support is targeted at those with most need. Work is well matched to each pupil and student. There is brisk pace, changes of activities are well timed, good questioning and answer techniques are employed, drawing the best out of the pupils. Teamwork between support staff and teachers is very good, enhancing the progress pupils and students make. Frequently in lessons, support staff have to intervene very quickly where pupils have extreme medical problems. This is done extremely well. The teaching continues and pupils ignore the medical crisis, concentrating on their work.
94. Mathematics is well led. The co-ordinator is introducing the numeracy strategy effectively. Her enthusiasm is having a positive effect on the organisation of mathematics across the school. It is in the early stages of implementation, but pupils are very keen and work hard. Mental arithmetic is working particularly effectively, challenging the higher attaining pupils and students. Most pupils and students find this aspect of number fun and progress well. Pupils' and students' mathematical achievements are effectively reported to parents in pupils' and students' annual reviews which also act as annual reports.
95. Learning resources for mathematics are good across all key stages and at Post-16. Many resources are made in-house by teachers to suit individual needs and enhance pupils' and students' progress. They are very effective and many pupils and students enjoy working with particular resources. Computer programmes are used effectively across the school. Many higher attaining pupils can work independently on the number programmes. Lower attaining pupils, show great pleasure when supported and helped to use switches and information technology programmes.
96. The mathematics curriculum for the school is good. There is a clear policy stating aims and helpful notes on the processes involved in teaching mathematics. Assessment is good and is used well to inform future planning. There are very helpful activity sheets explaining the context, activity, what to do, outcomes and resources required. The outcomes are coded, allowing the teachers to make detailed recording effectively and efficiently. Homework is given appropriately, when and where pupils and students can benefit. Home-school books are used well to inform parents of the work their children are undertaking, and could perhaps continue at home. Mathematics has a very positive influence on the social, moral and cultural development of pupils and students across the school.

### 103. **Science**

97. Pupils make good progress throughout all key stages. Pupils' investigative skills begin to develop at an early stage and during Key Stage 1 they make good progress in investigating the properties of materials. They handle different materials including wood straw and plastic. Some pupils observe and some participate in the construction of model houses from these materials. Those observing make good progress through eye contact and vocal responses. One pupil experiments with strips of adhesive tape as a method for binding straw together to strengthen it. The same pupil suggests an electric fan as a method for testing the relative strengths of the model houses. Pupils observe the effect of first the fan, and then a hair dryer, when held close to the models and recognise the effect of one compared with the other. They rub crayon, soap and candle wax on fabric to find out which treatments make it waterproof.
98. During Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in investigation and recording results. They conduct surveys of favourite foods. They add hot and cold water to different powders and record

the changes. They describe different fruits by feel, taste and smell and experiment to find the juiciest by squeezing each fruit and measuring the juice extracted. They illustrate different sources of light and observe and record the effect of light shining on different materials. They record what can be heard. In their study of plants, they use appropriate terminology to identify flower, leaf, stem and root. They know that a plant needs water, warmth and light. They extend their vocabulary by correctly using terms including fast, heavy, and hard. They find and list objects made from different materials including wood, clay, metal and plastic. In their study of animals they look at models and distinguish between old and young. They identify what is necessary for a pet to have a healthy life.

99. During Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils increasingly display breadth in their attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3, they know about life cycles in their study of living things. They count and record the number of seeds in different fruits including oranges, apples and tomatoes. They record the different ways in which seeds are dispersed. Some pupils place in order seed, plant, flower and fruit. They identify the changes that occur in the life cycle of a broad bean and other living things. Pupils look at pictures of different animals and match parents with their young. They look at pictures of humans and frogs at different stages of their life cycles and make good progress in ordering them in the correct sequence. Some pupils understand and use appropriate terminology including young, mature and reproduce. Some name correctly baby, toddler, child, teenager and adult, and frogspawn, tadpole and frog.
100. By the end of Key Stage 4, they make predictions and then compare the evidence with their predictions. They make circuits using battery, bulb, wire and switch. They conclude that not all materials act as an electrical conductor after testing string, wool and wire. They find different methods for separating solids from liquids. They mix solids and liquids together and draw conclusions about changes that occur. They find out about insulation by wrapping ice cubes in different materials, record the time taken for ice to melt, and draw conclusions about which materials are the best insulators. They record the hourly temperature of melting ice and compare the results with boiling water left to cool and with water from the cold tap.
101. Pupils' responses are good across all key stages and often very good. They retain concentration and remain on task during different lesson activities. A substantial majority of pupils show good concentration on individual activities when working alone or with staff support. They show enthusiasm and interest when handling resources. Some pupils show their interest through eye contact and others through volunteering answers during class discussion. There are some very good instances of individual pupils valuing the work of others. Pupils display good initiative in trying their best when responding to a question or suggestion. The standard of behaviour in lessons across all key stages is good and often very good.
102. Teaching is good overall with some very good and some excellent teaching across the key stages. Subject knowledge is good and lessons are well planned. Time is well used with lessons having an appropriately varied content. In the case of younger pupils, the most effective teaching is characterised by the very imaginative use of resources to stimulate interest, for example a wide variety of different materials being made available for pupils to investigate. Pupils' interest is further stimulated by the very good deployment of support staff to ensure that each individual has the closest possible involvement in lesson activities. The most effective teaching at different key stages is characterised by an excellent level of challenge which encourages responses from each individual. In some cases this challenge is in the form of being asked to recall previous knowledge gained with an emphasis on the use of correct terminology. In other cases, the challenge comes in the form of staff persevering with one-to-one support to achieve visual or vocal responses. Activities in such lessons have a high level of challenge appropriate to the needs of each pupil. Some pupils may be asked to sort or classify different resources into relevant categories whilst others are asked to respond visually to activities being demonstrated. In such examples, lesson activities are characterised by good progression with staff giving frequent feedback to individuals

to challenge them further. The use of high quality wall display materials during lesson introductions and plenary sessions is a further means of providing challenge, with pupils asked to identify points in displays using scientific terminology. The flexible use of support staff is another characteristic of the best teaching, with deployment being changed according to need as lessons progress. In all lessons, the management of pupils is good and often very good. In a small number of lessons, teaching is less effective, but still satisfactory, where a lively lesson introduction which stimulates interest and response is followed by time spent on individual activities which are repetitive.

103. Management of the subject is effective. There is long term planning of the curriculum with very good breadth and balance achieved. Full account is taken of the National Curriculum. Continuity and progression are very good with the development of investigation skills emphasised throughout. Resources for the subject are developing well. Assessment is very thorough. Science makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
104. Points from the last inspection have been addressed with a broader and more balanced curriculum developed and a wider range of resources available.

#### 111. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

##### 111. **Religious education**

105. Progress in religious education is unsatisfactory in all key stages and at Post-16 education, and does not meet the statutory requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. There has been no improvement in the teaching of religious education since the last inspection.
106. Religious education is delivered mostly through school assemblies with follow-up work in some lessons. However, religious education is not consistently timetabled, and pupils do not receive a curriculum which is appropriate for their age and ability.
107. Progress in religious education within assemblies is satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator works conscientiously to introduce the pupils to a range of stories from the Old and New Testaments and to share in some festivals of the Christian calendar. However, in an assembly where the curriculum needs of the pupils are varied and complex, the content and challenge within the subject coverage is not appropriate to the needs of the individual. Equally, opportunities to see book resources and artefacts are limited by the inappropriate accommodation for religious education assemblies.
108. Pupils' attitudes to religious education are satisfactory. They gain pleasure from the stories and are developing good attitudes of empathy, care, and concern towards each other and the natural world. The religious education which is provided makes a good impact on the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

##### **Information technology**

109. Long-term progress is satisfactory overall throughout the school, except that in Key Stages 1 and 2, progress is good for the lower attaining pupils who have additional special needs. Progress in lessons was satisfactory or better in all sessions observed during the inspection.
110. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the lower attaining pupils make good progress in basic skills, cause-effect and early sensory awareness. They are learning to operate a small range of single touch switches, concept keyboards and touch screens. These switches operate screen displays and sounds on the computers, or a tape player, air fan and bubble tube. This basic work continues satisfactorily through the school with pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The highest



attaining pupils in the lower part of the school, make patterns with shapes, make a graph with help, and use the pencil and brush tools on a drawing program. The highest attaining pupils enter their own name unaided, can choose which part of a program to go to next, and can use the arrow keys successfully.

111. Satisfactory progress continues to be made through all the key stages in a range of areas, such as using the computer mouse and keyboard to select, drag and drop screen items, to change screens, and to change options. Higher attaining pupils play simple games using one key or the mouse buttons, and enter their own name into a page. Some pupils enter a sentence using either a simple word processor or a symbol and text writer, with little assistance. Some produce simple pictures using the computers, and can look through some programs for information. Others use the computers to support their learning of number skills, or their word recognition and speaking skills.
112. In the Post-16 unit, students continue to learn satisfactorily, mainly through ASDAN Towards Independence units. They develop more consistent skills in using the keyboard and mouse. Some students enter personal details on a pre-prepared page, change the font and print size and colour, and use capital letters and spaces correctly. They use numbers in addition and subtraction activities on the computer. In graphics sessions, they bring in shapes from clip art programs, or create their own shapes and arrange and delete them. With some assistance, students start up the computer, find the correct programme, save their results, and print pages.
113. Pupils and students enjoy their computer sessions. Many are keen for their sessions to begin, and will concentrate for long periods. They co-operate with staff, and will work well alongside each other, taking turns well. They will queue for their turn in "choice" sessions, and enjoy extension activities and games when they have finished their other work. Some pupils and students will work alone at a computer, but they do not challenge themselves. If the adult attention is not frequent enough, then pupils are not stretched sufficiently in these sessions.
114. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Classroom assistants do much teaching with individual pupils or small groups of pupils. Information technology is not generally taught as a separate subject in itself through most of the school. In Post-16, there is more distinct teaching of information technology skills, but otherwise computers and the other equipment are used to develop general skills, communication skills, and to support some areas of the curriculum. Sessions tend to be short, and are mainly taken with an individual pupil or small group whilst the rest of the class is doing another activity. Although there is a good curriculum in place, this is not pursued with sufficient rigour to ensure good progress over the whole range of topics within information technology. When pupils are left to work on equipment without close supervision, the subject is usually relevant to the main theme of the lesson, but the effect is more to consolidate their mouse and keyboard skills rather than make any major gains in their knowledge and skills.
115. Other pupils who are supervised very carefully are challenged very highly. In one session, for instance, a pupil with a classroom assistant was identifying pictures of animals on the screen, and was well motivated to state clearly what the animals were, and what sounds they made. This was very good teaching of this particular pupil, and very good progress on his part; it was an excellent use of the program and the equipment.
116. Sessions are generally planned soundly, with specific aims in mind, and the equipment is used well in trying to achieve those aims. Teachers and assistants know their pupils and students well. They have satisfactory knowledge of the subject and the equipment, including some very recent machines and software. Staff give good feedback to pupils as they are working, and manage them well. The work is soundly supported at home in general ways of awareness and control, and sometimes by the specific use of home computers.
117. The curriculum is good. It ensures that teachers can plan for steady learning through the school. It

begins with an integrated scheme of early skills and awareness, and develops into a newly introduced scheme that is adapted from an official scheme of work. It continues into a unit from the ASDAN programme for Post-16 students. One older student has a college link that involves lessons in information technology. Assessment is carried out well on the whole, often with written observations at the end of a session. These comments can sometimes be vague or involve too much about pupils' enjoyment, rather than how well they progressed. Pupils and staff will sometimes fill in an end of lesson chart together to evaluate progress. There are also checklists connected with the different modules of the official scheme of work, and these are taking over from the previous system that has also been good.

118. The subject co-ordinator has a clear view of the subject, including recent and pending developments such as the purchase of new computers, software and additional equipment, and the in-school training to go with it. Curriculum developments are supported well, and the long term planning is now good. Staff tend to have good knowledge of how to use the equipment, from the sensory room to the new computers. The resources are satisfactory at the moment, and will be good when the new equipment and software arrives and is put into use. Good use is made of the accommodation, with several computers being well positioned to reduce distraction from other pupils in the room. Some old machines are still in use, and are used well, particularly with very basic skills development and early learning programs. Information technology makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Art**

119. Art is a strength in the school. Since the last inspection good improvements in the assessing and recording of pupils' work have been made. The department continues to make a significant contribution to the very good ethos of the school by means of the well-produced displays of pupils' and students' work around the teaching areas.
120. Pupils across all key stages and Post-16 students make very good progress. At Key Stages 1 and 2, some pupils describe concepts of consistency and show how to thin and thicken paint. They cut out shapes and make simple collages. They make simple printing effects with sponges. At Key Stages 3 and 4 and Post-16, pupils and students are able to draw objects from still life and describe textures and colours accurately. They work in a variety of media such as water colour, ceramics, photography and printing. Scrutiny of their portfolios shows that many make very good progress over time.
121. The majority of pupils respond very well in lessons. Many clearly enjoy creating and completing work and having it displayed around the school. In a mixed Key Stage 4 and Post-16 class, they work collaboratively on a large painting. They listen to the teacher, concentrate well and enjoy the relaxed but productive atmosphere in the classroom. The pupils' cultural development and understanding of different types of art are supported by the wide variety of visual experiences in the lessons.
122. Teaching is very good across all key stages. Eight out of ten lessons are very good, two out of ten are excellent. The quality of teaching shows very good knowledge of the subject and the needs of the pupils and students. Expectations are high and pupils are introduced to a variety of artistic styles and media such as impressionism, cubism in painting as well as photography and ceramics. Many examples of paintings and artefacts are brought in by the teachers to support the pupils' learning. Lessons are very well planned, both for the short and long term, to ensure pupils make progress. Teaching challenges and stretches the pupils.
123. The curriculum is good and follows programmes of study in the national curriculum. A wide variety of techniques are successfully used in the classroom. The Department has a kiln and pupils' work can be fired, glazed and displayed. The external curriculum is used very well. Pupils have access to galleries and museums. Artists, sculptors and local craftsmen visit the school and

pupils have had their work displayed locally. Art makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

130.

130. **Design technology**

131. The progress that pupils and students make is satisfactory overall. It is good in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, and satisfactory through the rest of the school. Pupils in the lower part of the school are progressing well in using different materials, considering why they are using them in different ways, and looking at the finished products to see how suitable they are for the intended purposes. A recent project on "The Three Little Pigs" was a very good cross-curricular project with science and geography, and it helped in developing pupils' skills with scissors, brushes and glue spreaders, as well as encouraging their designing skills. In the rest of the school, the design element of the subject is not being taught as well as the making side. Pupils are not satisfactorily learning to think in advance about why they are doing things in a particular way, or how they might be different. The subject is much more focused on the art aspects of the finished product, rather than the process of how and why a thing is made how it is. Pupils are learning satisfactory skills in using the tools of design and technology, including some limited use of building and construction kits.

124. Pupils and students enjoy their work in this subject, especially in the lower school, where they responded very positively to the lesson presentations and the close support given by staff. Throughout the school, pupils and students are attentive and remain on task well. They relate to each other well and will work together well.

125. Design and technology was only taught in Key Stages 1 and 2 during the inspection, designing houses for the three little pigs. Teaching was very good, with very imaginative use of a good range of resources, with pupils being very well guided and encouraged by the teacher and other classroom staff. The planning and preparation were very good, and staff took every opportunity to encourage pupils to choose for themselves, and to manipulate tools and materials themselves. It is not possible to comment on the teaching in the rest of the school, other than from discussions and from the records and samples provided. It is clear from these that there have been at least two recent projects in which pupils and students have been making design decisions in a very positive way. There are satisfactory links with the home in supporting this subject, particularly in Key Stages 1 and 2.

126. In general, the subject is satisfactorily led, with a policy, curriculum and scheme of assessment in place. The subject co-ordinator is currently revising these. Staff are soundly deployed, and the use made of classroom assistants is very good. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory, although the resources are limited in range and actual use. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural welfare through working together, knowing the rules of working and handling tools, and visiting museums and other places of technological interest.

134. **French**

127. Pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 are taught together in the same class. In another class, older Key Stage 3 pupils and Key Stage 4 pupils are taught together. Progress in French across all three key stages is satisfactory. During Key Stages 2 and 3, pupils greet each other and staff, say the day and date. They identify and name items of clothing, and take part in practical games that enhance their vocabulary. During these games, they count up to ten. During Key Stage 4, pupils continue to increase their vocabulary, describe the weather, the seasons, birthdays and anniversaries. They hold birthday parties, give their age, count the candles, and have a French café where they act out the roles of customer and waiter, read the menus and express their likes and dislikes about food and drink.

128. Pupils show enjoyment in their lessons, respond with enthusiasm, concentrate well, and persevere to complete tasks. They behave well and are quick to celebrate their own and others' successes, occasionally breaking into spontaneous applause at others' success. They take some responsibility for their own learning, timing each other in games, and recording class results.
129. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are effectively planned, resources are well-organised, appropriate to the pupils' need, easily accessible and well used. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, whatever their disability. Pupils are well managed. Pace is brisk, and there are well-timed changes of activities. Support staff are well used, targeting pupils with most need, and frequently dealing very effectively with pupils with more severe medical needs during lessons. Good links are made with other National Curriculum subjects, such as literacy skills of speaking and listening, numeracy skills of counting and recording, and using tape recorders and timers. A positive atmosphere was set in lessons by playing traditional French music in the background, much appreciated by the pupils.
130. Pupils are maintaining their progress since the last report. French makes a positive contribution to the pupils' social, moral and cultural development.
138. **Humanities**
131. Progress is good throughout all key stages.
132. During Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in developing an awareness of features of the environment. They explore different materials to find clothing suitable for hot and cold weather. One pupil describes a journey. They look at a map showing buried treasure and one pupil draws a cave and rocks on the map. One pupil draws around a plastic brick representing a house to transfer its shape on to a map. Pupils study forests by looking at objects made from wood and listening to forest sounds including birds and rustling leaves. One pupil operates a switch to create forest sounds. Pupils experience a hot climate with bright lights in the sensory area of the classroom and they look at pictures of people in hot countries.
133. During Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, pupils make good progress overall in developing their geographical and historical knowledge and understanding. They make better progress in developing enquiry and investigation skills in geography than in history.
134. During Key Stages 2 and 3, pupils make good progress in gaining knowledge about their own environment and about past societies. They record what they see, hear, touch and do at different stops along a trail. They use a grid to locate items in a room and to put together a treasure map cut into nine squares. They follow a route maze between home and school. They name features in the local area including telephone box, road sign, bus stop and post box. They look at local buildings and link them with particular occupations. They give reasons why people live in the local area. They locate on a map the different parts of the United Kingdom and match national flags to countries. They compare houses in different parts of the world. They write about African recipes and animal life. They make comparisons over time in looking at the life of the Romans in Britain. They compare and contrast modern furniture with furniture used by the Romans. They describe and illustrate court life in Tudor times and life in the countryside and in the towns. They develop their understanding of harsh living conditions in past times; they describe and illustrate a sailor's life on board ship in Tudor times and life during the great plague. They gain a good understanding of ancient Greek society; they dress in costume, sample food, weave cloth, act in scenes from stories about the gods and make theatre masks.
135. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils identify characteristic features in different environments including seaside and town. They identify physical and human features of different environments. They draw and assist with making models of mountains, hills, lakes, waterfalls and rivers. They trace the stages of a river in the classroom and as part of fieldwork investigation; they draw the

stages of a river and use appropriate terminology in labelling their diagrams, including meander and estuary. They also draw and label the features of coastlines including beach, cliff, stack and cave. In fieldwork studies of the local area they carry out shopping and traffic surveys, and record their results in bar charts. In their study of life in medieval England, they draw and illustrate people with different places in society including monk, knight, bishop, blacksmith and jester. They sort pictures of features of life before and after the industrial revolution into two groups, and make good progress in developing an understanding of the changes that occurred. Some pupils are able to make links, for example, between a picture of a steamship and a picture of a coal barge. They make historical documents using materials including quill, ribbon and sealing wax. They describe and illustrate the trading links between different countries in their study of the slave trade. They show these links on a world map and make a display of the different commodities traded.

136. Pupils' attitudes towards learning and responses are very good. Pupils display very good concentration when listening to a talk from a visiting speaker, and they are eager to participate in activities connected with the talk. Some pupils show very good initiative in working independently to sort and classify picture resources. Relationships in lessons are very good with pupils highly motivated and fully engaged in lesson activities to the maximum of their individual potential.
137. Teaching is good overall and often very good across the key stages. Lessons are well planned and well resourced. Support staff are always effectively deployed. Teaching and support staff assess pupils' work thoroughly during lessons and give a high degree of feedback and encouragement. Pupil management is very good. The teaching of the youngest pupils is always good with an activity-based approach well matched to needs, and with an emphasis on developing skills at an early age. A characteristic feature of the most effective teaching at all key stages is a high level of challenge in lessons for all pupils, with time well used to produce a challenging pace to different activities. In a small number of lessons at Key Stages 2 and 3, the high level of challenge in lesson introductions is not consolidated when activities for individuals do not give sufficient opportunities for progression. Subject knowledge is secure to ensure good progress across the key stages in acquiring geographical and historical knowledge and understanding. Teaching methods used result in pupils having good opportunities to develop their geographical enquiry skills, but there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop historical enquiry skills.
138. The curriculum is broad and balanced and well planned. The integrated approach used for younger pupils is appropriate and effective in providing a good foundation for further study. Assessment is thorough and leadership is effective, with a strong emphasis on monitoring and evaluation to ensure that curriculum opportunities enable pupils to make good progress. The local area is well used as a natural resource to develop pupils' geographical and historical understanding. The high quality resources used are effective in stimulating interest and consolidating learning. Humanities makes a good contribution to pupils and students spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
139. Since the last inspection the overall standard of teaching has improved and curriculum planning issues have been addressed to take full account of National Curriculum programmes of study.

147. **Music**

140. Since the previous inspection the arrangements for assessment and reporting in music have been strengthened. New instruments have been purchased. There is still no qualified teacher of music or instrumentalist on the staff and consequently music does not play as significant a role in supporting the ethos of the school as it could.
141. Progress for pupils in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 is satisfactory. Some Key Stage 1 pupils can remember the words of nursery rhymes and join in action songs. A few can keep time with simple percussion instruments, such as bells and tambourines. Pupils with more profound and complex

difficulties make eye contact with staff and indicate awareness of the sounds. No teaching was observed in Key Stage 4 or Post-16 lessons but pupils and students in residence listen to popular music in the evenings. They make choices and discuss their favourite groups with each other. Classical music is used effectively for pupils who benefit from periods of relaxation and calming.

142. Most pupils show a good response in music lessons and assemblies. They particularly enjoy singing in a large group. Some are keen to perform in front of other pupils and staff. They volunteer to play instruments and co-operate with each other in singing games. Some pupils with most profound difficulties communicate their pleasure from the rhythms of the music through eye contact and simple movements.
143. Teaching is satisfactory in all of the few lessons seen. Planning is good, as is the teacher's understanding of the needs of the pupils. There is little opportunity for instrumental work and the teacher relies mostly on recorded music. Although resources are good, they are not fully used because of the lack of practical expertise.

144. The music curriculum is enhanced by visits to theatres, concerts and performances at local schools. A Norwegian band visits annually and students from the local college support some lessons. There is a production at Christmas for the whole school. Pupils and students in the residential block have good access to music centres and a variety of tapes and discs. Music makes good contribution to the development of pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

**Personal, social and health education (PSHE)**

145. Pupils make very good progress throughout the school in a very wide range of skills. From the earliest years to the end of Post-16, pupils are actively learning to care for themselves. Lower attaining pupils and students learn to make choices; to communicate and relate to other people; and to explore their environments. Others learn to wash their hands and clean their teeth; to bath and to shower; to consider their appearance and how appropriate their clothing is for different occasions and weather conditions. They undertake regular visits to the town with an escort, crossing roads safely, finding their way to a supermarket and different shops. They select their needs from their shopping list, and learn how to behave well in public. They learn to prepare and cook the ingredients they have chosen and bought, and will eat their meals with a friend they have invited to join them. In each individual lesson, the progress is at least satisfactory, and is often good. However, the whole provision is so wide-ranging, consistent, well-planned and well-supported, that this builds up to being very good progress overall. Together with very good liaison between the day and residential staffs, this subject is a strength of the school.
146. Pupils and students respond well in these sessions, and are frequently very positive and sensible in their attitudes and behaviour. They are keen to do well, but treat the sessions very seriously, and concentrate on doing as well as they can.
147. The teaching ranges between satisfactory and excellent. Overall, it is good through the four key stages, and is very good in Post-16, where the ASDAN units give an extra boost to lessons. Lessons may vary from the whole class washing their hands and cleaning their teeth for ten minutes at the start of the afternoon, to an individual pupil spending the whole morning with a supporting adult going on a shopping expedition, and preparing their midday meal. Other lessons have focused on the role of the family and friends, and these have been very well taught. Whether taken by a teacher or a supporting adult, lessons are well planned and prepared for. Staff have high expectations for pupils' and students' involvement, effort and independence; they are well organised, and manage the young people well. Resources are used well, from the local shops and community to the worksheets and photographs in the classrooms, and the well-equipped kitchen areas. Staff give good verbal feedback – encouragement and guidance - to pupils and students during lessons, and the work continues soundly at home.
148. This subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They will learn about, for example, family values within their own culture, inviting each other to dine with them at midday, learning to get on in the wider community, and how to behave towards each other and to members of the public.
149. The curriculum is very broad and very well balanced. The independence and health-related training are very well structured, particularly in Post-16. Pupils leave the school very well prepared for later life. The subject is overseen by the headteacher, who has a very clear view of the subject, and who guides and supports its planning and development very well. There was a major revision of the curriculum earlier this year, resulting in the present very good provision in both the day school and in the residences. Staff are very well qualified, experienced and very capable. The teaching support staff, particularly, are very well employed in these situations.

## Physical education (PE)

150. Since the last inspection pupils continue to make good progress in PE. In relation to their abilities, standards of attainment for some pupils are high, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching continues to be good, and occasionally very good, across all key stages.
151. Pupils make good progress at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, and very good progress at Key Stage 4. They acquire skills which improve their performance and fitness. By the end of one lesson some Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils had successfully improved on previous best performances by increasing their laps around the sports hall. They progress in confidence. One Key Stage 2 boy with profound difficulties enjoys splashing and playing in the small swimming pool. By the time pupils leave, it is expected that all students who are physically able will be able to swim.
152. The response of pupils to PE is very good. Pupils enjoy sessions in the pool and visits to the sports hall. They react well to the teaching staff, listen carefully to instructions and co-operate with each other. Older pupils are aware of safety issues, help with the equipment and support other pupils who are less physically able. In team games they are unselfish and praise each other's success. PE makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development.
153. Teaching is good at Key Stages 1 and 2, and very good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Six out of ten lessons are good, four out of ten are very good. Expectations of pupils' potential are high. The teacher emphasises fitness as a priority, as well as building on pupils' skills. Lessons are planned for progression, from warm-up to stamina exercises. A variety of games, exercises and dance is organised, which is well adapted for all. Planning is very good and often incorporates an awareness of the pupils' physiotherapy requirements.
154. PE is well led. The curriculum is enriched by the use of a variety of external resources. Pupils and students benefit from the access to local coaching in a range of sports. Those in residence have membership to the local gym. Outward Bound activities are regularly used and residential experiences organised in the Lake District. Not all pupils can access these resources regularly because the minibus is not equipped to take non-ambulant pupils. Assessment and recording of pupils' and students' attainment are good. A variety of award schemes and certification is used. The use of the local sports hall and swimming pool helps the social, moral and cultural development of the pupils and increases their links with the community.
155. Pupils are encouraged to continue their sporting activities after school through a variety of clubs and organisations such as the Scouts and Guides and local gym.

163.

### Residential Provision

163.

156. The residential facilities are good overall and appropriate for the complex range of pupils and students currently in residence. Although the school has been unable to address the issue of access for non-ambulant pupils to the upper floor of the building. The quality of care and opportunities for personal development for those who can access the building are good. Since the previous inspection the unit has been redecorated and rewired. The commitment and expertise of staff remain very high, although there is still an over-representation of female staff.
157. The residential unit is well led by the acting head of care. Good systems of planning, assessment and recording have been developed. Pupils' and students' personal development is significantly improved by the improved liaison between the residential staff and that of the school. Care plans are detailed and include aspects of behaviour management and social development, as well as physical care. Arrangements for the medication process are very good. Liaison between parents and staff are good. Termly reviews detailing activities ensure that parents are fully informed of all aspects of their children's residential experiences. Residential and school staff are involved together in all annual reviews. Good links are maintained with a variety of agencies to ensure the



well-being of all pupils, especially those with the most profound and complex difficulties.

166. Staff have detailed knowledge of the needs of all the pupils and students in their care. The ethos in the residential unit is good. The issue of privacy raised in the previous inspection has been addressed and some rooms have been partitioned off to provide discreet areas. Pupils and students are encouraged to bring in favourite toys and posters from home. They have access to individual radios and disc players. Good use is made of a range of external activities. Pupils and students belong to the local scouts and guides, they attend sporting and youth clubs and make visits to the town in the evenings. Older residents are beginning to contribute to making decisions about activities they would like to be involved in and choices of menus. Emphasis is placed on encouraging all pupils and students to develop independent living skills. They are encouraged to make drinks, keep their rooms tidy and manage their pocket money.

166.

166. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

166. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

158. The inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors and one lay inspector. The inspection took place between Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> October and Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999. Over 50 hours were spent in classroom observations, and 90 lessons or part of lessons were seen. All classes and teachers were observed.
159. Assemblies and collective worship sessions were observed. Registrations, play times and lunch-time arrangements were observed. Pupils were accompanied on educational visits, a local sports centre, swimming baths and an evening youth club. One pupil was accompanied to a local first school for an integration session. Arrivals and departures were observed daily. Time was spent in the residential unit before school, and after school. Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, teaching staff, classroom support staff, acting head of care, care staff, pupils, governors, parents, lunch time supervisors, the caretaker, the cook and the school secretary. A sample of pupils were heard reading and others were observed during reading activities.
160. Documentation provided by the school was scrutinized before and during the inspection, a substantial sample of teachers' and pupils' records were examined. Displays throughout the school in classrooms, the big lounge, dining hall, residential unit, bedrooms, and corridors were scrutinized. Views of parents were sought through a questionnaire and 21 out 36 (58.3 per cent) returns were analysed and proved to be very supportive of the school.

## 170. DATA AND INDICATORS

### 170. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
R – Year 13	35	35	35	3

### 170. Teachers and classes

#### 170. Qualified teachers (R – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	5.8

#### 170. Education support staff (R - Y13)

Total number of education support staff:	15
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	322

### 170. Financial data

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	472946
Total Expenditure	474325
Expenditure per pupil	13175
Balance brought forward from previous year	6274
Balance carried forward to next year	4895

170. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:	35
Number of questionnaires returned:	21

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	37	47	11	5	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	75	25	0	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	47	47	5	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	35	60	0	5	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	60	30	10	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	65	35	0	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	70	30	0	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	41	35	24	0	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	89	11	0	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	79	21	0	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	84	16	0	0	0

170. **Other issues raised by parents**

Eighteen parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. There was a very positive atmosphere. Parents were very supportive of the school, the staff and the work they did for their children. No negative issues were raised. Of 35 questionnaires sent out to parents, 21 were returned and were very appreciative of the work of the school.