

INSPECTION REPORT

LONSDALE SCHOOL

Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117679

Headteacher: Philippa Clark

Reporting inspector: Rosemary Eaton
15173

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th June 2000

Inspection number: 187561

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community special
School category:	Physical disability and neurological impairment
Age range of pupils:	3 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Webb Rise Stevenage Herts
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Anita Newman
Date of previous inspection:	18 th March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; community links; care; partnership with parents
Ivor Evenden	Team inspector	Information and communications technology; geography; French; music	
Margaret Hart	Team inspector	Under-fives; English	Curriculum (learning opportunities)
Helen Jones	Team inspector	Science; religious education; personal, social and health education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; assessment
Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	Mathematics; design and technology; special educational needs	Efficiency
Clive Tombs	Team inspector	History; physical education; post-16	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lonsdale is a community special school for pupils with physical disabilities or neurological impairment. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainment, but most are well below average. Currently, 76 pupils attend the school, including six children under five and nine post-16 students. At present, the under-fives attend during mornings only, although older children can work with the Year 1 class on one or more afternoons. The school has residential facilities – pupils aged ten or over are eligible to stay for two nights each week, and most do so. A small number are weekly residents. Approximately 22 pupils stay each night, from Monday to Friday – 45 in all. Pupils attend the school from all parts of Hertfordshire and a few are from neighbouring authorities. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Only one pupil is from a minority ethnic background and none have English as an additional language. Two pupils are from traveller families.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Lonsdale is a good school. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. The quality of teaching is good and the school is very well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in their work. Children under five make very good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are all very good. They are consistently encouraged to be independent, in lessons and in the residential setting.
- Teaching is good. One strength is the way in which teachers and support staff work well together.
- The school is very well led and managed – the headteacher provides a very clear educational direction.
- The school cares very well for all pupils. Their progress and development are assessed and monitored very carefully.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

What could be improved

- The post-16 curriculum is not sufficiently different to that of Key Stage 4 pupils.
- The accommodation does not allow pupils to practise the skills that they need for independent living or learn about all aspects of food technology.
- Classroom toilet areas and the pool changing area do not allow appropriate access for all pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in March 1996. A large number of significant issues were identified and it was considered to have serious weaknesses. Since then, its improvement has been outstanding. All the key issues have been tackled and, in most of them, significant progress has been made. A clear sense of purpose has been established. Leadership and management of the school are now very good. The school's resources are managed much more efficiently and the value for money it provides, which was unsatisfactory, is now good. The curriculum has been reorganised, and most subjects are well managed. Pupils now make good progress – standards have improved. The quality of teaching is now good, and excellent arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate teachers' work. Assessment procedures have improved greatly and are now very good. A very good quality school improvement plan has been put in place. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development have increased significantly and the provision is now very good. Statutory requirements are now met.

Issues related to the accommodation have been addressed as well as can be expected – for example, a library and a science laboratory have been developed – but some aspects are still unsatisfactory. Because it is so well led and managed, and because most staff and parents are committed to raising standards further, the school is very well placed to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 19	Key	
speaking and listening	A	very good	A
reading	B	good	B
writing	C	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	A	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A		

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

1998 was the first time the school set targets for groups of pupils to achieve. These were too challenging for some pupils. Although they all made progress, the school's targets were not all met. This year's targets are still challenging, but are more realistic.

Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well, but there are variations between subjects and key stages. In particular, pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16 students are still developing skills and knowledge in English and mathematics that they should have learned when they were younger. Despite this, some Year 11 pupils and post-16 students have undertaken GCSE examinations or Certificate of Achievement tests and other accredited courses.

Children under five make very good progress and achieve very high standards.

Throughout the school, progress and achievement are very good in music, physical education and personal and social education. Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science, information and communications technology and religious education. In English, speaking (and other means of communication) and listening are particular strengths. In mathematics, a strength is the progress that pupils make in solving problems linked to everyday life.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy lessons and try very hard, despite their difficulties.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good in and around the school, and when they go on visits.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are confident and learn to appreciate their own strengths. They help each other and co-operate with staff.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils' absences are usually as a result of their medical conditions.

Pupils are very aware of each other, and consider each other's feelings and difficulties.

Behaviour in the residential provision is also very good and contributes to the happy and co-operative atmosphere.

Pupils are increasingly aware of their own progress – for example, they contribute to their annual reviews.

The residential provision makes a particularly good contribution to developing pupils' independence skills.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. Speaking (and other methods of communication) and listening are very well taught. Other aspects of literacy, and all aspects of numeracy, are taught well.

During the inspection, teaching was very good or excellent in 30 per cent of lessons. It was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent, and unsatisfactory in only two per cent of lessons.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well. This is linked to the very good relationships, which encourage pupils to try hard. A range of effective methods is used to enable all pupils to be involved in lessons and make progress – for example, signs, symbols and information and communications technology. Teachers usually provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to make choices and decisions – occasionally these choices are not guided enough. At times, the pace of lessons is too slow and resources are not sufficiently interesting. In these lessons, pupils' progress is limited. Homework is sometimes too difficult for pupils.

As a rule, pupils work very hard. They are very keen to be as independent as possible.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, good. The curriculum is broad, sensibly balanced and sensitively adapted to the needs of the pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Lessons, the day-to-day life of the school, and the residential setting all make very good contributions. The provision has an impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes, especially the confident way they approach learning and their future.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils are well known to all staff. Carefully thought out procedures ensure that pupils are looked after very well.

Overall, the school's relationship with parents is satisfactory.

The curriculum for children under five is very good and is very well planned to meet their needs. That for the students over 16 is not yet sufficiently distinctive. This is because some students are still making up for gaps in their education when they were younger.

The provision for careers guidance and work experience is good.

The arrangements to meet pupils' medical needs are very good.

Care plans are very detailed and inform staff very effectively about pupils' needs.

The procedures in the residential provision are very good. Routines are relaxed but caring.

Very good support is provided by visiting specialists, for example for pupils with visual or hearing impairment or dual sensory impairment.

The arrangements for providing an agreed amount of speech therapy are very good. The provision for occupational therapy and physiotherapy varies between individual pupils, depending on their age and where they live. The school, local education authority and health trust and health authority are working together to resolve this issue.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is excellent. The head of care manages the residential provision very effectively. Other staff are developing their leadership roles very well.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governors are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the work of the school at first hand. Statutory responsibilities are fulfilled effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Led by the headteacher, highly effective systems have been put in place. Staff and governors have a very clear picture of the school's effectiveness.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school improvement plan helps to ensure that finances are used effectively to promote higher standards.

The school is well staffed with experienced teachers and support staff and residential social workers. Resources for learning are good. Although some aspects of the accommodation are very good, there are weaknesses – in particular, classroom toilet areas, the pool changing area and the facilities to allow pupils to practise the skills they need for daily life. Arrangements for staff development are very good, including the support given to staff to help them carry out their management roles.

The school tries hard to apply the principles of best value, for example seeking second and third quotations for major purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overwhelming majority of parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems. • Most feel that the school is well led and managed. • Many believe that their children like school. • They think that the school expects children to work hard and achieve to the best of their abilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some feel that the school does not keep them informed about how their child is getting on. • They think that not enough interesting activities are provided outside lessons. • Some feel that the school does not work closely enough with parents. • A proportion are not happy about the provision of homework. • A small number are concerned about the provision of physiotherapy. • A small minority are not happy about recent changes in the arrangements for horse riding. • A few parents feel that the National Curriculum is not appropriate for their children.

The inspectors have formed a more positive view of the school than that of some parents.

The school provides a good range of detailed information about pupils' progress, including termly individual education plans, annual reviews, annual reports and consultation evenings, in addition to the information contained in home-school diaries or planners, which are used sensibly by the school, as pupils' needs dictate. All pupils over the age of ten have access to the varied activities provided by the residential facilities. At lunchtimes, pupils can choose to play outside – for example, goal scoring – or be involved in activities in classrooms – such as listening to music or using computers. The provision is good. The school makes every effort to work in partnership with parents. Teachers set homework according to the school's policy, but the inspectors agree that it is sometimes too difficult for some pupils. The school is well aware that the provision of physiotherapy does vary, depending on where pupils live. The local education authority is seeking to resolve this. There has been a break in the provision of horse riding. The school believes that the arrangements due to take effect in September will allow more pupils to benefit from the activity. The school adapts the National Curriculum very sensibly to meet pupils' needs.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Most pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment, in addition to their physical difficulties. However, in each year group there is a varying proportion of more able pupils. Overall, achievement and progress are good, although there is variation between key stages and subjects. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. At that time, although standards were generally satisfactory, a key issue for the school was to raise achievement in writing, numeracy, aspects of art, history and music, and improve standards for pupils in Key Stage 3, for those with additional special educational needs and those of higher ability.
2. Standards have risen because the quality of teaching has improved and the curriculum is planned so that pupils learn much more systematically, building on what they know, understand and can do. Additionally, the school is increasingly grouping pupils into classes according to their ability, rather than simply by their age. This means that, for example, the most able pupils study more difficult work and learn at a faster rate than others who need more time to consolidate basic skills.
3. Children under five make very good progress and achieve very well. This is as a result of very good teaching, stemming from an excellent knowledge of the curriculum for young children and a thorough understanding of the needs arising from their physical disabilities.
4. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in music, physical education and personal, social and health education. Progress and achievement are good in English, mathematics, science, information and communications technology and religious education, and are satisfactory in art, geography and history. It was not possible to make a judgement about pupils' work in design and technology, because not enough lessons were seen.
5. In Key Stages 3 and 4, progress and achievement are again very good in music, physical education and personal, social and health education. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in science, information and communications technology, French and religious education. Progress and achievement are satisfactory in art, geography and history. In design and technology, they are satisfactory in Key Stage 3 – a judgement could not be made in Key Stage 4. In English and mathematics, pupils are making good progress, because they are well taught. However, their achievement does not reflect this good progress, because they are still developing skills and knowledge which they should have learned before: they are making up for the underachievement noted in the previous inspection report. Despite this, some Year 11 pupils have taken Certificate of Achievement tests in English, mathematics, science, information technology and French.
6. Similarly, students in the sixth form are also making better progress than their achievement suggests. This year, the most able students have worked alongside the Year 11 pupils and completed GCSE and Certificate of Achievement courses. Students of all abilities have units of work accredited, for example as part of a youth award scheme. Again, the reason for the disparity between progress and achievement is the gaps in students' learning when they were younger, which have resulted in them not achieving their full potential, despite the school's current best efforts. However, students are now much better placed to build on their school careers, as they embark on further education courses.
7. Throughout the school, all pupils, including those with additional special educational needs, make particularly good progress in their ability to speak (including using other methods of

communication) and listen. One reason for this, and for pupils' very good progress in personal, social and health education, is that all staff, including those in the residential provision, encourage pupils to be confident and provide them with many useful opportunities to communicate with each other and with adults. This is a significant factor in enabling pupils to make progress in other subjects and in preparing them for their lives beyond school.

8. In 1998, the school set its first targets for groups of pupils to achieve. These were too challenging for some pupils. Although they all made progress, the school targets were not all met. Learning from the experience, this year's targets are more realistic but still challenging.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They try very hard, despite their difficulties. For example, in an information and communications technology lesson, a pupil who controls the direction of her pencil from a band around her head, painstakingly created an illustration on paper. She was determined, and eventually delighted, to successfully replicate this design using a light control switch and a graphics program. Pupils are keen to be involved in new learning experiences. When a visually impaired pupil was introduced to an adapted long cane, he paid enthusiastic attention to holding it correctly, during a walk around the school. Pupils' very good attitudes have a very positive impact on their learning. They often enjoy lessons. In a mathematics lesson, pupils had to wait their turn to predict the outcome of flipping a coin. They thoroughly enjoyed the element of chance and as a result they made good progress in their understanding of probability. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning are especially noticeable when they are tired; for example in lessons at the end of the school day. They are still enthusiastic to take part in activities. When listening to the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, younger pupils all wanted to try out sizes of chair and taste pretend porridge, even after a physically tiring swimming lesson. Pupils conscientiously complete their homework in the residential provision, willingly following the routine at the end of the school day. They take full advantage of opportunities to use the facilities of the school to promote their learning. For example, older pupils use the library and computers to support their homework.
10. Overall, pupils' behaviour is very good. They are well aware of the school's code of conduct and rewards and sanctions procedures. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. During the course of the inspection, a number of pupils went out for the day to Whipsnade Zoo. Their behaviour towards each other, the visitors from the Rotary Club who had organised the event, and the staff from school who were supporting them, was impeccable. There have been no exclusions from the school. Pupils' very good behaviour is especially noticeable at break times. Team games, such as goal scoring, do not clash with other pupils who are using the playground for more individual pursuits. Pupils are very responsible and careful with the school's equipment. As a result, they benefit from having access to a wide range of board games, computers and the library during break times if they do not wish to go outside to play. Pupils are generally very responsible with their mobility equipment and take care not to bang into each other, as they are aware of the speed that some wheelchairs can reach. Their behaviour in the residential provision is also very good and this promotes a very happy and co-operative ethos.
11. Pupils' personal development and relationships within school and the residential provision are very good. They are confident to ask for help – for example, to reposition their foot in a chair or adjust a head support. Pupils make choices from the lunchtime menu and of residential and lunchtime activities, supporting their very good personal development. A striking example of pupils' relationships occurred when a non-verbal pupil was helped to indicate his choice of supper by touching his friend's outspread hands; left for 'yes', right for 'no'. Older pupils confidently communicate the options they have when they leave school. One student was definite that she wanted 'to go to a college and meet students with the same needs that I have'. Across the school, pupils are confident in a variety of situations. This was clearly illustrated in the mainly calm and secure way that they interacted with members of the visiting Oily Carte

theatre company who, dressed in spangles, baubles and gold lame, blew bubbles, played saxophones, misted scent and poured streams of water around the enchanted pupils. The very good relationships between pupils and staff in the residential facility promote a very relaxed and caring atmosphere. A strong feature is pupils' willingness to help each other, for example with their homework. Pupils celebrate and are proud of their achievements. In a personal, social and health education lesson, pupils felt sufficiently secure in the knowledge of their disabilities to proclaim on a tree of achievement that 'I can write' or 'I can walk in the water'. A strength of the school is the pupils' ability, occasionally with support, to evaluate their own progress and development, for example when contributing to their annual reviews.

12. Overall, pupils' attendance is satisfactory and in recent years has been above the national average for a school of this type. In the most recent year, a number of pupils have had long absences for medical reasons. However, they are keen to return to school as soon as they can. The majority of pupils who use school transport are punctual for the start of the school day, but there is a small minority who are not ready when the transport calls at their home. Pupils who use the residential provision are always punctual for morning lessons, and the sociable meeting and greeting routines of all the pupils at the start of the school day is a very positive feature of the school. Afternoon lessons start promptly after the lunchtime break – pupils quickly finish their games or activities and return to their classrooms. The school has a clear attendance policy and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are registered when attending the residential provision and the school has appropriate signing in and signing out procedures.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. During the inspection, teaching was excellent in one per cent of lessons, very good in 29 per cent, good in 40 per cent and satisfactory in 28 per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only two per cent of lessons. This represents a considerable advance since the previous inspection, where the need to improve teaching was identified as a key issue. At that time, although more than 40 per cent of lessons were good or better, teaching was unsatisfactory or poor in almost one third. A number of staff changes have been made since 1996, which may in part account for the improvements in teaching. More significant are the strategies put in place to raise standards; a target in the current school improvement plan. For example, clear, whole-school policies have been agreed, providing guidance about issues such as how pupils' behaviour is managed. Teachers' work is monitored regularly, areas for improvement identified and progress checked on. The role of support assistants has been clarified and they now play an important part in pupils' learning. Subject co-ordinators take the lead in planning what is taught across the school and teachers are beginning to specialise in particular subjects – for example, French – making the most of their expertise. In some subjects, classes are composed according to pupils' ability rather than their age and this makes it easier for teachers to plan work to meet the needs of each individual.
14. A feature of pupils' learning is that they try very hard, even when tired or hot. An important reason for this is the very good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result, pupils behave very well and co-operate with each other and staff. In the nursery, the teacher and nursery nurse use very similar approaches – for example, consulting children before taking away a toy to give to another child. Children feel secure. Because adults' expectations are consistent, they understand what is required of them, and can learn and make progress. Throughout the school, teachers are careful to treat pupils according to their ages. For example, in a mental mathematics session, Key Stage 2 pupils very much enjoyed the teacher's jokes – 'Let's see who had brainy juice for breakfast.' This encouraged them to try very hard so that when the teacher started to help one pupil, he said 'No, I'm working it out.' At the other extreme, in post-16 lessons, students are treated as young adults. Their questions are answered honestly and they are given useful, practical advice to help them cope in different situations. For instance, one student was reminded to ask people that she meets to face her when speaking, so that she can read their

lips. The trust that pupils have in teachers and support assistants is especially noticeable when their physical needs are being met. In the swimming pool, pupils are able to relax, and so make very good progress, because they have such confidence in the staff. For example, one pupil was encouraged to dunk his face in the water, this time including his eyebrows. Although apprehensive, he met this challenge because the teacher was close by and he knew he would be safe.

15. Teachers use a range of methods to ensure that all pupils can be involved in lessons and make progress. For example, symbols are used extensively to help some pupils to read and communicate. Some pupils have 'communication books', which contain pages of symbols and words. When shown the appropriate page, pupils indicate their response to questions. This enables teachers to check their understanding and it raises pupils' self-esteem and encourages them to concentrate hard. Some teachers and support assistants also use signs very effectively, but their use is less consistent, as staff are still acquiring the necessary skills. Sometimes, resources such as toys are used very effectively to capture pupils' interest and help them learn; for example to understand the content of books. In one lesson, Key Stage 1 pupils appreciated more of the story of 'Goldilocks' because different sized model bears, tables and chairs helped them to imagine what had taken place in the bears' cottage. In a minority of lessons, resources are less stimulating and, when combined with lengthy discussions, result in pupils being bored and making limited progress.
16. When given suitable chances, pupils are happy to learn as independently as possible. Most teachers are careful to provide opportunities for them to make decisions about their work. For example, post-16 students, making badges as part of an enterprise activity, adopted a variety of roles – 'You're the boss. You make the final decision.' This increased students' knowledge of the world of work and helped them to take responsibility for their actions. Throughout the school, pupils are often required to choose from resources or activities, and this is usually an effective method of increasing their independence and helping them to make progress. Sometimes, the choices are too open. For example, in an art lesson, Key Stage 3 pupils could choose to create their own interpretation of a painting by Van Gogh, or add colour to the teacher's version. Almost all chose the easier option, which meant that the most able pupils were not stretched by the activity, and so did not make as much progress as they should.
17. Similarly, teachers do not always take full advantage of opportunities in lessons to group pupils according to their ability and provide alternative activities to meet their different needs. For example, in a science lesson in Key Stage 1, the whole class took turns to plant seeds. This meant that pupils spent a considerable part of the lesson as spectators. In a very good mathematics lesson, the teacher organised the Key Stage 3 class into smaller groups. After the teacher had started them off, support assistants worked with the groups, with very clear expectations to continue asking challenging questions. This meant that all pupils were able to make very good progress and enjoy working hard and being successful. Most teachers deploy support assistants very effectively, so that they are able to make a very good contribution to pupils' progress. In some lessons, even when they are sitting with the pupils – for example, when the teacher is leading a discussion – support assistants are valuably employed in making notes of pupils' responses or encouraging them to communicate their ideas. On other occasions, they are not sufficiently involved or may distract pupils by clearing away or making drinks whilst the lesson is still taking place.
18. Teachers set homework according to the school's policy. In the best instances, homework is very well matched to pupils' needs and is highly relevant to the work being done in class. For example, after a science lesson about predators, pupils were given 'secret' envelopes containing pictures to place in sequence. Some pupils inevitably need support in order to carry out homework tasks. However, on occasions, teachers set work that is too difficult and does not reinforce or suitably extend the learning that has taken place in lessons. For example, some less

able pupils in Key Stage 3 were given mathematics homework involving higher numbers than they had used in class. This was an unrealistic expectation for them.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

19. The school offers a curriculum which fully meets statutory requirements and which is broad, sensibly balanced and sensitively adapted to the needs of its pupils. For children under five, the curriculum is very good, offering imaginatively modified experiences in all areas of learning. From age five to age 16, the curriculum is good, following National Curriculum guidance but selecting carefully the level of work for each class or group, and ensuring its relevance – for example, making sure that the oldest students include in their literature studies books by, or about, adults with a disability. The curriculum for students over 16, while it contains work-related and careers education, is not yet sufficiently distinctive. This is because some teaching groups consist of a mixture of pupils, some from Key Stage 4 and some over 16; and some older students are still making up for gaps in their education lower down the school. The post-16 curriculum is, however, being developed by the school along fully appropriate lines and is currently offering a satisfactory educational experience. There is appropriate accreditation in place – for example, GCSE examinations, Certificate of Achievement, and a youth award scheme. The school is working towards accreditation opportunities in a greater range of subjects and towards increasing the numbers of students able to reach GCSE standards.
20. The school makes very good arrangements to ensure that the curriculum can be taught to the very wide range of abilities in each year group. Teaching groups are created, most of which include pupils drawn from more than one year group but who have broadly similar standards of attainment. Access to the curriculum is well managed, with appropriate levels of support and appropriate technological and communication aids and the use of signs, symbols and finger-spelling.
21. In addition to the academic curriculum, there are very good, well planned and delivered programmes of personal and social education and life skills. These include lunch hours, during which, apart from good social and leisure opportunities, there are feeding programmes and positioning programmes drawn up by speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. There are individual objectives for pupils and their progress is carefully tracked. Most after-school activities are linked with the work of the residential department. All pupils from the age of ten may use this unit for some nights each week and there is also a facility for other pupils to join activities on a regular or occasional basis. In the unit, they have access to carefully planned programmes aimed at increasing their self-care skills and independence. Activities are varied and well organised and there is very good participation in planning by the pupils – one of whom organised a trip to Wembley for his group, arranging it by telephone.
22. Provision for careers guidance, including work experience, is good. There is a significant careers element included in the personal and education programme from Key Stage 3, which emphasises such key skills as decision-making and self-advocacy and there are discrete careers lessons from Year 10. The local special needs careers officer is involved from pupils' transitional reviews and provides consistent and very good support and advice from this point onwards, to both pupils and their parents. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education. They have a growing awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, are clear about their likes and dislikes and can make well-informed choices about the options open to them. Close links with local and residential colleges and their lecturers ensures a smooth transition. Appropriate work experience placements provide opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world of employment and build their confidence and self-esteem. Careers guidance has improved steadily since the last inspection in every aspect.

23. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in ensuring that pupils are able to build up their knowledge systematically in all subjects as they move up the school. There are now schemes of work and policies for all subjects, helping to ensure appropriate breadth and coverage within subjects; these are being systematically evaluated, monitored and further developed. Pupils' progress through early learning stages and through National Curriculum levels is carefully tracked and targets for improvement set both on a school and individual basis.
24. In addition to improvements arising out of the last inspection, the school has adapted and implemented the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy. These are both having a positive impact on achievement in literacy and numeracy. Overall, the curriculum is much improved since the last inspection. It now offers pupils at all levels enhanced possibilities for further study, travel, leisure activities and employment.
25. The school has good links to partner institutions, which make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning. Practical links with the special school on the same site enable facilities and resources to be shared. In addition to close links with colleges, there are a number of successful integration programmes for pupils. Induction of new pupils into nursery and reception is supported by the school's close links to the local Opportunity Group. There are informal links with a number of primary schools in the area. Recently, pupils from one of these visited and played string instruments for the Lonsdale pupils.
26. Overall, links with the community are satisfactory. However, relations with the Riding for the Disabled Association have been adversely affected by a reduction in the school's take-up of its services and the subsequent withdrawal of the facility by the Riding for the Disabled Association. New arrangements have been made, to begin in September. These will give more pupils the opportunity to ride, as part of their physical education programme, and will extend the provision to pupils previously excluded because of their weight or difficulties with transferring them onto a horse.
27. The school offers all pupils very good opportunities to extend their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is seen in lessons, in the residential setting and throughout the work of the school and represents a considerable improvement on the previous inspection, when work in this area was inconsistent.
28. The daily assemblies provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on themes such as animals and national events in a thoughtful environment, appropriate to their ages. Pupils demonstrate the ability to think quietly and younger pupils responded well to a discussion of the value of individuals, led by the local vicar. The school also has a carefully planned, very thoughtful way of responding to the death of any pupil. A thanksgiving assembly is held, to which the pupil's parents are invited and staff and pupils discuss their memories of the pupil – toys and swimming, for example – and sing the child's favourite song. A corner is also set aside in the classroom with a photograph of the child and items that remind people of them. All pupils and staff are invited to visit this corner. This enables pupils to reflect on life and death and deal with sad and distressing events in security and openness. Special events, targeted at particular groups of pupils, enable them to wonder at the world around them. A visit by the Oily Carte Company provided an opportunity for some pupils to spend time in a fantasy world.
29. Assemblies encourage pupils to develop a sense of right and wrong and this is enhanced through the curriculum. For example, older pupils are able to suggest improvements that would make the world a better place – 'houses for everyone,' 'world peace' and 'everyone should be equal'. Younger pupils also develop their moral sense – for instance, through role play about the 'Good Samaritan'. Less able pupils are able to understand that it is wrong to hurt others, whilst the more able developed the idea that you 'should be kind to everyone, not just your friends'. High standards of behaviour and an awareness of the needs of others are actively encouraged in and around school and in the residential setting.

30. Pupils' social development is also extended very well. It is supported by the very good, positive relationships between staff and pupils in all aspects of the school, enabling staff to provide very good role models of social behaviour. The formal work of the personal, social and health education curriculum is valued by the older students and gives pupils the chance to consider social issues such as old age and disability. In lessons across the curriculum, pupils are encouraged to work in pairs and small groups and are able to do this well. The residential setting provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their social skills, both informally and through a range of organised activities – such as a staff versus pupils football match and a swing ball game. Residential pupils make good use of local facilities for activities such as bowling, shopping, eating out or visiting the cinema. This has a positive impact on their personal and social development, although there is currently no involvement with youth or social clubs in the area.
31. The school provides pupils with many very good opportunities to extend their cultural awareness, both through lessons and through the wider work of the school. The catering staff organise occasional 'theme days', providing, for example, Chinese food at Chinese New Year and a football themed menu to support the staff versus pupils football match, and to recognise Euro2000. The religious education curriculum enables pupils to consider facets of different cultures, developing their understanding and insight, and music and art lessons provide similar opportunities. The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors – musicians, theatre groups and pantomime casts come in to the school. Pupils have visited a Sikh Gurdwara and the Albert Hall for the School Proms, and attended sporting events.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. Pupils are cared for very well. Child protection procedures are very good. They are well known to all the staff, most of whom have received training through the school's in-service programme – an improvement since the previous inspection. These procedures are also secured by the school's paediatric nursing team, which receives mandatory training in identifying child protection issues. Health and safety procedures are very good and are supported by detailed risk assessments, carried out by the school's own manual handling trainers, ensuring the safe moving and handling of all pupils by all staff throughout the school. The arrangements to monitor the transport arrangements for pupils are very good and there is effective liaison between the school and the local education authority's transport manager. Arrival and departure procedures for pupils are routine and secure. Health and safety issues raised in the previous report have all been addressed, with the exception of the lack of adequate classroom toilet facilities for pupils who require hoists, and changing and toileting facilities for pupils using the pool. The school's arrangements to ensure that the pupils' medical needs are met are very good and overseen by the paediatric nurses, who are also on hand to assist residential pupils during the night. Pupils who are unwell have access to the medical room facilities, but nursing staff make every effort to ensure that they are returned home as quickly as possible. First aid procedures are very good. The very high standard of medical care for pupils has a very positive impact on their learning, as nursing and teaching staff work closely together and pupils are dealt with swiftly and efficiently, occasionally in the classrooms, and never to the detriment of lessons.
33. The procedures to promote and monitor attendance are very good. The school's detailed knowledge of each pupil and their home background ensures that each absence is noted and followed up. Registers, attendance and absences are routinely monitored by the education welfare officer and headteacher, who meet on a regular basis to discuss any concerns or persistent patterns of absence. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
34. There are excellent procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and eliminate any oppressive behaviour and bullying. This too is an improvement since the previous inspection.

Behavioural incidents are routinely analysed in both the school and residential provision. Systems are in place to review the effectiveness and consistency of rewards and sanctions, both for individuals and as whole-school procedures. Realistic and relevant behavioural contracts are in place for some pupils. For example, one pupil is currently enjoying creating a paper flower on a door, each leaf representing targets met.

35. Pupils have very detailed care plans that provide vital information for staff, detailing, for instance, how much help each one needs in order to communicate and best practice for providing moving and handling support. The plans ensure that all staff are well aware of pupils' needs and this contributes well to providing support and encouraging independence. The detailed plans for feeding ensure that pupils receive very good support and advice at meal times. At lunchtimes, there is a high ratio of staff to pupils. Pupils are given freedom to choose lunchtime activities, but there is always a member of staff in the close vicinity to ensure their safety. Meals are of a very high quality. Additionally, the Environmental Health Officer recently praised the school's kitchen facilities and procedures, for their health and safety standards.
36. Procedures for the care of pupils in the residential provision are very good. There are close contacts between the school and residential staff. The exchange of home-school diaries and homework planners between school and the residential facility, and the formal handover between medical staff from day to residential care, ensure that there is a web of written structures in place to support the oral and informal handover procedures. These arrangements are satisfactory, although there is still no formal handover between teaching and residential staff. Pupils have access to a private telephone and the number of Childline is prominently displayed, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Additionally, many pupils have now been provided with mobile phones by their parents. Although the school has not yet appointed an independent listener for pupils, a number of pupils spoke about their high regard for the care they are receiving in the residential facility and the confidence they have in approaching members of staff to speak privately. A number of these pupils were very anxious that the inspection team should recognise the improvement that there has been in the range of residential activities since the previous inspection. Routines in the residential provision are relaxed and caring, with an emphasis on providing a domestic atmosphere for pupils, whilst at the same time ensuring dignified intimate care. For example, staff knock and wait before entering bedrooms and ask permission before starting any care or feeding routines. The school has taken action to ensure the privacy of pupils whilst in the bathroom areas and at all times staff were observed to work closely to the school's intimate care policy. An overlap of time between waking night care staff and other residential staff ensures that there is sufficient time to discuss any concerns and talk through messages in the communication book. All medication issued to pupils is recorded, and each incident – for example, of a pupil needing attention during the night – is also recorded. Many pupils view their nights in the school as highlights of their week and appreciate the very good opportunity for personal development that the facility offers. No Social Services inspection has yet taken place under the 1989 Children Act.
37. Pupils who have additional special educational needs receive very good support from visiting specialists. Those who have sensory impairments receive particularly good advice and support from teachers of the visually impaired, hearing impaired and dual sensory impairment. A notable feature is the provision of a mobility officer for the visually impaired to provide instruction in long-cane techniques, to enable pupils to move around school more effectively. Pupils' statements of special educational needs indicate the additional support that they need but some recommendations do not specify the amount of support required. For instance, the provision of physiotherapy and occupational therapy is at the discretion of the local health trust. The school and local education authority have succeeded in establishing very good arrangements for pupils to receive an agreed amount of speech therapy. The therapists provide valuable support for pupils' physical needs. A number of parents share the school's concern that the provision of support differs between individuals. For instance, pupils entering school and living in a different health trust area have to wait before they can receive physiotherapy and occupational therapy –

sometimes for many months. Although therapists try to provide specific times for pupil withdrawal, there is not an agreed system to ensure that pupils do not miss a disproportionate amount of time in particular subject lessons. The school and local education authority are working with managers from the health trust and the health authority to quantify the amount of therapy provision and to agree priorities. This includes finding ways to enable all pupils who require physiotherapy and occupational therapy to receive provision within school as soon as possible after admission. The school hopes that the outcome of this review will be to match the resources for therapy to pupils' physical needs.

38. The school has very good arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and uses the information that is produced very well to plan the curriculum. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection when assessment, recording and reporting arrangements were unsatisfactory. The school reviews pupils' statements of special educational needs very well each year to provide good educational targets for the coming year. Individual education plans are well written and contain academic targets as well as those for personal development. These are shared with parents at the beginning and end of each term. Usefully, speech therapists and occupational therapists write some targets, such as those for the lunchtime sessions. When pupils enter the nursery, careful use is made of information from the pre-school service. This then feeds into the school's own assessment procedures. Across the school, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In the best examples, work is dated, marked, annotated with the amount of support a pupil needed to complete the task, and contains comments about what the pupil needs to learn next. However, in some classes, work is not always dated and is marked right or wrong with no comments or annotations, which is unhelpful when measuring progress. Pupils have access to an increasing range of recognised accreditation. Annual reports are detailed and accurate, and pupils and parents opinions are sought. Pupils are also involved in developing their own records of achievement, which contain, for example, pieces of work chosen by them. These represent a good way of involving pupils in their own assessment, boost their self-esteem and are valued by them. Assessment in school is well co-ordinated by the deputy headteacher, who has a clear view of where the school is in relation to assessment and how it needs to move forward. Many of the systems have been introduced only recently, but they are well known to staff and, with the exception of marking, carried out consistently.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. Overall, the parents' views of the school and the residential provision are satisfactory, although there is some diversity of opinion. Many parents are very happy with the school's regular use of the home-school diary and the homework planner to send information home on a routine basis, but a minority are not. A significant number of parents assist in the school, supporting pupils, for example during GCSE examinations and swimming lessons. Parents and volunteers have been involved in the setting up of the library and view this as a valuable and necessary support to their child's education, the lack of which was a key issue in the previous inspection. However, a few parents remain unconvinced about the value of the library provision for their children. The school makes strenuous efforts to meet all parents' concerns and regularly evaluates and analyses parental views on the provision it offers. The evidence from these views is very positive across the school but a significant minority of parents still feel that the needs of their child are not being met to their satisfaction, and that they remain ill informed and not sufficiently well served by the school. For example, these parents are unhappy about the provision of physiotherapy for their children and the changes in the provision of horse riding. Some have concerns about the issue of homework for their children, with opposing views on whether too little or too much is set, and whether it is relevant for all pupils.
40. Information provided by the school, in individual education plans and annual reports, is clear and demonstrates the progress that children have made. Regular newsletters now go out to parents, an improvement since the previous inspection. These are very well received by parents, for their

chatty style and the information that they provide about the activities within the school. Coffee mornings are now held to encourage an exchange of information between parents and with staff. Parents are encouraged to support the work of the parents and staff association and are invited into school assemblies and to visit the school and residence whenever they wish. Parental attendance for annual reviews, at school performances and the school's sports day is good, but due to many families living long distances from the school, it is not always possible for all parents and carers to attend these events. The governors' annual report to parents and the school brochure now meet statutory requirements, which is an improvement since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The school is very well led and managed. The first key issue in the previous inspection report expressed the need for a sense of purpose and vision for the school. In order to achieve this, the governing body appointed the current headteacher. This has proved to be a highly significant act, which has resulted in enormous strides forward. The headteacher provides excellent, strong and determined leadership. She has accurately identified the measures necessary to raise standards, and has established policies and procedures that improve the quality of education and deal very successfully with the host of shortcomings identified in the previous report. The deputy headteacher shares her very high expectations and sets an excellent example to other staff, in her own teaching and in the thoroughness with which she fulfils her management responsibilities.
42. Staff have had to change their working practices. For example, there is now an expectation that teachers are managers – of subjects and support staff. In turn, the role of support staff has changed to involve a greater commitment to supporting pupils' educational needs, rather than the previous over-emphasis on meeting their physical needs. Staff have responded very well to the demands made of them. This is evident in the way that teachers are, with support from senior managers, acquiring the skills needed to co-ordinate subjects, and support staff are making significant contributions to the improved quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Staff are now seeing the results of their hard work. They are more skilled, they recognise the progress that has been made, and most are motivated to maintain the momentum of developments. The school's head of care manages the residential provision very effectively, making a strong contribution to the care of residential pupils.
43. The governing body has become increasingly knowledgeable about its responsibilities. It now fulfils its statutory duties – a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Governors attend training events with the senior management team, and are committed to supporting the school. Although not all governors are able to be involved directly in monitoring the work of the school, some have observed lessons and assemblies and examined the building and aspects of health and safety procedures. Their findings are fed back to other governors, and all receive detailed reports from the headteacher.
44. In addition to the involvement of governors, a very wide range of strategies is in place to collect information about how well the school is performing. The quality of teaching is checked – for example, through lesson observations by senior managers and subject leaders. Teachers are then set targets for development, so that the school's performance is improved as a result of these monitoring activities. The role of subject co-ordinators is developing well, ably promoted by the work of the deputy headteacher, who has oversight of curriculum development, and there is now very good and regular monitoring of planning and pupils' work.
45. The school improvement plan provides an excellent illustration of the headteacher's clarity of thought and desire to delegate responsibility to other members of staff. Produced after an audit of staff views, and taking full account of national initiatives, the plan sets out clearly the school's priorities, and how they are to be achieved. Responsibilities are identified, including the role of

the governors in monitoring progress. Additionally, subject co-ordinators each have development plans for their subjects, although these only look ahead for one term, which is a minor weakness.

46. The overall provision of staff is good. The school is fully staffed with experienced and appropriately qualified teachers. The teaching staff are well deployed to make good use of their varied experience, knowledge and training. There are sufficient learning support assistants and they are well deployed according to the dependency of individual pupils. In nearly all lessons, they have a very positive effect on the progress and learning of pupils and ensure pupils' full access to the curriculum. There are an appropriate number of residential social workers who help pupils develop their independence and self-help skills. There is also a technician who gives valuable support to a number of curriculum areas. All staff have detailed job descriptions and are clear about their roles in promoting the school's aims and purpose – a significant improvement since the last inspection.
47. There has also been a major focus on professional development, which has led to improvement in the overall quality of staff. Management responsibilities are more widely shared and there is a greater involvement and commitment of the whole staff in management at all levels. Staff development is a real strength and there has been a notable improvement since the previous inspection. There are clear links from subject planning to professional development. In-service training, which is available to teaching and non-teaching staff, is carefully linked to the school improvement plan. The provision of professional development opportunities for care staff has had a very positive impact on the ethos and day-to-day management of the residential provision. Appraisal has been replaced by effective performance management procedures, which are also linked to in-service training. The induction programme for all new staff is comprehensive and effective.
48. The school, including the residential unit, present a pleasant welcoming learning environment with mostly a good standard of accommodation, very well kept and enhanced by attractive displays. The swimming pool, in particular, is an excellent facility. Most of the accommodation issues arising from the last inspection have been addressed and there are now improved specialist accommodation and facilities for music, French and science and a library. However, within the overall accommodation there are significant weaknesses. The unsatisfactory toilet facilities off classrooms, which are a health and safety risk to pupils and staff, noted in the previous report; have still not been addressed. Some pupils cannot access them safely. The same serious problem exists in the changing facilities off the swimming pool. In addition, the lack of an independent living area restricts pupils' opportunities to practise and refine the skills they need for everyday life, to evaluate their own accommodation needs, and to learn all aspects of food technology. It is difficult to control the temperature in most areas of the school. The outside area is attractive with a hard surfaced but not level playground, large but not smooth playing fields, gardens and two greenhouses. The latter are well used as a resource to support business enterprise schemes. The school should consider making the grounds more user friendly and providing more amenities of interest and challenge.
49. Overall, resources for learning are good. Following the previous inspection, the school has invested heavily in resources with the result that weaknesses outlined in the previous report have been addressed. For example, the shortages mentioned in art, modern foreign languages and music no longer pertain. The provision of modern computers is good and compares favourably with the national average. The level of resources in most subject areas motivates pupils to learn.
50. The control of finance was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. Financial administration is now very good. The school manages its expenditure very efficiently, by engaging the services of a finance officer from the local education authority. There are good systems to manage funds effectively using information and communications technology. Administrative staff provide efficient support for the school, managing day-to-day routines well and receiving the many visitors cordially. They manage pupils' records well, providing efficient

support for teaching staff. Governors and the senior management team monitor expenditure effectively, through regular and well-presented information from the finance officer. They are keen to ensure that purchases provide the best value for the school – for instance, by seeking second and third quotations for major purchases.

51. Financial planning was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and there was insufficient consultation between the headteacher and governors in planning expenditure. Procedures have improved considerably and are now very good. The very high quality school improvement plan helps to ensure that finances are used very effectively to promote higher standards, particularly in teaching and learning. Prudent financial management produced a healthy under-spend in the previous financial year. This is enabling the school to implement exciting improvements through the improvement plan, such as improving door mechanisms to enable pupils to move with greater independence. Curriculum budget holders make good spending decisions based on their knowledge of the curriculum. However, subject development plans mostly have insufficient detail of costs to judge the effectiveness of spending priorities in raising standards in the subject.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

1. Develop a curriculum for students over 16 that is distinctive, builds upon their previous experiences and prepares them effectively for their lives beyond school. (Paras: 19 and 123)
2. Develop the accommodation, so that pupils are able to practise the skills they need for independent living and are able to take part in a fuller range of food technology activities. (Paras: 48, 85 and 122)
3. Improve the classroom toilet areas and the pool changing area, so that all pupils have safe access to them. (Paras: 32 and 48)

In addition, the following issue should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

Work with the local education authority, local health trusts and the health authority, to provide physiotherapy and occupational therapy to meet pupils' physical and educational needs. (Para: 37)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	88
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	29	40	28	2	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	76
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	23

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	70
Any other minority ethnic group	

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.7
Average class size	7

Education support staff: YN – Y11

Total number of education support staff	40
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1250

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	99-00
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	£
Total income	1292025
Total expenditure	1300382
Expenditure per pupil	15481
Balance brought forward from previous year	167404
Balance carried forward to next year	159047

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	76
Number of questionnaires returned	38

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	21	13	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	24	45	8	8	16
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	42	8	3	16
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	63	5	16	3
The teaching is good.	42	32	3	5	13
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	29	26	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	39	0	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	42	3	3	5
The school works closely with parents.	37	34	16	13	0
The school is well led and managed.	50	32	8	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	34	8	11	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	26	13	21	16

Other issues raised by parents

A minority of parents expressed concerns about:

- the provision of physiotherapy;
- recent changes in the arrangements for horse riding;
- the appropriateness of the National Curriculum for their children.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

52. The school makes very good provision for children under five in the nursery class. Children may be admitted before their third birthday and all have a statement of special educational needs before admission to the school. Because of their identified special needs, their skills, both on entry to the nursery class and when they reach statutory school age, are in many respects significantly below those expected for children of their age. Children currently attend part-time in the nursery, mornings only, and initially for two sessions per week, increasing to five mornings. If appropriate, older children can work with the Year 1 class on one or more afternoons, to increase their social and educational opportunities. Pupils who attend fewer than five sessions also attend playgroups and opportunity classes local to their homes. Parents often make several visits to the school before deciding on it as a placement, and, after admission, can stay with their child until they are confident that all is well. Parents are regularly informed of their children's progress through reviews, reports and home-school books, as well as through personal contact. The school uses the objectives of the child's statement, together with assessment information, to plan experiences which promote very good progress and development in all of the areas of learning appropriate for children under five.

Language and literacy

53. Children under five achieve very well in language, communication and literacy. Many children have significant communication difficulties and they are helped by the use of sign, symbols, computers and switches to develop effective ways of expressing themselves. By the age of five, they listen carefully to each other and to adults and take turns in contributing to lessons and enjoying the attention of members of staff. Through experience of stories like *The Bear Hunt*, they know what books are and how to handle them, and they begin to be able to find things in the pictures and predict the endings to familiar lines of text. They respond to questions about their books with gesture, sounds, single words and short sentences. Some children use large switches to make their contribution. Children can make marks on paper and use standard and modified computer keyboards to produce symbols, pictures and words. Teaching in these areas of learning is very good. The teacher ensures, through sensory experiences – like dabbling children's fingers in water or moving their arms to simulate running through long grass or water – that all the children experience the excitement of a story, so they put great effort into their learning. Learning words like 'under' and 'over' is made fun by using them in activity games, like crawling over and under benches and rugs. Although they do not achieve all the skills expected for most children by age five, they make a good beginning with communication, language and literacy, and they make very good progress. Their listening skills are particularly good.

Mathematics

54. Children achieve well in mathematics by the age of five. Higher attaining children demonstrate knowledge of numbers, and of words like 'big' and 'little'. Some can count to four, and, with support, to eight. The teacher is skilled at organising experiences which help children to develop concepts of number, size and shape, through songs and rhymes, through playing with sand and water, and through counting during their activities in the nursery. For example, a child guesses how many steps she will be able to take and counts them as she walks. Because mathematical concepts and language are so well integrated into daily activities, children make good progress and their learning is secure.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

55. Children's achievement in gaining knowledge and understanding of the world around them is very good. By the age of five, they are familiar with different parts of the school building and grounds. They are confident in using switches and both specialised and standard computer keyboards. They can put in order a sequence of pictures showing how babies grow into adults and they can record, with help, where they found insects or animals during walks in the school grounds. Teaching in these areas of learning is very good and leads to very good progress. Activities are devised which allow staff to promote and assess children's understanding of time, place, technology and natural events, despite the restrictions placed on the children by their physical limitations.

Creative and aesthetic development

56. Children achieve very well in creative activities. They respond to music and understand that it can convey different feelings, and they use rain sticks and tuned percussion instruments to contribute to musical sounds, showing awareness of rhythm and mood. Teaching in music is very skilled, so children enjoy their lessons enormously and make very good progress. In the playground, children use sand, water and floating toys to play pretending games on a theme such as 'Holidays'. The very skilled commentary and questioning by the teacher keeps pupils in touch with what is going on and extends their play and learning. There is particularly good attention to developing children's imagination through their involvement in stories and pretending games. This leads to very good progress.

Personal and social development

57. The school promotes the personal and social development of children under five extremely well. Teachers require children to make decisions and choices from the time they enter the class at around three years of age; they ask them to indicate if they want help, but also encourage them to do things themselves. Children persevere with tasks that are difficult for them, such as putting their spectacles back on by themselves, but also have total confidence that they will be supported when necessary. In this way, children come to feel competent in managing their lives, to maintain dignity and increase independence. Because staff are skilled at making learning interesting and enjoyable, children make enormous efforts to do what they are asked and develop excellent attitudes to learning and behaviour. Activities are well constructed to ensure that children interact with one another as well as with staff. For example, the teacher makes sure in a seesaw game that the two children sharing the seesaw have said 'hello' to one another before starting to play.

Physical development

58. Children's achievement in physical development is very good. Despite their individual physical difficulties, they strive to master the manipulation of tools and switches and to move around the classroom and playground and use the toys and apparatus. They make great efforts to turn to watch each other as they slide down foam wedges or crawl through tunnels. In the swimming pool, children overcome initial caution and immerse their faces in water to blow bubbles. Teaching is very good; children's comfort and safety are vigilantly monitored and individual assessment and target planning make a very significant contribution to each child's progress. Because the level of care and security is so high, pupils feel able to attempt new things and extend their abilities. Because learning is fun, they persevere with difficult tasks and make very good progress.
59. The co-ordination of provision for children under five is excellent. The co-ordinator has excellent knowledge of the curriculum needs of young children and a thorough understanding of

the additional needs, including emotional needs, which arise from their physical difficulties. Children in the nursery are offered a consistently and outstandingly high quality experience, leading to very good progress and achievement.

ENGLISH

60. Overall, achievement in English is good, but there are clear differences between key stages and evidence of past under-achievement by many of the older pupils. During Key Stages 1 and 2, achievement and progress are both good, reflecting good teaching. During Key Stages 3 and 4, and for students over sixteen, progress is good but achievement does not fully reflect the good teaching seen during the inspection. Many pupils in secondary classes are making clear and measurable progress on basic skills that they should have learned at an earlier stage. This points to past gaps and omissions in their education when expectations appear to have been too low and not all pupils reached their full potential.
61. Throughout the school, there is a particular strength in speaking (including other means of communication) and listening. Listening skills are often excellent, with pupils making great efforts to understand others and showing outstanding patience as they listen to classmates who do not have clear speech. Their patience, as well as that of staff, is a major factor in the development of the confident and effective (but not always easy) communication which is seen throughout the school. Teachers are skilled at helping pupils to express themselves and provide many good opportunities for pupils to speak and listen and they are sensitive to pupils' difficulties.
62. Achievement in reading is generally good. During Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils all develop knowledge about books, stories and poems and acquire reading skills appropriate to their varied abilities. They are able to choose books from the library in regular timetabled sessions and enjoy this activity. Higher attaining pupils attain reading levels broadly within the range expected for their age and all pupils acquire some useful skills, aided by symbols where appropriate. Teachers have adapted the National Literacy Strategy for their classes and the structured approach is proving helpful in teaching about sounds and basic punctuation. Many children, by the end of Key Stage 2, know about full stops and capital letters; they know that a word printed all in capitals should be said loudly; they know about speech bubbles; a few know about speech marks. The most able groups can make inferences from the text. For example, in the book *Sky Hunter*, pupils are clear that a character is not what he seemed, judging from things he has done – like collecting birds' eggs while pretending to be in favour of conservation. The use of inference is promoted well by the teacher's skilled questioning techniques. Teaching is often lively, using humour – for example, the teacher's deliberate mistakes during a reading of *Owl Babies*, which the pupils correct with glee. Many teachers make good use of sign and symbols to support reading. However, not all teachers use fully all the aids to communication which would be useful to their pupils. In both 'Big Book' sessions and guided reading sessions, some pupils are working on books that are too easy for them and which do not therefore help them progress as well as they could.
63. During Key Stages 3 and 4, most pupils are making good progress, and are achieving broadly in line with their abilities by the end of Key Stage 4. However, too many pupils who clearly have the capacity to learn have not reached the standards that should be expected of them. For example, there are older pupils who are still learning letter sounds and blends but now making good progress on this work which they should, and clearly could, have mastered at an earlier stage. Higher attaining pupils have experience of reading extracts from Dickens and Shakespeare as well modern books written for young readers. Lessons are carefully planned and prepared. For example, a unit of work on 'School under Siege' was well chosen in terms of its interest for students and provided a wide range of linked reading, writing and discussion tasks. As in the

younger classes, there are examples of good use of sign, symbol and information technology to support reading, but this is not consistent.

64. During Key Stages 1 and 2, all pupils are helped to record their work in appropriate ways. Those pupils who are able to write practise letter formation and go on to write short passages in various formats, for example diaries, postcards, stories and poems. Others are helped to record their work in other ways; dictating it to a classroom helper, selecting words from a computer screen, or using a standard or adapted keyboard, independently or with support. Pupils achieve at a variety of levels consistent with their abilities and by the end of Key Stage 2, many pupils can compose a short passage of text with largely correct spelling. Teachers encourage independence well through teaching dictionary skills and using personal word banks. They are good at ensuring that every pupil has access to the lesson and is enabled to 'write'. However, they do not always ensure that all pupils write to the highest level of which they are capable. There is very little writing that extends beyond one or two paragraphs. It is clear from listening to pupils talking that some have the ideas and the vocabulary to achieve at a higher level in writing. There is a particular problem for pupils who are able to write, but with difficulty. Other pupils have priority for use of the two or three computers in the classroom because they can not write by hand. Alternative recording methods are needed to enable pupils to compose longer and more complex pieces of writing – such as group compositions scribed by a member of staff, increased use of lap-top computers, or dictating into a tape recorder for later transcription by staff or pupils.
65. Writing in Key Stages 3 and 4 is broadly in line with pupils' very wide range of abilities. As in the primary classes, all pupils are helped to record in some way and nearly all are able to choose and sequence words with the help of staff. Writing skills, like reading skills, generally lag behind what could be expected from many individual pupils and do not fully reflect the good teaching the pupils are receiving currently, indicating earlier under-achievement. However, more able pupils, who are working towards GCSE examinations or Certificate of Achievement tests, have good independent writing skills. They use computers well and combine text and graphics to achieve good presentation of their work; they understand how the printers in their room are networked and they can change ink cartridges themselves. They use the spell-check facility on the word processing program with confidence. Teaching is good and pupils are encouraged, through discussion and the reading of relevant linked texts, to produce varied pieces of writing including narrative, lists, letters and factual accounts. However, there is very little extended writing, even from pupils who are verbally fluent and have a good vocabulary, and this needs to be developed. In some classes, individual work is well supported but there is too little whole-class discussion and presentation and therefore missed opportunities for pupils to share their ideas.
66. There has been very good improvement in English since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and the substantial amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen then has been eliminated and replaced by mostly good teaching. There is now a scheme of work in place which is appropriate and relevant; planning and children's progress are regularly monitored and there is a cohesive and accurate system of assessment in place which allows progress to be effectively tracked both for groups and for individuals. A useful library has been set up and catalogued and it is beginning to be well used in regular timetabled sessions. Speech and language therapists are working well with teaching and support staff, making particular contributions by training classroom assistants to support pupils' language development. There is still a need to work on improving the quality and range of writing, as reported in the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

67. Achievement is good at Key Stages 1 and 2. It is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils are still making up ground since the previous inspection, through very good improvements to the provision for mathematics. Pupils throughout the school now make good progress overall, with

very good progress in some lessons. A strength of pupils' learning is the way that they consider how to solve problems. This helps them to develop number skills useful in life beyond the school. The quality of teaching is good overall. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

68. Pupils achieve well at Key Stages 1 and 2. Lessons are planned effectively to create interest and for pupils to develop independence by referring to familiar resources. Pupils use number cards particularly well to support their learning of number order. Assessment procedures are very good throughout the school and teachers use the information they collect very well to arrange teaching groups according to pupils' attainment rather than their age. Planning is effective to match tasks to pupils' needs and to provide the right amount of challenge. Teachers are enthusiastic and engage pupils' attention well, by providing interesting lessons. Lessons move along quickly and this encourages pupils to concentrate. They begin to anticipate questions during whole-class teaching, attempting to be the first to answer. Pupils receive effective support from other classroom staff because teachers give them clear instructions about how to help pupils to make progress.
69. At Key Stage 1, pupils are happy to be in class at the start of the day and have a very positive attitude to learning. They join in number songs enthusiastically, clapping to the beat, concentrating well to provide answers when it is their turn to add and subtract. At Key Stage 2, pupils take turns to suggest activities – for instance, naming numbers between ten and a hundred. Pupils consistently choose challenging tasks, proud to show the class what they know, such as counting back in tens from 71. During a mental arithmetic lesson, pupils expressed spontaneously that they enjoyed the work and that this was their favourite lesson.
70. At Key Stage 3 and 4, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, pupils make good progress. The curriculum is planned effectively, supported by the growing influence of the National Numeracy Strategy. This is raising achievement, as when higher attaining pupils make very good progress studying for accredited examinations. They describe how they round sums of money to the nearest pound, to calculate approximate costs. During a lesson to choose a bottle of perfume, they found their own way to analyse prices and quantity, to say which was the best value for money. They understand the need to check if the largest bottle is really the best value, because the teacher asks pertinent questions to guide their thinking. Pupils understand the benefits of co-operative working through helping each other to solve problems. Lower attaining pupils are beginning to use the language of time more confidently, and this enables them to relate events to their own lives. They are just beginning to benefit from the introduction of the numeracy strategy and this is enabling them to make better progress.
71. There are some good examples of homework throughout the school. However, homework is less effective in contributing to pupils' progress when the work set does not take sufficient account of pupils' clear individual targets in mathematics. Planning to use information and communications technology is inconsistent. However, pupils respond well when given opportunities – for instance, to use numbers to control the movements of a robotic device. The co-ordinator, in partnership with the senior management team, is implementing effective systems to monitor planning, teaching and learning. Action based upon this effective monitoring contributes well to promoting further improvements. Some good targets are set for further development, but they are short-term and not linked to sufficiently detailed costs and benefits for pupils.

SCIENCE

72. Pupils achieve good standards and make good progress in all key stages. At Key Stage 3, however, standards of achievement are variable, due to inconsistent teaching, especially by non-specialist teachers. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3, and good or very good in Key Stages 2 and 4. Pupils throughout the school respond with

interest to the well planned scheme of work and to the very good emphasis by staff on meeting pupils' need to have resources, seating and communication systems geared to their individual needs.

73. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to say that a plant would grow from a seed they had just planted and that water would help it grow. They are also able to remember the work of the lesson from the previous week and link that to their story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Pupils make good progress because teachers are quite clear about what they want them to learn. However, pupils would also benefit from more encouragement to use their senses systematically. For example, in one lesson, microscopes were available, but tended to be overlooked. Analysis of pupils' work shows that they make good progress over time, because the curriculum is so well planned.
74. During Key Stage 2, pupils learn to use technical vocabulary – for example, to describe the fact that the roots of plant absorb water and that leaves store energy for the plant. By the end of the key stage, they are able to describe and set up their own fair tests to see how a plant would react without leaves and are able to say that one suggested test is not fair because 'it isn't in the light'. They make good progress because the secure subject knowledge of the teacher enables her to have high expectations of their knowledge and to adapt the lesson even when they exceed these. Pupils make progress in recording their work through skilled use of information and communications technology resources, matched to their needs. They are clearly confident and capable with these resources. One pupil suggested that he could use the computer to look up whether or not a plant could survive without leaves.
75. During Key Stage 3, pupils' achievement and progress are generally good, because some specialist teaching leads to very good achievement. However, where the subject is taught by non-specialist teachers, achievement is no more than satisfactory. The pace of lessons is sometimes slow and teachers' expectations are not always high enough. Throughout the key stage, a clear scheme of work and good resources – especially the new science laboratory – lead to good progress, despite some inconsistency in teaching. By the end of the key stage, pupils know that grass gets energy from sunlight through the process of photosynthesis and are able to use their knowledge of animals to draw up a food web. They relish the opportunity to look for small creatures in leaf litter and use the specialist resources of the science laboratory very well. The good, hardworking and friendly atmosphere in the lessons contributes to pupils' progress as it encourages them all to join in and take a full part in the lesson.
76. Only one lesson was observed in Key Stage 4. However, analysis of pupils' work and teachers' planning shows that achievement and progress are both good. In the lesson observed, on acids and alkalis, pupils with a wide range of abilities, including those with visual impairment, were enthusiastic. More able pupils were able to discuss the purpose of a mordant in the dyeing process. Less able pupils were aware that change would have resulted from washing the pieces of materials they had dyed in a previous lesson, and were enthusiastic to see 'what colour it had gone'. The GCSE candidates' course work, submitted for the examination, showed that they are able to work independently on their own chemistry investigation. They had shown an understanding of the need for a fair test and for repetition of the experiment, had carried out their own research, used a line graph to show their results and were able to make their own predictions, based on scientific principles.
77. There has been considerable progress since the last inspection in all areas of the subject. Science is now well managed by a specialist teacher who has used the new science laboratory to good effect and is keen both to develop that further and to encourage its use by other colleagues. The new whole school scheme of work has also provided non-specialist teachers across the key stages with a good framework for planning their lessons.

ART

78. Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory. Progress is more consistent than at the time of the previous inspection, and has improved particularly well in Key Stage 3, where some pupils were judged to be underachieving significantly. The improvement is linked to the quality of teaching, which is also consistently satisfactory, and occasionally good. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. Throughout the school, pupils learn and practise a variety of skills, such as drawing, painting, printing and modelling.
79. During Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils tend to use techniques that require less control over the media. For example, when illustrating a story, pupils in Year 1 used their hands to apply a thick cornflour paste. Year 6 pupils produced a collage using scraps of paper and textiles. As they move through Key Stages 3 and 4, many pupils refine their skills so that, in one lesson, Year 10 pupils used water colour paints effectively to reproduce images from Oriental art. This was a good lesson, because the teacher has a secure knowledge of the technique and was able to give useful advice to the pupils – for example, how to remove excess paint and so tone down the colour – helping pupils to make progress. Pupils were encouraged to observe closely, so that a less able pupil noticed that a flower, at first glance simply blue, was actually made up of several different shades of blue. This helped him to mix colours accurately. The teacher constantly reminded pupils what they were learning about – to control their brushstrokes – and praised particularly good efforts. This ensured that pupils focused on this aspect of their work, and achieved high standards. The lesson also illustrated another feature of pupils' progress – they learned about the art of another culture. The programme of work for art, produced by the co-ordinator, is very well structured to enable pupils to become aware of the work of artists from different times and places, so making an important contribution to their cultural development. However, pupils tend to be required to merely copy pictures by famous artists, rather than applying similar techniques to their own, original work.
80. A strong feature of the teaching is that teachers consistently encourage pupils to be independent – for instance by offering them choices of materials. In one lesson, Year 2 pupils were able to choose from charcoal, pastels or crayons, to draw squirrels to be added to the class depiction of 'Twelve Squirrels in a Chenna Tree'. Pupils tried hard, but were then given a further choice of using their own squirrel or the teacher's version as the basis for a collage. Most chose the teacher's, which meant that the final outcome did not reflect the pupils' own creativity. Teachers often give the same task to all pupils in the class, regardless of their needs, which tends to result in some pupils doing work that is too easy. In these lessons, more able pupils practise skills but may not be stretched sufficiently.
81. The co-ordinator has only been responsible for art for a short time, and has worked very hard to develop a scheme of work that helps teachers to plan lessons so that pupils build on what they have already learned. This is already having an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. A very good system for assessing pupils' achievement and progress is now in place. However, teachers do not consistently annotate pupils' work, indicating how much help they have received. This would make it easier to assess pupils' progress over time and to plan the next stage in their learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

82. There were insufficient lessons in design and technology to make a judgement about teaching and learning overall. Only lessons at Key Stage 3 took place during the inspection week. Analysis of pupils' work shows that achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. At Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is good.

83. During Key Stage 1, pupils investigate houses, using cereal boxes to represent their own home. This links well with homework where, with parental support, pupils complete an assignment to describe the appearance of their home. This provides a very good basis for design – for example, one pupil used the information to show the teacher that their main entrance is on the side of their house. Pupils develop skills further when they design and build a model town in a link with geography. Pupils at Key Stage 2 make textile bookmarks. They create several designs and choose one to produce.
84. Pupils at Key Stage 3 make good progress in lessons. They choose cutters to create their own biscuit shapes and design boxes to hold them. Pupils base their designs upon commercial products, taking boxes apart to investigate their construction. Teachers provide good opportunities to promote numeracy through counting and measuring. Pupils receive very good support from teachers and classroom support staff to use computers to design and print their biscuit packets. They demonstrate a growing knowledge of the need to choose words carefully for the wrapper. Teachers and support assistants encourage them to consider the effect of language, such as trying to find an alternative word for ‘delicious’.
85. The scheme of work for design and technology makes generally good provision for pupils up to and including Key Stage 3. Pupils have opportunities to design and make in other lessons. For example, the whole school took part in a music day, spending part of the day designing and making their own instruments. Pupils at Key Stage 4 follow a worthwhile scheme of food technology tasks to prepare them for life after school. However, the range is narrow because lessons only take place every third term and the limited availability of resources and accommodation also limits designing and making opportunities. Pupils follow a scheme to plan meals, linking well with the promotion of independence. They work co-operatively to design a menu, costing the ingredients. Pupils help to prepare their own lunch, evaluating the result to make improvements. The co-ordinator manages the subject well, with strong support from the senior management team. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES - HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

86. Progress and achievement are satisfactory. Geography and history are taught at all key stages under the general title ‘humanities’. They are, however, treated largely as discrete subjects, following two comprehensive but complex schemes of work that contain more material than is likely to be covered in the time allocated. Planning of the course follows a three-year cycle in order to take advantages of studying themes. However, this takes no proper account of the growing maturity of pupils and themes are not supported by classroom displays or suitable artefacts that might provide some justification for this approach. There are very few cross-subject connections made between the two subjects. Teaching and learning across the school ranges in quality from satisfactory to good.
87. Only one lesson was observed in the primary department. This was satisfactory, and scrutiny of pupils’ folders indicated a small quantity but good range of written work, carefully completed. The written work examined from the secondary department was equally good. Folders showed a good range of map work in geography and useful writing and drawing tasks in history and geography. Lessons observed at Key Stages 3 and 4 were satisfactory or good in equal measures.
88. Pupils enjoy their lessons, especially when teachers use praise to encourage them. In Key Stage 2, pupils acquired knowledge about the importance of conservation while studying the recycling of materials. The lesson began with an examination of the contents of a rubbish sack and moved on to look at composting of food and plant waste, the re-use of glass and so on. With good questioning and well-directed support, pupils found solutions to the problems posed – for example, using a CD-ROM to explore various types of recycling. Teachers match activities

suitably to pupils' needs. For example, Key Stage 3 pupils were studying landscapes, and different approaches were used in each class and with groups of pupils. Year 7 pupils were working from large pictures of a town and a village, identifying the differences. In Years 8 and 9, pupils were studying the landscape more specifically – considering why people settled in different areas, examining pictures of typical landscapes in China, Italy, Russia, Australia and Egypt, or looking at old pictures of the local area. Two more able pupils extracted material from quite challenging text, making notes and planning a piece of writing. One group went outside to look at the area around an adjoining school and then at the distant view, developing their awareness of rising, flat and falling land. At Key Stage 4, a history class was studying gladiators in Ancient Rome. Excited by the topic, despite the rather slow pace of question and answer, they became familiar with the important facts and key vocabulary. A significant dimension was the good discussion about the morality of slavery, which resulted in mature and sensible contributions.

89. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection but the subjects still lack the sharper focus that would make them come alive. Resources are often unimaginative.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

90. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Although it is still developing, there has been very good improvement in this subject since the last inspection. Its use as an aid to learning in other subject areas and as a means of improving the learning capacity of individual pupils is a strength of the school. The quality of teaching is good. Most teachers are now sufficiently confident with the computer programs to use them regularly and several have worked together to expand this area by helping their colleagues over initial difficulties. There are computers available in every classroom and the Internet is easily accessible from all classrooms. A number of pupils use specialised aids to access the computer, including concept keyboards and head switches. Severely disabled pupils are also afforded opportunities to work with switches in the interactive room. Several higher attaining pupils are now familiarising themselves with using lap-top computers, which is clearly an area for further development. These various electronic devices have provided a great step forward for gaining access to learning.
91. Teaching of information and communications technology skills, which now follows a thorough scheme, begins in the nursery class and continues at all key stages. Good use is made of large switches and a floor robot. During Key Stage 1, pupils are introduced to basic information and communications technology skills. For example, in one lesson, pupils learned to select and press the appropriate buttons on a floor robot. After setting it in motion, they measured and recorded the distance travelled, helping them to establish a connection between this and the instruction they had given. This generated real excitement, supported by the teacher's use of dramatic language to maintain their interest.
92. During Key Stage 2, pupils learn to communicate information using text and create pictures. In one very good lesson, the teacher's confidence and high expectations were very effective. Pupils were consistently encouraged to control the mouse accurately, producing a careful drawing rather than a scribble. Because they were required to compare the time taken and results achieved with pens and paper and information and communications technology, pupils were able to form their own opinions about the value of the resources. As one pupil commented, 'We will have to be careful or the world will be taken over by computers.' Throughout primary classes, individuals will be found working with a computer to improve basic skills.
93. The building of skills continues throughout Key Stage 3 as pupils explore combining pictures and text, set up databases, use e-mail, model effects on screen and learn to make multi-media presentations. In a Year 7 class, one pupil who previously had had great difficulties with manipulating a mouse was really excited by the discovery that a joystick could be employed

instead. In a class of Year 8 and 9 pupils, there was a big contrast between several pupils struggling to understand the basic principles of a program while two others were working quietly, preparing a presentation about the school. Both could use the wizard, call up clip-art and move around the program freely, actively enhancing the presentation. At Key Stage 4, pupils work towards external accreditation, according to their ability. For example, in a Year 10 class, two boys working together in creating a database compensated for each others' disabilities, one physical, the other visual. In the same year group, a pupil was able to demonstrate his presentation of the Roman city Verulamium. His enthusiasm and growing confidence with the effects available, despite some shortcomings that were the result of his visual impairment, greatly increased his self-esteem.

94. Information and communication technology is playing a significant role in improving learning across the school. Some of the specific teaching is a little pedestrian and there is some insecurity in the knowledge of some teachers and assistants, but the subject is moving forward positively and bringing a new dimension to learning at all levels.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

95. Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well. The subject is firmly established in the school and has improved well since the last inspection through the introduction of a good scheme of work and better planning. Pupils learn to speak and write the language through conversation work, listening to good audio and video tapes, role play and music. The complex disabilities of some pupils inevitably intervene to reduce the impact of this programme but there are gains from opportunities to understand another culture by learning about French life and customs and marking cultural events. All pupils show obvious enjoyment in lessons, participating with appropriate support in activities either as individuals or groups. Older pupils are preparing for Certificate of Achievement examinations and making good progress.
96. The subject is shared by two part-time teachers, one of whom was temporary at the time of the inspection. Teaching and learning are good or very good in those lessons taught by the permanent teacher who speaks French fluently and usually satisfactory in those taught by the supply teacher who has less confidence in speaking the language.
97. Lessons are conducted mostly in French and the pupils imitate the sounds well, are confident in developing simple conversations and complete good clear worksheets. Although many experience difficulty with the latter, folders of Year 10 pupils' work contain evidence of a well-developed vocabulary and some competence in writing simple French.
98. In a very good Year 7 lesson, the class could recall from previous lessons the days of the week, numbers one to ten, 'Ouvrez [or fermez] le livre' and 'Je vais a l'ecole'. Most spoke with some confidence, moving on to 'Asseyez vous' and 'Levez vous' which they practised as individuals instructing the class. The ambulant pupils stood or sat down to order while those in wheelchairs raised or lowered a hand. Good support work encouraged a lively pace in a relaxed atmosphere where the desire to learn was a prominent feature. Older pupils learned to ask for bread or a cake and then were given samples of a wide variety of French boulangerie and patisserie products: baguette, croissants, croissants au chocolat, eclairs and even a Belgian bun.
99. In all French lessons, encouragement enables pupils to participate in their own ways and make good progress. They gain a small measure of the language while developing a good measure of important life skills: confidence, self-awareness, interaction with each other and some appreciation of another culture.

MUSIC

100. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. Improvement in music has been excellent since the last inspection. Standards, taking account of pupils' disabilities, have been at least maintained at Key Stages 1 and 2 and are now very good at Key Stage 3. The subject is now also taught at Key Stage 4 and to the sixth form and standards there are also very good. Teaching is always very good and sometimes excellent. A particular feature of teaching is the musical atmosphere created in lessons by a high standard of the teacher's singing and piano accompaniment, helped by sympathetic support assistants who become fully involved. The provision of specialist accommodation is also an improvement.
101. The school music policy advocates a practical approach to music in the classroom, successfully promoting it as a 'means of self-expression, personal pleasure and a medium in which all pupils can succeed'. Pupils are engaged in performing and composing, listening and appraising in virtually every lesson. The central theme of every lesson is the opportunity to participate in activities that increase understanding and stimulate enjoyment. During this process, pupils acquire a good knowledge of styles of music both classical and popular and learn about some of the rudiments such as rhythm, pitch and key. All lessons are about performing together, either by singing or playing a wide variety of instruments, listening to each other and engaging in what is a lively, social activity that increases personal confidence and self-esteem.
102. The following illustrations add some colour to that description. In a Year 4 and 5 class, pupils enjoyed singing with great gusto a number of popular ballads ranging from 'What shall we do with a drunken sailor?' (with local variations) and 'Windy Ol' Weather' to 'He's got the Whole World in his Hands'. Pupils were guided through the opportunity to choose what instruments they could use to accompany their singing. This lesson was about creative listening to each other, taking turns, entering into the activity and channelling enthusiasm into co-operation with one another. A Year 8 and 9 class were engaged in listening to and improvising based on Indian music. They were given guidance to enable them to appreciate the importance of strings and drums and to explore different ways of playing these. The pupils were then encouraged to experience the process of the Indian raga, undertaking three possible routes then debating which produced the best sound. The three versions were recorded and pupils showed real pleasure as they listened to themselves. This was a complex lesson and the majority were carried along by good lesson planning and a brisk pace, even to the point where the teacher was able to alter the dynamic and tempo. The lesson ended by contrasting Indian with Western music, reverting to some previous work that involved changes of mood, in singing the 'London's Burning' round, the theme music from 'Titanic' and a significantly romantic 'Cockles and Mussels'. This was a very good lesson where the wide range of musical experience was closely linked to the learning of technical vocabulary and the understanding of new musical forms.
103. That progress in music across the school is sustained over time was shown by an exceptionally good lesson with Years 11, 12 and 13. This was the last of series that had composed "Frere Jazzer" based on 'Frere Jacques', its theme written out in staff notation. Each pupil had an instrument within his/her physical capabilities and the ensemble had built up a set of variations that involved improvisation of various levels of complexity around the theme. The first section was based around familiar harmonies, the second involved an echoic keyboard effect and included an ostinato played by a severely disabled pupil, the third involved a variation across keys from C to A minor using a ground bass. As the group gained in confidence, the music became more experimental, even including a musical joke by the most accomplished musician who was leading on the keyboard, the introduction of 'Allouette'. This was about real music-making where significant variations were kept together by listening to each other. The whole ended neatly as they took cues from each other. Links were then made to Big Bands – the class could identify Glen Miller and then listened appreciatively to Duke Ellington. This was a remarkably high level of achievement.

104. The development of extra-curricular music has included a carol concert and a music day. These promising activities have been led by other staff, not least because the music specialist has only a two-day teaching commitment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

105. Pupils achieve very high standards in physical education. They make very good progress throughout the school because the quality of teaching is consistently very good. As a result, pupils work as hard as they can during lessons and show a genuine enjoyment and real commitment to learning.
106. At the end of Key Stage 1, in swimming, pupils have grown in their confidence in the water and improved their movements and co-ordination. They respond readily to instructions like ‘Blow’ or ‘Splash’. Buoyancy aids are well used, so that pupils independently experience the feelings of floating and relaxation. Pupils’ total trust in the teachers and support assistants considerably enhances their learning. Full access is ensured for every pupil. For example, one pupil taking part in the swimming activity continues to be attached to an oxygen supply, by means of long plastic tubing. A hoist is used appropriately to lift another pupil from the water and a curtained area affords privacy while he is changed. The great care taken in moving and handling pupils is a very good feature of all teaching.
107. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have learned that their performance in athletics can be measured in a variety of ways – in measures of time or distance – and they are encouraged to evaluate and improve their performance. Pupils learn quickly because the teacher clearly explains what they are going to do and support assistants give appropriate support. In another lesson, pupils consolidated their skills and improved their stamina while moving at speed in relay games. They learn to work as members of a team, waiting patiently for their turn and encouraging one another. The teacher’s enthusiasm is infectious and pupils compete keenly.
108. During Key Stage 3, pupils learn to understand the importance of warming up before strenuous exercise. In one lesson, they worked in pairs and took turns in instructing their blindfolded partner around an obstacle course. They carried out this task in a careful manner, giving clear instructions – ‘Turn left’ or ‘Go forward. I said FORWARD’ - but with a sense of fun, when the partners sometimes got it wrong, with the consequent collision! In another lesson, pupils made very good progress in learning the techniques required to throw a javelin and perform a standing long jump. They responded well to the teacher’s praise and good demonstrations, and improved their performance with practice.
109. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are confident and mature participants. The teacher treats them like adults and encourages them to be independent. For example, they can choose to take part in either cricket or croquet. Those choosing cricket first checked the Internet for the latest news on the South African cricket scandal and then the television to get an update on the Test match. The state of play of both was discussed before pupils themselves played a game of modified cricket. The teacher’s very good subject knowledge and skilful questioning enhanced the discussion. By the end of the lesson, pupils had learned to strike or bowl a ball with reasonable accuracy and understood some of the subtleties of the game. They worked hard at the skills involved but played the game in a spirit of camaraderie.
110. Physical education is well led by an enthusiastic and experienced specialist who monitors the subject across the school. There is a good policy and scheme of work in place and all areas of the National Curriculum are addressed in an appropriate balance. Physical education makes a consistently good and planned contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and personal development and to other areas of the curriculum. The award of school certificates and an annual

sports day celebrate pupils' achievements. Resources for the subject are good and the limitations of the accommodation are compensated for by the use of community facilities. The subject provision is enhanced by extra-curricular activities, which include inter-school sports and sailing activities. The subject has developed well since the last inspection from what was already a firm base. There is good improvement in all aspects of the subject. It is now a real strength of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

111. Pupils achieve well and make good progress at all key stages. Pupils make this good progress within and between key stages because teachers' expectations are high and they use their knowledge of individual pupils to plan work that enables them to make progress. Of particular note is teachers' use of specialist individual resources to ensure the participation of all pupils. In a lesson in Key Stage 1, for example, all of the pupils had a different way of being involved in the story. One had a copy of the book all to herself, another had a symbolised worksheet and another was involved through the use of signs. This enabled pupils to be able to retell the story at their own level and understand the concept of kindness to those in trouble.
112. In one Key Stage 2 lesson, pupils made very good progress as a result of the very good teaching. They knew that a synagogue is where Jews worship, could identify artefacts found in a synagogue, and became familiar with the vocabulary associated with this, such as Torah, Hebrew and scroll. Very good organisation by the teacher and the creation of an air of anticipation at the start of the lesson enhanced pupils' learning and left them at the end of the lesson with their curiosity still aroused.
113. During Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress. In a lesson about a Church, they were able to ask pertinent questions, such as 'Why do Christians have bread and wine?' and one pupil was able to answer this by mentioning the Last Supper. Another pupil knew that a pulpit is 'where the vicar stands'. This knowledge is developed by the teacher's clear expectations of what the pupils are to achieve. Resources were well organised, so the lesson got off to a quick start, capturing the attention of all the class. During Key Stage 4, pupils continue to make good progress. They respond with increasing maturity to a scheme of work that gives them the opportunity to discuss their attitude to issues such as ageing. The more able pupils can describe clearly what would happen to them if their Grandma came to live with them – one pupil recognised that he would be 'spoiled'. In this way, they are able to relate their own experience to ideas about growing old. Pupils were able to share their ideas in a large group, but were less confident when asked to work in pairs. They make progress as a result of good clear planning linked to the scheme of work and the teacher's skilful use of questions to enable all pupils to contribute.
114. The subject has developed well since the previous inspection especially in relation to whole-school planning and co-ordination. The co-ordinator is well organised and leads the school well in this area. A wide range of relevant resources, well linked to pupils' needs, is used effectively by teachers to enhance their experiences and learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

115. Pupils' achievement and progress are very good. This reflects the high priority given throughout the school, including the residential provision, to pupils' personal development. The older pupils themselves commented positively on the way the curriculum prepares them for adult life. Teaching in personal, social and health education lessons is good, often very good.

116. By the end of Key Stage 2, many pupils are able to discuss issues related to disability and their experience of it in a mature, sensible and confident manner. They can also understand other people's motives for treating them badly – one pupil commenting that 'people see the wheelchair before they see me'. Their good personal development was also shown by the way they listened to and respected each others' views, even though they had a great deal to say on this issue. The same pupils were also able to list a wide range of positive things they can do despite their disability – for example, 'I can play football with the wheels of my wheelchair'. In another class, on the same topic, two pupils using communication aids could hardly keep pace with each other, punching out their achievements in an atmosphere of rising delight. Pupils are encouraged to express their opinions so confidently by the teachers' celebration of their achievements.
117. During Key Stage 4, the good scheme of work, which includes appropriate work on sex education and drugs awareness, and the opportunities provided in the residential setting, enable pupils to make very good progress – though this is not always reflected in more formal lessons. In the residential provision, pupils are encouraged to develop friendly, open relationships with each other and demonstrate tolerance for each others' difficulties. They also develop their independence skills, being encouraged to do as much as they can for themselves and responding positively to this. Older pupils are able to discuss the nature of relationships in a group session, responding to a well chosen story. They are able to recognise other people's motives and realise that people may be off-hand with each other because they are shy or uncertain, rather than out of unkindness or rudeness. They are also able to modify their ideas in the light of discussion and share some of their personal thoughts and feelings. In some lessons, the slow pace leads to progress that is only satisfactory – especially where the work is too hard for some pupils, as in a lesson on anger at Key Stage 3.
118. The area has developed well since the last inspection. There are now specific policies in place, including for sex education and drugs awareness, and these are complemented by detailed, whole-school schemes of work, which help teachers to plan work which builds on pupils' previous learning. The co-ordinator has worked hard, with the support of the deputy headteacher, to put these in place and is continuing to work to develop resources for this subject.

PROVISION FOR POST-16 STUDENTS

119. Students' achievements in the sixth form are satisfactory but there are gaps in their knowledge as a result of under achievement in the past. However, they are now making good progress across a range of subjects because of teaching that is mainly good and because of their own positive attitudes.
120. For this academic year, there is no discrete post-16 provision. Some students are completing GCSE and Certificate of Achievement courses in English, mathematics and science. Students from Years 11, 12 and 13 are grouped in two sets for these subjects and in two mixed ability groups for other subjects. Next year, pupils will complete their GCSE courses in Year 11. A number of specialist teachers currently contribute to the sixth form provision to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which also includes for Year 13 students a youth award scheme. Whatever the course being followed, there is an appropriate regard for teaching practical life skills and encouraging students to be independent learners.
121. In mathematics, for example, higher attaining students are able to make informed decisions about the best value for money when buying a deodorant. The teacher has secure subject knowledge and chooses interesting examples of a range of products and costs that engage the students. In English, students display good speaking, listening and decision-making skills when preparing for and conducting a job interview. The teacher clearly explains the task and recaps on the previous lesson so students know what is expected of them. As a result, learning is enhanced. Good and appropriate support is given to individuals to help them complete their work. In personal and

social education, students display good number-handling and home-management skills when making and designing a bird box. They are sensible, mature and well motivated. In this lesson, the teacher showed a good awareness of safety, which she instilled into the group. She gave a very good demonstration of securing the wood on a workbench and using an electric drill, and provided appropriate physical support to enable the students to complete the task. A knowledgeable girl in the group was encouraged to share her experiences, so that her self-esteem grew. In careers lessons, students show good information and communications technology skills when accessing the careers information database. The inter-personal skills within the group are very good and there is a supportive ethos. This helps students to learn effectively and with confidence. The teacher guides the students using the computer with challenging and probing questions so that their choice of jobs is realistic. In physical education, students are treated like adults and are offered a choice of recreational activities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills for life after school. They follow sporting events on the television, in newspapers and on the Internet with genuine interest.

122. The sixth form is well led by an experienced and enthusiastic teacher who has a good knowledge of accredited courses, careers, and lots of personal and practical skills. Along with the support assistants, she provides a consistently good role model for young people. The curriculum for the sixth form is considerably enhanced by a weekend residential trip, personal interviews with the special needs careers officer, work experience placements, business enterprise schemes and by the use of community facilities. Resources are adequate but could be improved in the area of home maintenance. Accommodation for the sixth form can only be reached by walking through the residential area, which is not ideal, but this does have the advantage of giving the base a separate identity. The lack of an independent living area seriously limits the experience and development of essential life skills that students will need for the future.
123. The provision has developed well since the last inspection, particularly in regard to curriculum planning and assessment, recording and reporting procedures. It is now important that for the next academic year, as planned, there is discrete and focused provision for students in Years 12 and 13.