

INSPECTION REPORT

The Castle SCHOOL

Newbury, Berkshire RG14 2JG

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 110182

Headteacher: Mrs Heather Fernie

Reporting inspector: Kathy Hooper
2971

Dates of inspection: 26th June – 29th June 2000

Inspection number: 188639

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	special
School category:	community special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Love Lane, Donnington Newbury Berkshire
Postcode:	RG14 2JG
Telephone number:	01635 42976
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Appropriate authority:	governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R. A. Cawley
Date of previous inspection:	8 th July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Kathy Hooper	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology, design and technology; the provision for children under five	How high are standards?
Helen Morgan	Team inspector	Music, special educational needs	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught?
Jane O'Keefe	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; how well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Averil Anderson	Team inspector	English; art.	How well is the school led and managed?
Margaret Hart	Team inspector	French	
Roger Parry	Team inspector	Religious education; geography	The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
Sanchia Pearson	Team inspector	History	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	Mathematics, physical education.	How good is the curriculum?
Francis Thornton	Team inspector	Science; personal, social and health education; equal opportunities.	How well does the school use its resources?

The inspection contractor was: Capital Inspections, Chaucer Building, Canterbury Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 6PX.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Castle School is a mixed special school for pupils aged 2 – 19 who have moderate or severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and a small number who have autistic spectrum disorders. Since the last inspection in 1996 the number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties has decreased and the number with more severe difficulties has increased. In September 1999 the local education authority opened a Key Stage 1 class for 6 pupils with autism. Currently there are 143 pupils on roll, which is large in comparison to other special schools. Nine pupils attend the nursery on a part-time basis. The majority of pupils under 11 years of age and those over 16 have severe learning difficulties, whereas more than half of the pupils aged 11 to 16 have moderate learning difficulties. The 16 pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are spread throughout the age range of the school. The majority of these pupils are taught in one group for half of the school day. In addition to their learning difficulties some pupils have challenging behaviour. All pupils have statements of special educational need and they are all achieving standards below or well below national expectations. There are more boys than girls on roll, (just under 60% are boys) which is usual for this type of school. Twenty one per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is about average compared with other schools and there are no pupils from homes where English is an additional language

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Overall, pupils benefit from good teaching and their standards of achievement are good. Throughout the school English is taught well and pupils make good progress. Pupils behave well, have positive attitudes towards lessons and enjoy coming to school. Post-16 students have a mature and independent attitude and their personal and social skills are good. The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching and good achievement especially for children under five and pupils aged 5 – 11.
- The quality of education in the unit for pupils with autism is very good and these pupils achieve well.
- Pupils behave well and develop good social and personal skills.
- The school is well led and managed.
- The school has very good links with the community and a number of younger pupils benefit from good opportunities to attend mainstream primary schools for some lessons each week.
- The links with parents are good and they support pupils' learning well.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology throughout the school are not as good as they could be, and standards in French at Key Stages 3 and 4 are unsatisfactory.
- Teachers' planning does not always state clearly what pupils should learn.
- Teachers' assessments evaluate what classes have been taught rather than what pupils have learnt.
- Monitoring of standards does not focus enough on how much progress individuals make.
- The way in which the curriculum for pupils aged 11 – 16 is organised for the teaching of information and communication technology, art, design and technology and music, limits pupils' progress.

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 has made good progress since its last inspection in 1996. Pupils' achievements were only satisfactory and now overall they are good. Teaching has improved considerably. Previously there was a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching and there was some poor teaching for older pupils. All teaching seen during this inspection was at least satisfactory and almost half was good. The weaknesses in the curriculum have mostly been improved. Satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' achievements have been introduced although they are not yet as effective as they could be. Detailed monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school takes place but it does not yet focus sufficiently on pupils' progress. The provision for information and communication technology has improved and teachers are developing greater confidence in its use but it could still be better. The leadership and management of the school have improved further and the governing body is more fully involved in monitoring and evaluating whole school development.

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 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
speaking and listening	B	B	B	B	
reading	B	B	B	B	
writing	B	B	B	B	
mathematics	B	B	B	B	
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

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

Pupils' achievements are good as a result of the good quality of teaching that pupils receive. Across the curriculum as a whole standards of achievement are better for pupils aged 2 to 11 than for older pupils. Children under five make good progress in most areas of learning. Pupils aged 5 - 7 in the specialist unit for pupils with autism make very good progress. Throughout the school pupils make good progress in all aspects of English. This progress is especially good for pupils aged 5 to 11 because the introduction of the Literacy Strategy has helped teachers to plan lessons which focus very clearly on what pupils are expected to learn. Pupils with more complex needs make good progress in developing their communication skills because there is an appropriate emphasis on the use of symbols and signing. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are good for all pupils except those aged 11 - 14 for whom they are satisfactory. In science, standards of achievement are good for pupils aged 5 - 7 and satisfactory for older pupils. The teaching of religious education, personal, social and health education and physical education is good throughout the school, consequently pupils achieve well in these subjects.

By the age of 16 the more able pupils achieve Level 1 or 2 in the Associated Examining Board's Literacy and Numeracy tests, and obtain Certificates of Achievement in English, mathematics and life skills. Recently more able pupils have started working towards a Certificate of Achievement in science. Post-16 students work towards the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) 'Towards Independence' award.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils are motivated and concentrate well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. Pupils are friendly and courteous. Any challenging behaviour is dealt with effectively by teachers and support staff.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. Relationships with staff are strong and supportive.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Post-16 students were visited while they were on their annual residential school journey. These students have a very mature attitude, relationships are very good and their personal and social skills are well developed.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	good	good	satisfactory	no evidence

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.

Overall teaching and learning are good. They are often very good for pupils aged 5 to 7 but mostly satisfactory for pupils aged 11– 16. The teaching seen was never less than satisfactory. It was good in 44% of lessons and very good in 20%. There was a small amount of excellent teaching for pupils aged 5 to 7. Children under five benefit from good teaching. Activities are well planned and there is a good emphasis on language which engages and encourages children. Throughout the school the teaching of English is at least good and pupils' standards of achievements are good. Mathematics teaching is satisfactory for pupils aged 11 – 14 and good for all other pupils. Science teaching is at least satisfactory and is consistently good for pupils in Key Stage 1. The teaching of personal, social and health education is good throughout the school, both in lessons and in all activities throughout the school day. No teaching was observed for post-16 students as they were away on school journey during the week of the inspection.

The teaching for pupils in the special unit for pupils with autism is very good. These pupils benefit from the teacher's excellent knowledge and understanding of their needs, and from the way in which a successful combination of different strategies are used to help them learn. Pupils with more complex needs receive at least satisfactory teaching in the individual learning class. They benefit from the thoughtful use of resources which they can touch, see, feel and hear.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. All the required subjects are included. There is good emphasis on literacy, numeracy and personal and social education. There are good opportunities for some younger pupils to attend local primary schools for part of the week. However, there is insufficient planning for ICT in most subjects, older pupils have too few opportunities to obtain accreditation, and in most classes too much time is spent on horse riding.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL continued

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Daily acts of worship are meaningful and enjoyed by pupils. A variety of experiences exist for pupils to learn about their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are well cared for and procedures to encourage appropriate behaviour are good and are consistently applied. Monitoring of attendance is good. Procedures for assessing pupils' achievements are sound but in too many subjects teachers assess what pupils have been taught rather than what they have learnt.

The school has good links with parents and this helps to support pupils' learning. Good information is given to them about their child's progress and parents are happy with the education their children receive. Links with the local community, including other schools and the local college are very good and these benefit pupils' learning especially in the development of their personal and social skills.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives clear direction to the school. The good leadership and management by senior staff make a positive contribution to the good quality of education.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	All responsibilities are met. The governors are enthusiastic, supportive, and knowledgeable about all aspects of the school. They make an important contribution to its success.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Regular evaluation takes place but there is not yet enough emphasis on individual's learning and progress.
The strategic use of resources.	Satisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value in the use of its resources.

There are sufficient teachers and a good number of assistants who are well trained and they make important contributions to pupils' learning. The accommodation is set in spacious grounds and is well-maintained. Resources are generally adequate for all subjects except art and design and technology.

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 close links between home and school. The attitudes and values the school promotes. The standard of pupils' behaviour. The ease with which they can approach the school with any concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework for older pupils.

The inspection team agrees with all the positive comments. During the week of the inspection the use of homework to extend pupils' learning was good for all ages of pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall, pupils' attainment is well below national expectations in all subjects and areas of learning as a result of their learning difficulties. However, the ability range within the school is wide and a few pupils in the secondary department are achieving standards just below expectations whilst others are attaining much lower levels.
2. Throughout the school pupils achieve good standards in relation to their own abilities because the overall quality of teaching is good and pupils have a positive attitude to their lessons and behave well. Achievements for pupils aged 5 to 11 are better than those for older pupils. This is because the teaching for younger pupils is generally better than for older pupils.
3. Children under five achieve good standards and make good progress in personal and social development, language and literacy, numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world. and physical development. They make satisfactory progress in developing creative skills.
4. Pupils aged 5 – 7 in the unit for those with autistic spectrum disorders make very good progress. Pupils with profound and multiple difficulties make at least satisfactory progress when taught in a separate group and when taught within their own class. Pupils in the unit make the better progress because the level of teacher expertise and confidence is higher in teaching these pupils with autism than it is for teaching pupils with other complex needs.
5. At the time of the last inspection standards were satisfactory for all pupils except those aged 11 – 14 for whom they were unsatisfactory. Since then the school has been successful in improving pupils' standards. This improvement is a result of a better quality of teaching, an improved curriculum and pupils' better attitudes and behaviour.
6. There is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy in many subjects. Throughout the school pupils make good progress in English. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are good for all pupils except those aged 11 – 14 for whom they are satisfactory. In science, standards of achievement are good for pupils under the age of 7 and satisfactory for older pupils.
7. The teaching of religious education, personal, social and health education and physical education is good throughout the school, consequently pupils achieve well in these subjects. There is a good emphasis on developing personal and social skills in most lessons and in other activities during the school day; for example lunch times and off-site visits.
8. Throughout the school standards of achievement in information and communication technology are satisfactory. However, there is insufficient emphasis in teachers planning on developing these skills, consequently standards are not as high as they could be.
9. In art, design and technology, geography and music pupils aged 5 to 11 make good progress and older pupils' achievements are sound. This difference is a result of the better teaching for younger pupils. In history achievements are good for pupils aged 7 to 11 and satisfactory for others. The only subject in which there is unsatisfactory progress is French for pupils aged 11 – 16. This is because they have not practised their French sufficiently or built up their knowledge and understanding over time. Some pupils now have rather disinterested attitudes towards the lessons and this has a negative effect on their learning.
10. Pupils aged 11 to 16 do not achieve their full potential in information and communication technology, art, design and technology and music because of the organisation of pupils for these subjects. Currently pupils study two of these subjects each half term and then swap to another two. This means that pupils have too long a gap between subjects which affects their progress over time. In addition, these groups contain a very wide range of ability and teachers' planning and the activities selected do not always match the needs of the pupils. Consequently, for example with music, progress is satisfactory overall but for some, often the more able, it is unsatisfactory in some lessons.

11. The more able pupils in Key Stage 4 obtain accreditation in Literacy, numeracy, English, mathematics and life skills, and a course leading to accreditation in science has just been introduced. Post-16 students follow modules in the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' course and make good progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and life skills. However, in some subjects the most able pupils do not have the opportunity to obtain recognised qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4.
12. Throughout the school well-trained assistants work effectively with teachers and provide good support for all pupils. This has a very positive effect on pupils' achievements both in their academic development and in their personal and social development.
13. Pupils make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans. Most of these targets state clearly what is expected of pupils and so pupils' progress towards them is easy to measure. However, in some subjects it is unclear exactly what teachers expect pupils to learn and this means that the gains pupils make in acquiring knowledge, skills, and understanding is difficult to assess.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

14. Attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory at the time of the last inspection and since then they have improved further. Pupils have good attitudes to school and to their work. They are keen to learn, try hard and concentrate well in lessons. A minority of pupils has behavioural problems but are supported well by staff and rarely disrupt the learning of others. Most pupils are well behaved and treat each other with kindness and respect. They are courteous and friendly to visitors. Bullying is very rare and pupils are confident that when it does occur staff will deal with it quickly.
15. Pupils move around the building sensibly and take care with resources. They become increasingly independent and self-confident as they get older. Younger pupils are encouraged to select their own resources, tidy up and change their own clothes for physical education and horse riding. In recent years pupils in Years 10 and 11 have taken part in a good enterprise scheme making and selling craft items at school events. The post-16 students when visited on a residential trip were self-assured and their behaviour was exemplary. Students respond in a mature fashion to the challenges presented to them and work closely as a group, supporting each other well.
16. Attendance remains satisfactory. The overall figure for the reporting year was just under 92%. The majority of absences are for medical reasons. The number of unauthorised absences was low. Punctuality has improved and is now good. The school has been vigilant in dealing with previous transport problems and very few pupils are now late in the mornings.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Overall teaching and learning are good. The teaching observed was at least satisfactory in all lessons. It was good in 44% of lessons and very good in 20%. There was a very small amount of excellent teaching for pupils aged 5 to 7. Teaching is better for pupils aged 2 – 11 than it is for pupils aged 11 – 16. No teaching was observed for post-16 students as they were away on school journey during the week of the inspection.
18. There has been a good improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection. Although the percentage of good and very good teaching has remained fairly similar, the most significant improvement has been that four years ago, 17% of teaching was unsatisfactory whereas during this inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed.
19. Across the school as a whole the main strengths of teaching are the way in which teachers and assistants manage pupils, including those with challenging behaviour, and encourage them to learn. This has a positive effect on all pupils' achievements as lessons usually proceed without distracting interruptions. The use of symbols and signing is a good feature of many lessons and this ensures that pupils with more limited skills of communication are included in lessons and therefore make progress. Throughout the school teachers and assistants work well together and

provide good support for all pupils. This has a very positive effect on pupils' academic and personal and social achievements. Across the school the teaching and learning in English, religious education, personal, social and health education and physical education are good. The introduction of the Literacy Strategy has helped teachers to plan lessons that focus very clearly on what pupils are expected to learn. This has improved achievement in English, especially for younger pupils.

20. In many lessons, especially those for older pupils, teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good because lesson objectives are not as clear as they should be and there is insufficient emphasis in teachers' planning on what they expect pupils to learn. There is not enough distinction made between expectations for more and less able pupils. Consequently learning for all abilities of pupils is not as good as it could be. The teaching of information and communication technology is satisfactory in all key stages but it could be better.
21. Children under five benefit from good teaching so that they learn well and achieve good standards. Staff work very well with assistants and create a stimulating environment in which exciting activities are introduced. Great care is taken in choosing resources which hold children's attention and good emphasis is placed on reinforcing language in all activities.
22. The best teaching seen was at Key Stage 1 where it was always good or better. It was very good in almost 50% of lessons and occasionally excellent. Teaching and learning are good overall in all subjects except information and communication technology in which they are satisfactory. No teaching of history was observed. In excellent teaching of English the variety of resources used and activities selected captured pupils' interest, and by the time they got to the writing part of the lesson they were eager to rise to the challenge set. As a result pupil's learning in these lessons was excellent. In many successful lessons the teacher's great enthusiasm, the use of exciting resources and the way the teacher made lessons fun resulted in very good achievements. For example, in a music lesson all pupils were very excited when they explored sounds which reminded them of their recent trip to the seaside. They were delighted with their efforts as they listened to the whole class tune they had managed to compose and record.
23. At Key Stage 2, teaching and learning were good in almost 70% of lessons and very good in 20%. Teaching is good in all subjects except science and information and communication technology in which it is satisfactory. In many lessons the choice of interesting resources and activities, coupled with high yet realistic expectations led to successful learning. For example, in an English lesson the use of many sounds and actions when reading a play about dinosaurs resulted in great enthusiasm for reading and very good understanding of the story. In some lessons, especially art and mathematics, tasks and resources are well matched to pupils' abilities and this results in some successful independent learning. The regular use of homework, especially in English and mathematics extended pupils' learning.
24. In Key Stage 3, teaching and learning was good in 35% of lessons, and very good in only a very small amount. It is satisfactory in all subjects, except English, religious education, personal, social and health education and physical education where it is good. In very good English teaching there was a careful explanation which was understood by all, tasks were broken down into small steps and learning was at least good for all pupils. The most able pupils were encouraged to think for themselves and work out meanings independently. This resulted in very good learning and pupils were rightly proud of their achievements. The main weaknesses in teaching are the lack of clear objectives, the way in which tasks do not always match the abilities of the most and least able and the way pupils are organised for information and communication technology, art, design and technology and music. Pupils are taught these subjects in alternate half terms and this has a negative effect on pupils' learning during the course of a year.
25. In Key Stage 4 teaching and learning was good in just over 50% of lessons and very good in almost 30%. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, personal, social and health education, physical education and in most science lessons. In English, mathematics, science and art good subject knowledge contributed to pupils' successful learning in acquiring and using scientific vocabulary, using their mathematical skills to solve simple problems, and in helping to improve their observational skills and drawing techniques. The weaknesses in teaching are the same as

those for Key Stage 3 because most classes for pupils aged 11 – 16 are made up of pupils from both key stages.

26. The teaching for autistic pupils in the unit is very good. These pupils benefit from the teacher's excellent knowledge and understanding of their needs, and from the way in which a successful combination of different strategies are used to help them learn. Pupils with more complex needs receive at least satisfactory teaching in the individual learning class. They benefit from the thoughtful use of resources which they can touch, see, feel and hear and from the use of music and songs which are accompanied by actions.

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

27. The school provides pupils with satisfactory opportunities to experience the full range of the National Curriculum and a programme of personal and social education, sex education and drugs awareness training. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum for children under five is satisfactory. It includes the recommended areas of learning and children have good opportunities to develop the foundation skills they need as they move into Key Stage 1. For post-16 students there is an appropriate focus on developing independent learning skills as they work towards the ASDAN 'Towards Independence' course.
28. Schemes of work are more complete than they were at the time of the previous inspection. These now help teachers to plan for subjects because they detail the content of lessons. However, they do not give sufficient guidance on what pupils are expected to learn. This reduces the effectiveness of the school's system of monitoring as it difficult to judge how much progress pupils make. Planning does not consistently take into account pupil's needs and abilities therefore in some lessons activities are not always appropriate for them. This prevents pupils from making as much progress as they could.
29. There is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and the national strategies have been implemented well. For example, in science at Key Stage 4, scientific vocabulary is emphasised well. In music there is a good emphasis on specific words and on songs which include counting. In hydrotherapy for pupils with more complex needs counting and number recognition is reinforced. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Emphasis on information and communication technology across the curriculum is not as good because all teachers do not plan enough opportunities to reinforce and extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
30. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and students at post-16 are prepared well for the next stage of their education through careers guidance, work experience, and for older students there are good college links. At the end of Key Stage 4 the most able pupils work towards recognised accreditation in English, mathematics, life skills and more recently science. The less able pupils have recently started a pre-vocational course. This range of accreditation is adequate for some pupils, but there are insufficient opportunities for more able pupils to achieve accreditation in a variety of subjects. The rotational system for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 to study art, design and technology, music and information technology is unsatisfactory. It does not ensure that pupils make sufficient progress. Pupils spend short periods studying the subject and then wait many weeks for the next group of lessons. The limited time allocation and lack of continuous teaching in these subjects prevents pupils achieving more, such as taking an external examination. The lack of time for these subjects is partly as result of the excessive amount of time spent on physical education, especially horse riding.
31. After school activities are limited because of transport arrangements but the school provides some good lunchtime clubs. There are some good arrangements for pupils to take part in competitive soccer and swimming. This enhances pupil's self-esteem and gives them valuable opportunities to work as a team. The provision of residential visits is good and pupils and students derive much value from their experiences, especially from the sailing holiday.
32. There is a good policy to promote equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum. The senior managers ensure that pupils receive the agreed number of lessons in each subject. However, there is insufficient monitoring of what pupils actually learn. For example, a large amount of time is spent travelling to and from horse riding sessions. Additional subjects are

timetabled for these journeys and whilst at the centre but there is insufficient monitoring of how this time is spent to ensure that pupils really receive their entitlement to all subjects. The provision for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties is satisfactory, and for those in the unit for pupils with autism it is very good. The use of the sensory room and the emphasis on sensory resources in lessons makes an important contribution to pupils' learning.

33. The school has very good links with a significant number of schools as well as the local college. The arrangements for pupils at Key Stage 2 to attend regular lessons in a local primary school are particularly good. These pupils make good gains in their learning and in the development of personal and social skills. The school has extensive links with the community, which are effective in promoting pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from the numbers of visitors to the school, such as theatre groups and musicians, and the school takes advantage of personal contacts, such as a governor to demonstrate motorcycle transport.
34. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies provide pupils with opportunities to reflect upon themselves and others. Acts of worship are meaningful and enjoyable occasions for pupils. Teachers use music and song effectively to focus pupils on particular thoughts and create a sense of calm. Pupils develop a clear understanding of moral behaviour, which helps them to distinguish right from wrong. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss issues related to behaviour and personal development. Within the school there is an overriding sense of the worth of each individual, which is evident in the relationships between adults and pupils.
35. Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and others. Younger pupils help to carry equipment and distribute resources in lessons. As they get older they become more independent by, for example, taking registers to the school office. Senior pupils represent their fellow pupils on the school council. Post-16 students take responsibility for their own building, keeping it clean and make drinks and meals. A variety of experiences are given to pupils for them to experience their own and other cultures. Across the curriculum pupils learn about the heritage of Britain, for example in history senior pupils discover the impact of the Great Western Railway on people's lives in Victorian England. Since the last inspection there has been more emphasis on preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society. A balanced programme and appropriate materials for teachers' use have been provided by the co-ordinator. Pupils experience other cultures through food, art, music, story telling, examining artefacts and going on visits for example to France.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school has effective measures for ensuring that pupils are safe and well cared for while at school. There are good child protection procedures and regular staff training takes place. Arrangements for first aid and administering medicines are good and risk assessments are routinely undertaken and acted upon. Attendance is well monitored and there is good contact with parents.
37. There are good, consistent, systems for promoting appropriate behaviour, which include clear routines for pupils to recognise and follow. The consistent use of appropriate rewards and meaningful praise works well in encouraging co-operation. Teaching and support staff clearly care for each child. This is particularly evident at lunchtime. There is a very sociable atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to feed themselves and to behave appropriately. Such times instil good social behaviour and build up the good relationships which benefit everyone.

38. The support given to pupils' personal development is good. There is a thorough personal, social, and health education programme, which is taught in lessons and reinforced constantly throughout the school day. This is helping pupils to gain independence and have confidence in taking on responsibilities for their own welfare. The school has good contacts with outside agencies and works satisfactorily with visiting therapists. Pupils who have sensory impairment receive good support from visiting professionals. Speech therapists are now working alongside pupils in class and this has the benefits of allowing pupils to partake in the same activities as all the others.
39. As in the previous report, the caring and welfare of the pupils and the promotion of appropriate behaviour are good features of the school. However, assessment was a weakness and although it has improved and there are satisfactory arrangements for assessing and monitoring pupils' achievements there is room for further improvement. The assessment of pupils' progress towards targets on their individual education plans is good and is better than the assessment in most subject areas. This is because in most classes the targets in these plans are more specific than the objectives in subject planning. Teachers do not use targets and assessments sufficiently to plan the step or steps each pupil will be expected to make, although better practice is seen in English than in other subjects. The impact of the Literacy Strategy has improved practice in English. As learning outcomes for pupils are unclear in most subjects assessment is focused on what has been taught rather than what has actually been learnt. This means that assessment information is not as accurate as it could be. It is of only limited use in lesson planning and does not contribute as much as it could to improving pupils' achievements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The school benefits from a good partnership with its parents. Parents are supportive of the school and they are generally happy with the education provided for their children. The emphasis on promoting social skills and independence is especially valued.
41. A good range of information is issued to parents via newsletters, curriculum evenings and termly open evenings. Parents are particularly appreciative of how accessible teachers are both in and out of school hours if there is a problem or concern about a pupil. Detailed and informative reports are issued annually. Parents are invited to, and fully involved in their children's annual reviews. There has been a steady increase in parental attendance at these meetings in recent years. Staff and parents work closely together on setting targets for pupil's individual education plans.
42. Parents help around the school in classrooms and with hydrotherapy and horse riding. A few parents work with staff in fund raising for the successful Friends of Castle School. Many parents regularly attend these events as well as seasonal concerts and drama productions. Most parents are happy with the homework set throughout the school. Homework diaries are issued for pupils and some parents make detailed contributions to these.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The leadership and management of the school are good, as they were at the time of the last inspection, and they make a positive contribution to the quality of education for the pupils. The school is well managed and the headteacher provides good, clear direction. The senior management team work well together and despite difficulties with illness and restructuring, they continue to guide the school forward. There is a clear system of delegation to middle management and subject co-ordinators, which works efficiently and effectively because of the on-going dialogue which occurs throughout the school.
44. The governing body plays an important role in the management of the school. Governors are lively, very enthusiastic, genuinely support the school and are proud of the progress made in recent years. They are very knowledgeable about all aspects of the school and make a real contribution to its success. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have the capacity to improve the school further.
45. Since the last inspection the school has implemented a two-year cycle for monitoring and evaluating all subjects. This, along with the systems for monitoring the teaching and learning in

literacy and numeracy lessons, provides the school with a powerful tool for improvement. This system has significantly improved teaching but the focus on pupils' learning is not yet rigorous enough. The school development plan covers a three-year period. All staff and governors are involved in its formulation. It is very detailed, accurately costed and is used well to move the school forward. It makes clear those who are responsible for carrying out actions and the ways in which the success of developments will be measured.

46. Financial planning and administration are satisfactory. The governors play an active part in financial decision making. Expenditure is based on the clear priorities stated in the school development plan but monitoring expenditure is made more difficult because the planning year differs from a financial year. The school recognises this difficulty and intends to alter the planning year so that it starts in April rather than September. The income per pupil is low in comparison to broadly similar schools whilst expenditure is average. In recent years the school has had a significant budget deficit and has had to supplement its income with private funds. This year staffing costs have been reduced and with the continued use of private funds, a deficit will be avoided.
47. The school has had a recent audit and is already planning changes to take account of the recommendations. Specific funds are deployed effectively, are carefully accounted for and monitored by governors. The good work of the bursar and finance staff ensures that school managers and governors are provided with the necessary information on which to base decisions. This contributes to the efficient management and control of the school resources. The school makes use of best value principles in all its decision-making.
48. There are sufficient teachers and a good number of assistants all of whom are appropriately trained for their roles. Regular appraisals of staff take place and there are sound procedures for the induction of new staff. The premises are spacious and well maintained and there is a good range of attractive outside play areas. There are sufficient learning resources for all areas of the curriculum with the exception of art and design and technology where they are inadequate.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. To further improve pupils' standard and the quality of education the senior managers and governing body should:

- Raise standards in information and communication technology across the school and in French for pupils aged 14 – 16. **(See paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 29, 99, 100, 101, 102)**
- Improve teachers' planning so that there is more focus on what pupils should learn. **(See paragraphs 20, 39, 73, 85, 89, 96, 99, 110, 123)**
- Ensure that teachers assess what pupils have learnt rather than what they have been taught. **(See paragraphs 13, 39, 78, 86, 96, 110)**
- Ensure that the detailed monitoring that exists is focused on how much progress pupils make in their learning. **(See paragraphs 32, 45, 73, 110, 116)**
- Raise standards by improving the curriculum organisation and teaching of information and communication technology, art, design and technology and music for pupils aged 11 – 16. **(See paragraphs 13, 24, 30, 81, 86, 107)**

The following weaknesses should be considered by the school but need not be included in the action plan:

- There are too few opportunities for the most able pupils to obtain nationally recognised qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4. **(See paragraphs 11, 30, 69, 82, 87)**
- Many pupils spend too much time horse riding which limits the amount of time for other subjects **(See paragraphs 32, 89, 115)**

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	116
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	44	34	0	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	143
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	30

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	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.79	School data	0.49

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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	143
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	2	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YN– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.5
Average class size	8

Education support staff: YN– Y13

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	619

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	98/99
	£
Total income	998,426
Total expenditure	1,011,140
Expenditure per pupil	6,974
Balance brought forward from previous year	-14,366
Balance carried forward to next year	-27,080

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	143
Number of questionnaires returned	31

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	32	0	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	42	6	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	52	6	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	16	16	6	6
The teaching is good.	68	26	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	19	16	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	26	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	42	6	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	61	32	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	77	13	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	26	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	10	23	6	13

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

50. The quality of the provision is good. Children are gradually introduced into the school through a programme of visits and part-time attendance. Children make good progress in reaching the targets set for them by the school. The familiar routines and well-structured activities help children to settle quickly and effectively into the lessons. The staff work very well together and provide good support for children so that they gain from their experiences. Time is well used because activities are well planned and children are able to move smoothly from one activity to the next. Adults use language well to engage and encourage children throughout the day, and this helps them to respond appropriately.
51. Children make good progress in their personal and social development. They clearly enjoy coming to school and gain confidence from the good relationships within the group. The routines help them to develop confidence and their ability to predict events. They gradually develop an awareness of others. The more able children greet visitors appropriately and demonstrate the ability to respond appropriately to others. Children with more complex needs respond to requests with obvious pleasure. They develop an increasing awareness of themselves through recognising their own photograph and they become increasingly independent in terms of their own personal needs because they are encouraged in this by staff. For example, they help to dress themselves after swimming. Children develop their social skills well when playing alongside and with others. Some children with challenging behaviour learn to tolerate someone else working close by them. Teachers plan a good range of relevant activities and this promotes awareness among the children that school is a good place to be and that learning is fun.
52. Children's language and literacy development is good. Planning is well linked to individual needs, and language skills are constantly reinforced throughout the day. This helps pupils to make good progress. For example, there was good development of children's language when they were making sweet potato cookies. Those children with the greatest difficulties in speaking are given appropriate encouragement, plenty of time to respond and lots of praise when they are successful. This makes children want to succeed and their vocabulary and clarity of speech improves as a result. Children's vocabulary is well extended through activities such as naming body parts in music. There are good opportunities for children to handle books and to develop an understanding of their purpose. Children listen well to stories and join in with the sounds. Good use of sign language helps pupils without speech to respond appropriately. Children learn to predict events and the more able children anticipate with delight the "and then ..." sections at the end of each page of a big book. Children's writing is at an early stage but regular opportunities to develop pre-writing skills, helps them to make steady progress. The most able children make intentional marks on paper. Information technology is well used to reinforce spelling.
53. Children develop a good understanding of mathematics. They sort beans and teddy bears into sets, for example, by colour. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of different children. This helps the children to make good progress and the more able children are appropriately challenged. Teachers plan a good range of relevant activities and use attractive resources to engage and extend children's interest and concentration. Children's understanding of number is reinforced well through counting songs and rhymes. The use of information technology to reinforce number is good for most pupils. Children develop their understanding of shape well through matching games and toys.
54. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is well developed. They learn about combining ingredients together when making sweet potato cookies. Their understanding of cause and effect is developed in the multi-sensory room and through using the good range of electronic toys. They clearly enjoy opportunities to experience a range of light and sound effects. Those children with complex needs anticipate experiences with excitement and all express amazement and delight at the effects. More able children persevere for considerable lengths of time and they learn to recognise, sort and manipulate a good range of materials.

Teachers are imaginative in finding ways of engaging pupils in everyday events. For example, on the teacher's birthday, children lit and blew out candles and opened birthday cards and presents.

55. The physical development of children is good. They have regular opportunities to use the pool and develop good levels of independence through the effective use of swimming aids. They develop confidence in the water because they are well supported by staff. For example, one under-five was able to put his face under the water. The most able children are beginning to swim with the aid of floats. Some reception children have good opportunities to take part in physical education lessons at a local mainstream school. Pupils' manipulative skills are extended well through a variety of activities, for example, when cooking, using playdough, sand and water.
56. Children's creative development is satisfactory. They enjoy their music lessons and take part in action songs. Music is used to good effect in the multi-sensory room and pupils are encouraged to respond to the light and sound effects. They learn the names of colours and use paint to make marks on paper, for example handprints. They handle a range of materials of differing textures.
57. Children's learning is well managed. Priority targets and termly targets are based on the children's individual education plans. However, some of the targets are too general and this makes the small steps that children make in their progress difficult to measure. There are good links with parents and they feel appropriately involved in their children's learning.

ENGLISH

58. Pupils' achievements are good. At Key Stage 1 they are very good and sometimes excellent, and at Key Stage 4 progress is sometimes very good in lessons. The more able pupils obtain Certificates of Achievement in English at the end of Key Stage 4. Throughout the school progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing is good, mainly as a result of the very good implementation of the Literacy Strategy. This is an improvement since the last inspection when achievements were generally satisfactory.
59. Pupils' achievements in speaking and listening are good. Pupils of all abilities are well supported by speech therapists and they make good progress in communication. Good use is made of sign language to augment pupils' language. It is very well used in Key Stage 1 classes, including the class for pupils with autism. Learning the sounds and signs for letters and words takes place simultaneously. By the end of Key Stage 2 more able pupils understand compound words and some explained why 'workmen' is such a word. Less able pupils participated enthusiastically in a drama activity about pigs. They anticipated the action and said what they thought would happen next. More able pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 express themselves more fluently and begin to use more complex sentence structure. They discuss with accuracy and interest characters and situations in scenes from plays by George Bernard Shaw and William Shakespeare. Post-16 students speak confidently, express opinions and listen well to others.
60. Pupils' achievements in reading are good. By the end of Key Stage 1 more able pupils know the sounds and signs of half the letters of the alphabet and a few phonic blends. Less able pupils remember up to five sounds and signs. By the end of Key Stage 2 more able pupils are beginning to read simple texts with expression and understanding. Less able pupils recognise story characters from pictures and read very simple words. They all participate in class 'play reading', reading the script and making relevant sounds and movements with great enthusiasm. More able pupils in Key Stage 3 know how to find books in a library, read teenage magazines and confidently build up words they are unsure of. They have a clear knowledge of phonics. Less able pupils read simple texts and look at magazines such as those about motorcycling. By the end of Key Stage 4 most able pupils have a very good knowledge of the stories they read, and read with good expression, for example, reading direct speech with accurate intonation.
61. Pupils' achievements in writing are good. They become more confident as they move through the school and by the end of Key Stage 4 they have a good range of skills to use in their life after school. At Key Stages 1 and 2 most able pupils dictate sentences to adults and then begin to copy over and then under these simple sentences. Through regular practice they increase their pencil control and improve their formation of letters. By the end of Key Stage 2

they write in sentences, some independently. At Key Stages 3 and 4 some pupils write brief paragraphs without support, and have a knowledge of upper and lower case and basic punctuation. More able pupils use dictionaries to confirm their spellings. Handwriting is neat and often in joined script. Post-16 students make good progress as they work towards modules in their ASDAN award.

62. Key Stage 1 pupils with autism make very good progress. They are very well supported by talented staff who have specialist knowledge of their difficulties which enables pupils to achieve very well especially in speaking and listening. They begin to understand sequencing through stories and songs. Older pupils with more complex needs make satisfactory progress when in their special class and when working with their peers. Some of these pupils select their name from a choice of two and indicate their preference of activity.
63. The quality of teaching and learning is good. At Key Stage 1 it is often very good and sometimes excellent. In the most successful lessons planning is detailed and there is good assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do. Adults' enthusiasm is infectious and plays a vital part in influencing pupils' positive attitudes to their work and consequently aids their learning. The emphasis on discussion about work enables even the youngest pupils to evaluate their work and decide how it could have been improved. In many lessons throughout the school teachers' excellent knowledge of pupils' needs and of the subject is used to ensure that work is fun and pupils' learning is at the best possible pace. Where teaching and learning is not as successful work is not closely matched to pupils' abilities, for example, when studying the film 'My Fair Lady' all pupils, regardless of ability, were given exactly the same worksheet. Planning is insufficiently detailed, introductions to lessons are slow and learning time is therefore lost. The use of reading record books is inconsistent throughout the school. In some classes they are not used to remind pupils of skills to practice nor do they guide parents in helping their children when listening to them read.
64. The detailed planning for and the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy by the English co-ordinator has had a positive impact on teaching and pupils' learning. Literacy lesson plans are clear and detailed, the pace of lessons is brisk, the variety of activities engages pupils' interest and much good learning takes place. The effective inclusion of relevant parts of the Literacy Strategy within Key Stage 4 lessons is a positive move to assist pupils' learning. Pupils are managed effectively and their generally positive attitudes and good behaviour has a marked impact on their capacity for learning. This was especially noticeable amongst the oldest pupils when they were reading and producing calligrams. Resources prepared by teachers are invariably good and are well-used. For example, the enlarged play scripts and facemasks used during drama had a positive effect upon pupils' learning.

MATHEMATICS

65. Overall, pupils' achievements are good but they are only satisfactory at Key Stage 3. The achievement of autistic pupils in the special provision is particularly good. The school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy. The subject co-ordinator provides strong advice and support to colleagues. This is raising standards significantly.
66. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress. They respond very well to the lively presentation in lesson and they develop a good sense of their own learning, for example, when they express preferences for numbers, declaring that zero is their favourite. Pupils develop good mathematical language because planning ensures that they consistently respond to terms such as more or less. There are effective strategies to encourage good behaviour and pupils behave well. Pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour receive effective support, often from assistants. This enables pupils to participate as much as possible in the lesson and minimises disruption to other pupils' learning.
67. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress. Sometimes progress is very good when they are very familiar with the routine for the lesson, attend well to instructions and apply themselves diligently to their tasks. Pupils enjoy the introduction and the opportunity to demonstrate what they know. They take turns to be the teacher and hold up fingers for the class to follow. Concentration was intense when a pupil has difficulty holding up three fingers and held four up instead. He pushed one down and chuckled that he had to take one away. This demonstrated a growing understanding of numbers and number language. Pupils complete challenging work

with some independence. Where pupils make less progress, there is too much emphasis upon the oral part of the lesson and this slows the pace of work.

68. In Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress. Sometimes pupils make good progress, for example, in developing strategies to double numbers. They respond well to the teachers' carefully directed questions aimed at developing methods to check their answers. Pupils often make good progress in the mental arithmetic sessions at the beginning of lessons. Pupils predict numbers they will score with a dice and are beginning to understand that they throw a number by chance. However, progress is not consistently good as tasks are not always sufficiently matched to the pupils' abilities.
69. Pupils at Key Stage 4 make good progress. Most pupils are successful in an accredited numeracy test which focuses on the number skills required in everyday life. The more able pupils obtain Certificates of Achievement. Pupils make very good progress in lessons analysing bank statements to see how much money a person withdraws from a cash machine over a period. They use computers very effectively to complete a spreadsheet to invent their income and expenditure. With effective support, they create graphs to demonstrate that they have no spare money at the end of the month. The tasks promote good progress in literacy as pupils fill in personal details about their life. Pupils develop good skills of independent learning and try to find answers for themselves before asking staff for support. Relationships are good and pupils readily share computers. They are pleased to share ideas and respond well to each other's suggestions. Most pupils achieve well in the numeracy test. There are opportunities for higher attaining pupils to progress to a higher level of accreditation through a link with a local college but this provision is inconsistent to ensure that all higher achieving pupils have access to the appropriate accreditation.
70. Students at post-16 were taking part in a residential visit and were not in school during the inspection week. During their stay they used their numeracy skills well, achieved targets such as buying an ornament for a present and proudly showed it to visitors. Others put into practice the life skills training in numeracy learnt in school. They demonstrated good progress, ordering and paying for cakes unaided. Students' work indicates that they achieve well. They follow topics that are useful in life after school, such as handling money and reading transport timetables.
71. Pupils who have additional special educational needs usually make the same progress as the remainder of their class. Some pupils who have difficulty communicating use devices to read out numbers, and apply adhesive numbers to their books when they have difficulty writing. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties make satisfactory progress in the special class and planning is usually good for those who are included in their appropriate classes for some of the numeracy lessons. Pupils in the unit for pupils with autism make very good progress. The teacher knows pupils very well and plans lessons effectively. This ensures that pupils receive support and follow well-established routines, with tasks effectively matched to their needs. This, together with the application of effective behaviour management strategies, means that pupils behave well and apply themselves diligently to tasks. Pupils have access to stimulating resources and receive plenty of encouragement to succeed. They have good opportunities to enhance their learning by using the computer to solve number problems.
72. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. However, it is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 rather than good because the planning does not consistently provide opportunities for pupils to follow work matched to their needs. Good features of teaching throughout the school include the good use of appropriate resources, which match pupils' needs and hold their interest. This contributes to their successful learning. Teachers have a very good knowledge of pupils and are very good at seizing opportunities to promote individual progress. For example, this was evident in a Key Stage 1 lesson when the teacher skilfully followed up a pupil's suggestion about counting how many songs they had sung. Through effective support and careful questioning the delighted pupil knew that they had already sung three. At Key Stage 2 teachers' give pupils very clear instructions at the beginning of the lesson. This means that pupils are clear about intentions, enabling the teacher to move quickly onto written work, which is planned effectively to match each pupil's needs.
73. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection when teaching and learning was effective in only half the lessons seen. There is now documentation which provides good

guidance of the tasks that pupils will follow but teachers' planning does not consistently indicate what pupils will learn in lessons which makes it difficult to assess pupils' progress. It also means that only limited assessment information can be used when planning pupils' future learning. This is unsatisfactory. Similarly, the significant amount of monitoring of teaching is not as effective as it could be since it does not focus sufficiently on how much progress individuals make. Teachers do not plan sufficiently to use the limited resources for information technology to support pupils' learning in numeracy lessons. The provision of homework is good and reinforces learning in class.

SCIENCE

74. Pupils' achievements have improved since the last inspection. Overall pupils' achievements are satisfactory.
75. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils understand that light comes from different sources and they develop their listening skills as they explore sound. They make good progress. In Key Stage 2, pupils with more complex needs understand that different clothes are worn in different weather. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 understand simple circuits and made good progress in making a parallel circuit. Most able pupils explained why one bulb worked when they removed the other from the circuit. Pupils with additional special needs are well supported by appropriate materials linked to their everyday experiences.
76. Pupils in Key Stage 3 increased their understanding of friction and streamlining. Achievement overall is satisfactory but pupils' records indicate some uneven progress pupils do not have folders of work covering all areas of the science curriculum. In Key Stage 4, achievement is satisfactory over time although in some lessons the good teaching resulted in good learning. In one such lesson, older pupils increased their knowledge and understanding of fair testing and of the conditions that lead to faster dissolving of sugar. These pupils made good progress. Pupils now follow an externally accredited course, which has resulted in more consistent achievement. Pupils with more complex needs consolidate their understanding of how sound travels. Pupils make limited use of information technology to record data, to produce graphs or to research information.
77. Overall, the quality of teaching observed in lessons was at least satisfactory and there was some good teaching and learning, especially for younger pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The best teaching is for pupils at Key Stage 1. Overall, teachers have improved their knowledge of science, since the last inspection. They plan good activities, which interest the pupils. In some classes, the planning takes account of all the pupils' needs, but in other classes, teachers plan for the whole group rather than for individual needs. For instance, in a Key Stage 1 lessons, the teacher planned a range of interesting activities for the whole class on sources of light. She also planned for individuals and matched the work to their ability, which stimulated the pupils' interest and developed their skills of observation. Learning was effective for these pupils. However, in a Key Stage 3 lesson, although the teacher supported individual pupils there was insufficient planning for individual needs. As a result, their previous learning on friction was not successfully developed. In a Key Stage 4 lesson, the teacher had good knowledge of both the pupils and the topic. Her skilful questioning challenged the pupils to think and relate the abstract topic of dissolving to everyday events. Time is used well in most lessons and clear limits are set for tasks. Teachers provide good support and check pupils' progress through frequent questioning. Pupils are managed well and relationships are good and based on mutual respect. This creates a good working atmosphere and leads to effective learning. The high standards expected are consistently enforced which ensures that most pupils, including those with very challenging behaviour, behave well. In a minority of lessons, pupils became restless if the teacher talked for too long or they became distracted when rules were not firmly established, for example, when using a laboratory. This had an adverse effect on pupils' learning.
78. The subject is well led and a number of important improvements have taken place since the last inspection. There is more emphasis on investigations; the planning of the curriculum is now satisfactory and covers all the required aspects, and the co-ordinator monitors the curriculum. However, the weakness in using assessment information to plan future lessons

remains unsatisfactory in most classes and so planning is insufficiently focused on what pupils of different abilities should know, understand and be able to do at the end of a topic.

ART

79. Standards of achievement are good at Key Stages 1 and 2 and satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection when art was judged to be satisfactory in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4. Key Stage 1 pupils worked collaboratively to make a class sculpture using balsa wood which had been cut and sanded by pupils who then gave directions as to where each section should be positioned. More able pupils increase their cutting and sticking skills. They can copy lines, colour and designs of a shell on to their drawing and are able to cut along lines with some accuracy. With support, less able pupils choose colours, make handprints, and attempt spatter prints. Pupils with more complex needs paint bears including body, head, legs and arms and with some help roll out clay.
80. At Key Stage 2 pupils experience a wide range of activities including self-portraits, drawing and painting woodland scenes, marbling and still life painting. Their sketchbooks include a range of techniques such as wash over wax, collages using material, and pattern making using lentils. Most able pupils accurately copy a picture of Buddha and create a self-portrait positioning ears, nose and cheeks correctly. Less able pupils draw the basic outline of a shoe, sketch a house with windows, door and chimney and create a 'real' Van Gogh painting with thick, bold strokes in oranges, browns and greens.
81. Pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 have lessons in half-termly blocks with gaps in between when art is not studied. This leads to inconsistent progress during the course of a year. Less able pupils make more progress than the more able. In the lessons seen and in pupils' work over time there was insufficient challenge for more able pupils. However, still life drawings on display show that all pupils can produce work of a good standard but this was not evident during the inspection.
82. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stages 1 and 2. They are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. The main weakness is that more able pupils are insufficiently challenged because work is not planned for individual needs and pupils do not have the opportunity to extend their work and develop an idea across several lessons and different media. The present rotational system of lessons stops pupils following an accredited course which is a lost opportunity for most able pupils. The most successful lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2 engaged pupils' attention immediately and provided a range of exciting activities throughout the lesson. For example, pupils used thick paint to create a 'Van Gogh' painting, made a collage of sunflower seeds and discovered Van Gogh paintings on the Internet. Such lessons were carefully planned, good quality resources were immediately available and learning was successful throughout the lesson. In less successful lessons teachers did not capture all pupils' interest, especially the more able. They quickly became bored and began to chat. Sometimes pupils are given too much help rather than being expected to think them out for themselves. Opportunities to consolidate knowledge are lost. Good relationships between staff and pupils make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Assessment of pupils' achievements and its use to improve future lessons is better in Key Stages 1 and 2 than in Key Stages 3 and 4. The good quality displays that brighten the building stimulate interest and learning around the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

83. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' achievement is good and in Key Stages 3 and 4, it is satisfactory. At Key Stage 1 pupils use pencils and scissors well and they test their models, for example of boats to find out whether they float, and adapt their designs accordingly. Pupils with autism in the special provision use linkages such as paper clips to make moving models, for example of birds. At key Stage 2 the more able pupils construct annotated designs and use them to make imaginative models such as caterpillars. Their models reflect their designs well. They fold and stick accurately and understand the purpose of a template. All pupils have good experiences of a range of different materials. They develop their literacy skills well, explaining their work and making notes on their designs. In lessons where pupils are encouraged to work with others, they develop their social skills well. Some younger pupils have good experiences through working with pupils in a local mainstream school. The pupils who had made puppets were able to work with others to present a poem about two people exchanging greetings on meeting each other.
84. At Key Stage 3, pupils design and make products such as pizzas and design the packaging for them. They learn about insulation by working out ways of keeping their pizzas warm. More able Key Stage 4 pupils use a sewing machine competently and identify and solve problems, for example, when translating designs into tapestries. They understand aspects of business through designing and making products to sell and by being involved in formal meetings to discuss production. The progress made by older pupils is not as good as it could be because of the rotational timetable arrangements. Older pupils with more complex needs gain good experiences of linkages when making moving models of ducks as an extension of an earlier opportunity to walk by the river. Pupils are very proud when they have made something successfully.
85. Teaching is satisfactory. In about half of the lessons observed, teaching was good. In the best lessons, teachers have good knowledge of how to engage pupils in problem solving activities, which results in them taking responsibility for their work and developing a growing confidence in their abilities. A calm atmosphere in the lessons for autistic pupils helped them to make very good progress. These pupils developed their ability to make decisions when teachers encouraged them to select within carefully defined options. Teachers plan relevant tasks and these are well linked to on-going work in other lessons. The best lessons engage pupils in understanding the relationship between designing and making. Constructive feedback helps pupils to understand why their work is successful. Teachers make good use of questions to help pupils to work out ways of achieving a successful outcome, for example, "How are you going to get the star to stay on the back?" The most successful assistants work closely with individual pupils to enable them to be successful without giving them too much help. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the links between designing and making are not made explicit and sometimes pupils are prompted to say the right answer, rather than being helped to understand. Targets are not always well focused. Planning is described in terms of tasks to be completed rather than identifying what individual pupils will know, understand or be able to do as a result of the activities. Although teachers know their pupils well, the relationship between pupils' individual targets as described in their individual education plan and the activities in the lesson plans is not clear. At Key Stages 3 and 4 teachers do not always have a sufficiently good understanding of the individual needs and abilities of pupils they are teaching. It is not possible, therefore, to assess their learning accurately. Teachers do not make enough use of information technology in their lessons and this limits pupils' progress.
86. The subject is soundly managed. Although teachers' planning is monitored, there is insufficient emphasis on evaluating pupils' learning. There is a good curriculum for younger pupils but for older pupils it is limited by the unsatisfactory timetable arrangements. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and there is a greater emphasis on problem solving. Although assessments are in place, they are unsatisfactory. They are too general because of the lack of specific objectives in the planning. There is now more emphasis on designing but not all teachers provide adequate opportunities. The accommodation is limited but due for up-grading next year.

GEOGRAPHY

87. Standards have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievements in Key Stages 1 and 2 are good, and in Key Stages 3 and 4 they are satisfactory. The most able pupils in Key Stage 4 are capable of achieving success in external examinations but this opportunity is not available for them. Geography lessons alternate termly with history. Insufficient time is available therefore to prepare pupils adequately for examinations.
88. Younger pupils can link typical foods with countries of origin. They recall a visit to the seaside and know a lighthouse warns ships of rocks at night. Key Stage 2 pupils identify different farm animals by sight and sound. More able pupils link animals with products like sheep and wool, and draw lines on a board to show their understanding of these links. Pupils who have additional special needs focus closely on models of farm animals and show by eye movement their recognition of the differences. Pupils in Key Stage 3 show some understanding of how people change landscapes, for example, by destruction of rainforests. More able pupils write protest letters as Amazonian Indians about their views on the loss of the forest. They know the term 'canopy' describes the foliage at the tops of trees, and understand that the forest floor is damp because little sunshine penetrates. Less able pupils colour pictures of the rainforest before and after the logging companies' work. With guidance pupils use the Internet and CD-ROMs to access information. Key Stage 4 pupils with additional special needs recognise houses by matching them to photographs during a walk to a local river. They experience going down and moving up a small hill. More able pupils use globes and atlases to find information and record it on outline maps. They watch video programmes and make notes on what they observe.
89. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. However, only a very small amount was seen at Key Stages 3 and 4 because some classes were not having geography lessons this term. Teachers manage pupils very effectively by making good use of their knowledge of individuals. The team of adults in each class works co-operatively under the teacher's direction to benefit pupils' learning. In order to stimulate a response and help pupils learn and remember, teachers make good use of resources. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson a teacher used models and pictures of farm animals and products such as wool to help pupils see the links. Water poured from a watering can on soil held together by plant roots and also on loose soil, helped Key Stage 3 pupils to understand the idea of soil erosion. Teachers make good use of song and rhyme to consolidate learning with younger pupils, and this contributes to the enthusiasm and sense of fun that pupils share with the adults. Teachers adapt their questions well to match pupils' levels of understanding. Teachers use homework to consolidate new learning. However, teachers of older pupils allow some activities, such as colouring, to take up too much time so learning is less effective. Pupils' information technology skills are not well developed so they use more time than necessary to gain access to information. Planning does not generally include the individual outcomes expected for pupils so the focus on their achievements is not as sharp as it might be. Planning does not include activities related to the lesson for pupils who go off-site, to horse riding for example, when the remainder of the class is at school. When pupils leave classes for behavioural reasons with a class assistant, work is not always planned to allow continuity with the lesson.
90. Management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has audited resources and they have been extended to match the requirements of the curriculum. There are helpful lists and collections of resources in classrooms and the staff room that make the use of resources easier when planning lessons.

HISTORY

91. Overall, pupils' standards of achievement are sound. They are good at Key Stage 2 and satisfactory for all other pupils. Where standards are good the quality of teaching is good. For example, pupils are encouraged to find things out for themselves, and work is matched carefully to individual targets. Pupils generally show an interest in history and talk with enthusiasm about the visits they have made. These positive attitudes contribute to pupils' achievements.
92. Pupils at Key Stage 1 are beginning to understand past and present through relating events such as birth and death to their own experiences. They benefit from first-hand experiences, including visits to local sites. They record their observations through drawings and paintings. Talking about photographs taken on these occasions helped them to recall key events and facts. This sound start is built upon in Key Stage 2, where more able pupils start to make connections for themselves, for example, recognising the castle on the school logo as the local castle they have visited. By the end of Key Stage 2, they talk independently about the visits they have made and recall some of the stories associated with the places. More able pupils are starting to sequence objects in terms of age, recognising how everyday objects, such as irons, have changed through time. They identify Greek gods and use a CD-ROMs to find out more information about the Ancient Greeks. Less able pupils show interest in artefacts. They enjoy holding and touching a Viking shield, and learn from dressing up and taking part in role-plays, for example, when they re-enacted a Roman feast.
93. In Key Stage 3, pupils record ideas about their visits and experiences. Most pupils pick out differences in photographs of local places taken recently and in the past. They observe how local shop fronts have changed and talk about why this may be. Less able pupils are supported in making these observations and use computers to help record their ideas. By the end of Key Stage 4, more able pupils write with reasonable accuracy about medieval times or the Roundheads and Cavaliers. They appreciate the difference between primary and secondary sources and attempted their own investigations using videos, cameras, and tape-recorders to record their own findings. Less able pupils copy writing to record their experiences or react to photographs which help them recall events.
94. Throughout the key stages, pupils develop their literacy skills through talking about and recording their historical experiences. Younger pupils respond well to the use of big books, which they can read together. They show good listening skills and by the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils express their own ideas clearly and with reasonable confidence.
95. Overall, teaching is at least sound. It is good in Key Stage 2. No teaching was observed at Key Stage 1. Teachers use a wide and interesting range of activities which helps develop pupil recall through first-hand experiences. They record these in a variety of ways appropriate to pupils' abilities. Where teaching is good, pupils are working towards individual targets and teachers match activities well to pupils' abilities. For example, roles are carefully chosen to develop particular speaking or listening or social skills, which reflect the priority targets of each pupil. Lively presentations involve pupils fully and help them remember key facts. Good use is made of local history, including the local museum and books written by local people. This means pupils gain first-hand experiences, which motivate them and contribute to their learning. The better teaching is beginning to involve pupils in doing their own research, which is making an important contribution to the more able pupils' progress but there is not enough emphasis on personal study and research for older pupils.
96. The management of history is good. There is regular monitoring of the teaching which has led to the identification of key areas for development. Teachers are already responding to these by using big books, enlarged photographs, and computers, as sources of evidence. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. Assessment was largely concerned with what units of work pupils had covered rather than on individual's achievements. Some improvements have been made in the process of assessment but teachers plans still lack clear learning outcomes for individual pupils. This makes accurate assessment of their learning very difficult.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

97. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory across key stages. At Key Stage 1 pupils learn about cause and effect through opportunities to interact with a good range of electronic toys. More able pupils know how to load CD rooms and use a mouse to point to arrows on the screen when moving a truck to its destination. Pupils with autism, match words using a concept keyboard to move icons on the screen. Key Stage 2 pupils use a mouse to type short sentences and learn how people make use of electronic mail to communicate with others. At Key Stage 3 pupils set up lap top computers successfully, load a word processing program and change fonts when decoding a message. More able Key Stage 4 pupils type their Record of Achievement statements with some support. They enter details into spreadsheets independently and are developing a good understanding of their use. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school in using computers to load, select programs, save and print their work. Older senior pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties improve their eye contact by following images on the screen.
98. Throughout all key stages, pupils use concept and standard keyboards to word process their work in subjects such as English, humanities and religious education. They use draw programs to make designs of their work. They learn how to use the tape recorder to record the sound of musical instruments. Ten year olds use cameras to record likenesses when recalling events in the past. Pupils make good use of touch-screens to access programs to reinforce their learning in literacy and numeracy, particularly in Key Stages 1 and 2. At Key Stage 4 pupils use information technology to calculate monthly spending and to draw graphs. Pupils make insufficient use of data-logging equipment in science. Some pupils with more complex needs are unable to focus on the screen without support and do not understand cause and effect by the end of their time in school. Most pupils persevere very well when using computers and gain great satisfaction in their growing control and skill.
99. Teaching is satisfactory and in about a third of lessons it was at least good. In the best lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and present activities in a lively and exciting way. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils were prompted to ask, "How do you get e-mail?" The use of a large computer screen helped more able pupils to understand how electronic mail was received. This encourages pupils to use information technology confidently and competently. Good teachers take every opportunity to make good use of information technology in their lessons, for example, to reinforce literacy and numeracy. Concept keyboards are well used to allow some pupils to reinforce spellings in relation to a favourite book. Some teachers lack sufficient confidence to extend pupils' understanding and plan too few opportunities for pupils to make good progress in their learning. Some teachers' planning is insufficiently challenging for more able pupils, particularly in the senior school where there are mixed-age classes. Planning is often descriptive and does not identify what it is intended that pupils should know, understand and be able to do. The range of strategies used to teach pupils how to use information technology is limited and the activities are not always well related to relevant, everyday events. For example, the exercise used by older pupils to decode a message was absorbing, but the learning was not applied to an understandable context. The system for on-going assessments of pupils after the age of seven is unsatisfactory and does not help teachers to plan precisely to meet the individual needs of pupils.
100. Management is good. There have been significant improvements in the range of hardware and software. Since the last inspection, there has been some staff development. All pupils have a timetabled lesson of the subject each week. However, not all teachers plan enough opportunities to reinforce and extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. There is still insufficient use of switches for pupils with more complex needs.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

101. At key Stages 3 and 4 standards of achievement are unsatisfactory. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are able to ask simple questions using "s'il vous plaît" and "merci". They can ask and give their names in French, are familiar with very basic vocabulary about numbers, colours, the weather, home and school. They know the names of some French cheeses and have experienced a day trip to Boulogne, so have some clear impressions of France at first hand. However, they do not use and combine their vocabulary with confidence or fluency, so their knowledge does not translate into useful skills of communication. Key Stage 4 pupils can put together phrases in French to select goods from a shop and ask how much they cost. They can use a dictionary to look up words and, when listening to very simple tapes, they have a basic understanding of the tape's meaning but do not understand the details. They have familiarity with units of vocabulary about towns and shopping, they know about French foods and have taken part in French breakfasts. As with the younger pupils, they are not confident in what they know and it is apparent that they have not sufficiently or consistently practised their French or built on it progressively over time.
102. During the inspection teaching was satisfactory overall and occasionally good but it has been inconsistent over time. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory and they model acceptable accents and intonation, leading to sound performance by pupils. Methods are appropriate and include good opportunities for role play, for example, buying cakes in a pâtisserie, and good use of display, both of which increase pupils' motivation and support their learning. Information and communications technologies are used appropriately for listening and vocabulary practice. Praise and encouragement are used well, especially with the less able pupils and this encourages participation by all. There is good lesson planning and although assessment is too general, teachers do use assessment information to plan future lessons. Many pupils show poor patterns of learning for parts of the lesson, taking only a very passive and unenthusiastic part, for example, some pupils did not enter into the spirit of the lesson even where real cakes from France were provided for their rôle play. Lessons are, too often, insufficiently lively and active to motivate some pupils. The resistance shown by some pupils towards French is almost certainly due to their recent inconsistent and fragmented experience in which they have been taught by a series of supply teachers. Pupils appear to have got out of the habit of using French regularly and they show reluctance and embarrassment when asked to do so. Their progress over time is unsatisfactory and their current progress, because of negative attitudes, is also unsatisfactory despite the satisfactory teaching they are now receiving.
103. The subject has not developed satisfactorily since the last inspection. Indeed, standards of achievement are lower than they were in 1996. This is almost certainly a consequence of staffing difficulties. Long term planning is inadequate for non-specialist teachers as it does not specify what pupils should know, understand and be able to do at each stage, and units of work do not include an appropriate quantity of work for each term. Assessment does not provide sufficient information about what individual pupils can do and there are no courses leading to external accreditation.

MUSIC

104. Standards of achievement are satisfactory for pupils aged 11 to 16 and good for younger pupils. The better quality of teaching, more appropriate organisation of pupils and more positive attitudes result in more successful learning and better progress for younger pupils.
105. At Key Stage 1 pupils respond enthusiastically to opportunities to explore the sounds made by different instruments. They get excited about making their own tune, listen well to others and take turns to offer their own sounds for others to hear. With support they can operate a simple tape machine and record a tune composed by the whole group. At Key Stage 2 more able pupils can use a mouse to give commands and select, drag icons and listen to the tunes each plays. Some count the number of notes in each tune and use appropriate vocabulary such as loud, soft, quick and slow when answering questions. There is a good emphasis on music across the curriculum. Singing is an introductory activity in many lessons and is a regular

feature of assemblies. Many songs include actions and these are used well to reinforce specific vocabulary and to practice counting skills.

106. At Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils make satisfactory progress. They have many opportunities to experience live music and most have good listening skills. More able pupils are developing an understanding of musical instruments from the past, in particular the Elizabethan period. Pupils of all abilities have opportunities to compose using keyboards and drums and to perform alongside professional musicians. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties clearly enjoy the songs and actions which are a feature of most lessons and some join in with the actions. The most able pupils are starting to write down simple musical notations.
107. Achievements for older pupils are satisfactory rather than good because music is not taught continuously to all pupils throughout the year. This means that pupils have half-term gaps in their learning which affects their progress over time. There is a very wide range of abilities in the groups for music. Teachers' planning does not focus enough on what different pupils should learn therefore the tasks set are not always appropriately matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils. This means that at times progress is unsatisfactory for some pupils. During the inspection progress was unsatisfactory for more able pupils in one of the lessons observed.
108. The quality of teaching is good for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 and sometimes it is very good for pupils in Key Stage 1. In one of these lessons, the tremendous enthusiasm shown by the teacher had a very positive effect on all pupils, even those with very challenging behaviour. They were totally engrossed in the activities because she used a large number of interesting instruments made the lesson such fun. Consequently pupils' achievements were very good. By the end of the lesson they had composed a whole class tune to illustrate their recent trip to the seaside. A weaker aspect of teaching for Key Stage 2 pupils was the use of only one computer when composing a tune with the whole class. Pupils, especially those with more challenging behaviour, were waiting too long for their turn. In this lesson learning was not as good as it could have been. Teaching for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory. An interesting range of instruments is used and there is a good emphasis on pupils performing. However, pupils are not always managed effectively and planning does not sufficiently take in to account the wide range of abilities. Sometimes this leads to unsatisfactory and disruptive behaviour which affects the learning of the whole group.
109. The curriculum is good overall. The regular opportunities pupils have to take part in performances, the workshops organised by professional musicians, the inclusion of music from around the world, and the emphasis placed on music across the curriculum, have a positive effect on pupils' musical progress and on the development of their personal and social skills.
110. There has been an improvement in standards, teaching and the curriculum since the last inspection. However, planning and assessment were weak and some weaknesses remain in these aspects. Lesson objectives are not always very clear which makes it difficult to assess pupils' achievements. Monitoring is detailed but is not yet sufficiently focused on individual pupil's progress.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

111. Overall, achievement is good especially in swimming. Pupils in the class for pupils with autism achieve very well. The school allocates an exceptional amount of time to promoting pupils' physical development through lessons in physical education and horse riding. The school has maintained the good standards evident during the previous inspection.
112. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1. They make very good progress in aiming at a target and developing the skills to play games and take part in athletics. Teachers plan very effective support to guide pupils to improve skills, for instance by providing opportunities for pupils to aim at hoops of increasing distances and heights. Pupils evaluate their performance well, taking time to develop strategies to aim and then throw with determination. By the end of the lesson, pupils share enthusiasm for high achievement, encouraging each other to do well. They make good progress in swimming lessons in the shallow water pool as staff support them in the water and provide encouragement and advice. Using armbands to help them float, pupils

propel themselves through the water and respond well to instructions to alter their position in the water and kick their legs.

113. Pupils at Key Stage 2 make good progress. Planning is very effective. Revision of previous work and demonstration is good so that pupils develop their ball skills well. Higher attaining pupils begin to understand the need to develop strategies to field the ball and they learn simple rules. By the end of the key stage pupils can demonstrate sending the shot and discus, responding well to the teacher's high expectations for them to learn. They observe well and modify their techniques and increase the distance they achieve after watching the effective staff demonstration. Teaching effectively promotes numeracy and literacy, for example, pupils count throws and are encouraged to follow instructions.
114. Achievement is good overall at Key Stage 3 but satisfactory in games. Pupils consolidate skills well, sending and receiving a ball in preparation to play small team games. However, the work is not planned sufficiently in all lessons to build upon the skills pupils have developed at earlier key stages and so promote better progress. Pupils at Key Stage 4 achieve well. They make very good progress responding to challenging personal tasks during swimming lessons at a local pool, working towards swimming certificates matched to their attainment. There are very good relationships with staff and mutual respect. Pupils are keen to take part and behave well in public. Staff manage pupils very well, instilling self confidence and encouraging pupils to strive to succeed. By the end of the key stage, higher attaining pupils can swim several lengths and lower attaining pupils are able to swim several widths, achieving distance awards for their efforts.
115. Pupils with autism in the unit achieve very well. Staff demonstrate the activities very effectively and this enables pupils to achieve well in running, jumping and climbing. Staff managed a pupil who has extremely challenging behaviour very effectively so that he eventually required minimal support to use a small trampoline. Pupils who have more complex needs make good progress during lessons in the hydrotherapy pool. However, they do not have the same access to horse riding offered to other pupils because of concerns over the adequacy of arrangements for moving and handling.
116. Pupils from Key Stages 2 and 3 have regular lessons in horse riding. They gain in confidence and a significant number learn techniques to control their horse. However, pupils spend too much time travelling to and from one of the centres. The intention is that pupils will study subjects such as science and numeracy during travelling and waiting time. However there is insufficient planning or monitoring of pupils' learning to demonstrate sufficient achievement and progress.
117. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is very good in swimming. Teachers are enthusiastic, and use effective demonstrations and stimulating resources. The way in which skills are gradually developed through well-thought out practices is good and this makes a very important contribution towards pupils good achievements.
118. The co-ordinator provides good support and ensures that pupils follow a good range of activities. However, the monitoring does not focus consistently upon what pupils are learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

119. Pupils' achievements are good and have improved since the last inspection. Personal and social education has a high profile in the school and the curriculum followed by all pupils is good. Throughout the school pupils make good progress in relation to targets set for them in a wide range of social, interpersonal, independence and health related skills. Teachers promote appropriate independence skills at all ages. For the younger pupils these are focused on personal development whilst at Key Stage 4 and post-16 these are related to pupils taking responsibility. Key Stage 4 pupils work towards a Certificate of Achievement in life skills and post-16 students follow the ASDAN course 'Towards Independence'.
120. More able Key Stage 1 pupils take turns acting as shopkeepers and other pupils choose a picture to select their snack. In Key Stage 2 pupils improved their dressing skills when preparing for riding. Less able Key Stage 3 pupils improved their independence skills when

preparing for physical education. They collected their own kitbags and checked they had the correct items. By the end of Key Stage 3, more able pupils can join in a discussion and make sensible suggestions about where it is safe to go to play. In Key Stage 4, an award for innovation was given to the pupils in recognition for their work in a team enterprise project. More able Key Stage 4 pupils help to run school council meetings and they made satisfactory progress in their knowledge of voting. Pupils with more complex needs begin to take some responsibility in caring for themselves. Post-16 students make good progress in their independence skills programme. Whilst on a residential visit, two students confidently prepared a cooked breakfast and helped the less able students. In daily routines, pupils learn to become more independent. For example, during lunchtime there are effective and well-planned feeding programmes for pupils with more complex needs. They all learn acceptable behaviour and help each other.

121. Teaching is good overall with some very good features. The work of teachers and assistants has a positive impact on pupils' learning. They have a very good knowledge of their pupils and provide effective support for them. Teachers use interesting methods such as providing a snack shop in order to develop the social skills needed to go into a shop. Pupils found this lesson fun and therefore their learning was very good. Interesting resources are often used to encourage self-help skills. For example, in the individual learning class, pupils tried on a variety of hats in an introduction to weather. They thoroughly enjoyed this activity. Pupils of all abilities respond to the well-established routines such as those at the beginning of the day. Pupils are constantly praised and encouraged in all the lessons and respond with good behaviour. The teaching is well planned and learning objectives are clear. In a number of lessons pupils are encouraged to communicate through songs and rhymes. This is very effective in developing good communication skills. However, occasionally in Key Stage 4, opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and make decisions are missed as staff provide too much support for pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

122. Throughout the school pupils' achievements are good and they make good progress. The improvement since the last inspection has been good.
123. Younger pupils enjoy stories and singing songs. Singing about rain and rainbows for example helps them to recall the story of Noah. They name wooden animals, and recall from the Christmas story that camels carried the Three Kings to Bethlehem. Pupils with more complex needs recognise symbols and colours that they indicate by smiling and eye contact. Pupils collaborate in acting Bible stories so they become familiar with the characters and the messages. In Key Stage 2 pupils have a good knowledge of the symbols of various faiths seen when visiting places of worship. They know for example that the cross is a symbol of the foundation of Christianity. They increase their understanding of religious ceremonies, for example when they identify features from photographs of their own christening. Older pupils use stories such as Joseph and his coat of many colours to reflect upon jealousy in their own lives. They contribute openly, and more able pupils, especially girls, write extensively. Pupils listen attentively to each other. They develop their spiritual awareness through consideration of people's capacity to be thankful and fearful. They put much effort into thinking and discussing their thoughts with teachers and other adults, and then expressing them in writing as prayers.
124. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use resources effectively to engage pupils' interest and help them understand stories and ideas. For example, the use of wooden animals crowded on a model Ark, and the use of recorded sounds of torrential rain and thunder, gave pupils an exciting experience of God's anger with the people of the world. Teachers manage pupils skilfully so their learning benefits from direction and a purposeful and calm environment. Teachers expect good manners and pupils taking turns to speak in formal discussions and in role play, and provide good models of behaviour when they thank pupils for biding their time to speak. They use questions well to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils enjoy the effort needed to find answers. Teachers use time appropriately so that more able pupils can think through their ideas and write extensively. Occasionally tasks for less able pupils do not match the theme of the lesson or activities pursued by other pupils. This arises because teachers do not write into their plans what they expect each pupil to learn by the end of the lesson. Sometimes opportunities are missed to reinforce learning of new subject vocabulary. Teachers use homework well to consolidate pupils' learning.